SOC6312H1: STRATIFICATION AND INEQUALITY

University of Toronto

Term: Winter 2019 – Lecture Date/Time: Thursday, 12-2pm – Location: Room 240, 725 Spadina

INSTRUCTOR
Geoff Wodtke
Office: Room 394, 725 Spadina Ave
Office Hours: Thurs 2-4pm or by appointment
Email: geoffrey.wodtke@utoronto.ca

DESCRIPTION
This course will examine the empirics, causes, and consequences of material inequalities in modern societies from an interdisciplinary perspective. More specifically, we will investigate some of the following questions. For example, how are material inequalities conceptualized and measured? How unevenly is income distributed in contemporary society? How have these inequalities changed over time? And what are the consequences of these changes? This course will cover basic concepts and facts as well as both classical and contemporary theoretical debates. Although much of the material will be comparative and pertain to modern societies in general, the emphasis will be on the U.S. and Canada.

READINGS
This is a reading intensive course. The required readings consist of books and articles available for loan through the University of Toronto library or for purchase through a variety of online retailers. Where possible, pdf copies of the assigned articles and book chapters are hyperlinked below in the course schedule or posted to the course website site. Extra copies of the assigned books are also available from the instructor for short-term loan.

EVALUATION

Reaction Essays
Each week, students will write a short reaction essay summarizing their thoughts about the assigned readings for that week. The essay should be no more than 1-2 pages in length, double-spaced, and in 12-point font. When drafting these essays, it may help to consider some of the following questions. What is the key argument or finding? What do you think of the author’s argument or finding? What are the reasons that you agree or disagree with the author’s argument or finding? These short reaction essays are due each week at the beginning of class, and altogether they count for 15 percent of your final grade. They will be evaluated on a credit versus no credit basis.
In-class Presentations
Each week, a different student or group of students will deliver a presentation to the class on the assigned readings for that week. The presentation should be about 50 minutes long and accompanied by slides or some other form of visual media. This assignment will count for 35 percent of your final grade. When creating these presentations, consider the following questions. What is the key argument or finding of the article? What data or evidence did the author use to support this argument or generate the finding? Is the author’s evidence compelling, or are there reasons to be skeptical? How might the study be improved to make a more convincing case? How does the article relate to others you have read for the course? Presentations will be delivered during the first half of the course and then followed by group discussion during the second half. Presentations will be evaluated for the extent to which they demonstrate knowledge of the assigned readings; the structure of their arguments about the merits and limitations of the readings; and the quality, clarity, and grammar of the slides and delivery.

Research Proposal
Students will write a research proposal that involves a question related to poverty or inequality. These proposals should be at least 15 pages long, double-spaced, and in 12-point font. They will count for 50 percent of your final grade. Students are strongly encouraged to develop an existing project or idea using material from this course or to use this assignment as an opportunity to launch a new empirical project. The proposal should include a well-defined research question, a description of the motivation for the study, a review of the relevant literature, and a brief outline of some proposed methods and/or data for answering the question of interest. Proposals will be evaluated for the extent to which they demonstrate knowledge of the selected topic; the structure of their arguments; and the quality and clarity of the writing. ***Paper copies of this assignment are due to me by April 18, 2019***

Grades
Grades for this course will be assigned as follows: reaction essays (15 percent), in-class presentations (35 percent), and research proposal (50 percent).

SCHEDULE

January 10, 2019: Income Inequality – Conceptualization, Measurement, and Empirics

Reading:

880.

January 17, 2019: Trends in Income Inequality – Supply-side Explanations

*Reading:*


January 24, 2019: Trends in Income Inequality – Demand-side Explanations

*Reading:*


January 31, 2019: Trends in Income Inequality – Institutional Explanations

Reading:


February 7, 2019: Trends in Income Inequality – Alternative Explanations

Reading:


February 14, 2019: The Consequences of Income Inequality

Reading:

Gilens, Martin. 2012. Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in
**February 21, 2019**: READING WEEK (NO CLASS)

**February 28, 2019**: Poverty – Conceptualization, Measurement, and Empirics

*Reading*


**March 7, 2019**: Extreme Poverty in Modern Societies

*Reading*


**March 14, 2019**: The Working Poor

*Reading*


**March 21, 2019**: Poverty and Housing Instability

*Reading*
March 28, 2019: The Spatial Concentration of Poverty

**Reading:**


April 4, 2019: Poverty and Public Policy

**Reading:**

