

# Class, Status, and Power

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Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Department of African American and African Studies

Spring 2018

M 2:30-3:50 PM, W 1-2:20 PM

449 Conklin

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Office Hours: Mondays 5:30-6:30 pm or by appointment

## Course Description

Who has power in American society? Depending on who you ask, you may get very different responses. However, these opposing perspectives provide a powerful lens to understand how individuals think about their social position and the organization of power. This course is an introduction to political sociology and uses theories of inequality, social ranking, and power to analyze divisions in the United States.

We will survey a diverse sampling of social scientific research to ask: Who has power? What markers of social division (race/gender/class) are most important for understanding American society? How do people understand, explain, and express their social position?

We will begin by reviewing classical sociological theories that posit different explanations for the organization of societies and the construction of social identities. These readings will provide a strong foundation to analyze transformations in contemporary American society. From then, we will work our way down the socio-economic ladder and explore various factions and constituencies in the U.S. We seek to understand how different groups view the distribution of power in American society and how this perspective shapes their identity and mobilizes group action. We will take an expansive of American society and reading will cover: stratification, race/racism, gender/sexism, economic inequality and wealth distribution, elites and the invisible poor.

## Learning Objectives

- Students will gain theoretical and empirical tools to understand and explain the social world.
- Gain first-hand experience conducting social scientific research.

Course Requirements

Attendance/Participation	10 %
Theory Essay	25 %
Response Memos (3)	30 %
Final Project	35 %
Proposal	5 %
Project update (mandatory, not graded)	0
Presentation	5 %
Group Participation	5%
Final Paper	20%

Readings

There are no required texts for this course. All readings are available on Blackboard. This syllabus is subject to revision and updated versions will be posted to the course site. Please check Blackboard and your email for any changes.

Theory Essay

Students will be required to write an essay analyzing theoretical perspectives from course readings and apply these concepts to explain the social world. This essay will be due on Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup> at 4PM. Students must bring a hardcopy to class and submit it via Blackboard. Students will receive a handout with detailed instructions prior to the submission deadline.

Response Memos

We will read a wide survey of academic scholarship that investigates stratification and identity amongst elites, the middle class, and the lower class in American society. Students will be required to write three response memos critically engaging course readings, one for each socio-economic group. Memos should be one page singled spaced. Students are expected to briefly summarize key findings and then provide their own assessments of the work(s). Students should rely on theoretical perspectives covered in class and provide data driven arguments to receive a high score. Memos that simply rearticulate points mentioned in class will be graded poorly. Memos will be graded on originality, logic, content, and grammar.

Response Memo 1 on Elites Due February 28<sup>th</sup>

Response Memo 2 on The Working and Middle Class Due on March 26<sup>th</sup>

Response Memo 3 on the Lower Class Due on April 9<sup>th</sup>

Final Project

In lieu of a final exam, students will complete a research project that requires them to explore stratification, and class-, status-, and/or race-based identities in their own communities. Students must conduct original research and can use any methodological approach (ethnography, interviews, surveys) to produce their findings. Students will complete this project in assigned groups of 3-4 individuals. The final paper should be 15-20 pages double spaced. A detailed project description will be posted on Blackboard with group assignments by February 14<sup>th</sup>.

To ensure that you adequately prepare for your final project, students will be required to submit a paper proposal on March 7<sup>th</sup> (graded) and project update on April 18<sup>th</sup> (not graded, but penalized if not submitted). Finally, students will present on their projects on May 7<sup>th</sup> during the time of our scheduled final exam at 3:00-6:00 PM. Presentations should be 10 minutes long and incorporate visual aids. Students must bring a hardcopy of the final paper/project to class on May 7<sup>th</sup> and submit it via Blackboard.

### Grading Rubric

A: Outstanding

A-: Outstanding, with one or two areas of improvement

B+: Very good

B: Good

B-: Good overall, with some significant weaknesses

C+: Satisfactory, with some potential for improvement

C: Satisfactory, but needs significant development

C-: Barely satisfactory

D: Poor: overwhelming flaws

F: Failing: doesn't complete assignment

### Final Grades

89.45+ = A, 89.44-84.45= B+, 84.44-79.45= B, 79.44-74.45=C+, 74.44-69.45=C, 69.44-65.45=D, 65.44-Below= F

All papers are evaluated for content, grammar, and logic.

For assistance on your writing assignments, please consult the [University Writing Center](#). Tutors can help students: clarify an assignment, generate ideas and writing, review and revise drafts, improve grammar and usage, and strengthen reading and editing skills.

### Class Policies

#### Blackboard

All class communication will be through Blackboard. **This syllabus is subject to revision and updated version will be posted to the course site.** Please check the site regularly for notification. All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard.

#### Attendance Policy

Attendance is required. There will be no make-up opportunities for missed classes.

Excused vs. Unexcused absences: [The Rutgers-Newark Undergraduate catalog](#)

The recognized grounds for absence are illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid, recognized religious holidays, and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions." If you plan to claim a religious holiday as an excused absence, you must inform me of this fact within the first two weeks of class.

### Electronics Policy

Electronic media is a welcome tool to aid learning in the modern classroom. However, used irresponsibly it can also be detrimental to learning when students lose the ability to focus on lectures or distract other students with it. Use of electronic media is therefore a student privilege, not a right, and may be revoked by the instructor under certain conditions. During class time certain electronic media—laptop computers and tablets, not cell phones—may be used only for the following purposes:

- 1) to read required course texts (E-books or texts posted on Blackboard)
- 2) to type notes on lectures and classroom discussions

Electronic media may NOT be used to browse the internet, answer email, check social media, or for any use that is not directly related to the course. If any student is found to be in violation of the electronics policy—as witnessed by the instructor or as reported by fellow classmates—that student will be banned from using any electronic media for the remainder of the course. If the student continues to use electronic media despite the ban, his or her final grade will be reduced a full letter grade at the conclusion. In extreme cases I reserve the right to ban the student from the classroom altogether. The student will be notified in writing if s/he has lost the privilege of using electronic media. Cell phones must be turned off during class time or set to “vibrate”.

### Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, for which a student may receive a range of punishments, including failing the course, a permanent record on his or her final transcript, suspension or even expulsion from the University. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s definition of plagiarism by reviewing the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity, here: <http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/plagiarism>.

If I suspect any student of plagiarism I will bring it to his/her attention and report it to the administration. We faculty have a professional obligation to report all instances of plagiarism in our classes. Failure to do so promotes inequity among the student body, given that honest students have not had the advantage of using external sources in preparing their work.

All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”

### Disability Services and Accommodations

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please

complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information please contact Kate Torres at [\(973\)353-5375](tel:9733535375) or in the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219 or by contacting [odsnewark@rutgers.edu](mailto:odsnewark@rutgers.edu).

Course Schedule

1/22:	Theories of stratification, power, and inequality	"Class, Status, Party"	Max Weber	
1/24:	Theories of stratification, power, and inequality	The Manifesto of the Communist Party "	Karl Marx	
1/29:	Theories of stratification, power, and inequality	"Estranged Labour", "Alienation and Social Classes", and "the Coming Upheaval"	Karl Marx	
1/31:	Theories of stratification, power, and inequality	"The Black Worker" and "the White Worker". Family Feud: Jay-Z, Beyoncé, and the Desecration of Black Art	W.E.B. Dubois . Max Gordon	
2/5:	Theories of stratification, power, and inequality	<i>The Power Elite</i>	C Wright Mills	
2/7:	Theories of stratification, power, and inequality	The Functions of Poverty. Principles of Stratification	Herbert Gans. Wilbur Moore and Kingsley Davis	
2/12:	Theories of stratification, power, and inequality	<i>Racial Formation in the United States</i> , "Racial Formation" "The Racial State"	Michael Omi and Howard Winant	
2/14:		No Readings		Theory Essay Due
2/19:	The Top 1 percent	<i>The Sum of Small Things</i> "Ballet Slippers and Yale Tuition: Inconspicuous Consumption and the Elites"	Elizabeth Currid Halkett	

2/21:	The Top 1 percent	<i>The Sum of Small Things</i> "Motherhood as Conspicuous leisure in the 21st century"	Elizabeth Currid Halkett	
2/26:	The Top 1 percent	<i>Privilege</i> "Gender and the Performance of Privilege"	Shamus Khan	
2/28:	The Working Class	<i>Working Class White</i> "Experiences of White Racial Identity"	Monica McDermott	Response Memo 1
3/5:	The Working Class	<i>The Dignity of Working Men</i> "Assessing "People Above" and "People Below" "	Michelle Lamont	
3/7:	The Working Class	<i>The Dignity of Working Men</i> "Assessing "People Above" and "People Below" "	Michelle Lamont	Research Proposal Due
<b>SPRING BREAK- No Class on 3/12 and 3/14</b>				
3/19:	The Working Class	<i>Coming Up Short: Working Class Adulthood in Age of an Uncertainty</i> "Prisoners of the Present: Obstacles on the Road to Adulthood"	Jennifer Silva	
3/21:	The Working Class	<i>Coming Up Short : Working Class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty</i> "Insecure Intimacies: Love Marriage, and Family in the Risk Society"	Jennifer Silva	
3/26:	The Poor	<i>Evicted</i>	Matthew Desmond	Response Memo 2
3/28:	The Poor	<i>Evicted</i>	Matthew Desmond	

4/2:	The Poor	<i>\$2.00 A Day</i>	Kathryn Edin and Luke Shaefer	
4/4:	The Poor	<i>\$2.00 A Day</i>	Kathryn Edin and Luke Shaefer	
4/9:	Voices from Rural America	<i>Strangers In Their Own Land</i>	Arlie Hochschild	Response Memo 3
4/11:	Voices from Rural America	<i>Strangers In Their Own Land</i>	Arlie Hochschild	
4/16:	The Experiences of Black Elites	<i>Blue Chip Black "Status-Based Identities : Protecting and Reproducing Middle-Class Status"</i>		
4/18:	The Experiences of Black Elites	<i>Blue Chip Black "Race-and Class-Based Identities: Strategic Assimilation in Middle Class Suburbia"</i>		Project Update Due
4/23:	The Experiences of Black Elites	"Racing Through the Halls of Congress: The "Black Nod" as an Adaptive Strategy for Surviving in a Raced Institution"	James Jones	
4/25:	The Black Underclass	<i>The Minds of Marginalized Black Men</i>	Alford Young Jr.	
4/30:	The Black Underclass	<i>The Minds of Marginalized Black Men</i>	Alford Young Jr.	
5/7: 3:00-6PM	FINAL			Final Presentations and projects due