

2nd term seminar 2024-25

Classics and Currents of Social Stratification Research CCSS

Version 0.1 (some readings subject to change)

Given by Herman van de Werfhorst (Herman.vandeWerfhorst@eui.eu)

Contact: Monika.Rzemieniecka@eui.eu

This seminar aims to discuss core theories, concepts and studies in the field of social stratification and mobility, and studies how classical ideas are still (or are not) relevant in contemporary social scientific research. We will read and discuss both classical and contemporary works, and investigate the continuity and change in research problems across (mostly) the 20th and 21st centuries. We will furthermore posit the field of social stratification and mobility in the broader literature on inequalities in contemporary societies, including inequalities by race/ethnicity, gender, and location. Specific attention will be paid to education as a channel through which inequalities are manifested. We will also reach out to adjacent fields on inequality, in particular political philosophy, economics, and political science.

The discussions in the seminar take various forms. Sometimes, we discuss the broader field, and ask what are the broad trends in social stratification research and how do recent papers contribute to long-standing debates? In other occasions, we dig more deeply into the empirical approaches that papers present. We will also 'bring the outside world' into the seminar by linking social scientific scholarship to real world problems and situations, for instance in relation to a recent report that was published, or a news item that appears.

Participation:

Participants are expected to read the core readings of every week, and come well-prepared to class. Everyone should be able to explain the thrust of each paper. Should you be interested to read more about the topic of the week, there are some suggestions under "Additional readings". If you want to get suggestions for further reading on related topics, let me know and we can find a way to help you find your way.

Participants write a short reflection note each week (see below for instructions). These can be uploaded on the Mycourses website of the EUI (LINK), not later than Monday morning 11am on the day before the seminar. We use these notes as input for the

discussions we can have on the readings. Researchers are also asked to write a final paper and present this during the final mini-conference (instructions below).

Weekly reflection note:

Please write a short note of max 300 words to highlight issues you'd want to discuss in class, and/or additional research questions you think about in relation to the readings. We may give some specific questions in some weeks. We start in the first week, to be handed in on January 6th at 23:59h.

Final seminar paper

During the course, develop a final paper formulating the introduction and theoretical section of a new paper. Place your idea in the context of where the field comes from, and where (you hope) it is heading. Around 2000 words (max 2500), to be handed in on 25 March 2025. You may loosely relate the paper to your upcoming prospectus (but you don't have to), but it should be explicitly linked to the literature and topic of the seminar.

Presentation:

One session halfway the course is devoted to present the ideas for the seminar paper. Each participant presents their idea, and gets feedback from the group.

COURSE OUTLINE:

1. Introduction. Key concepts and theories of stratification research 7 January 2025

Core readings:

Review article of the main questions and findings of social mobility research:

Breen, Richard, and Jan O. Jonsson. 2005. "Inequality of Opportunity in Comparative Perspective: Recent Research on Educational Attainment and Social Mobility." *Annual Review of Sociology* 31(1):223–43. doi: [10.1146/annurev.soc.31.041304.122232](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.31.041304.122232).

A classic on conflict theory as an alternative to functionalist theory of stratification:

Collins, Randall. 1971. "Functional and Conflict Theories of Educational Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 36(6):1002–19. doi: [10.2307/2093761](https://doi.org/10.2307/2093761).

A paper presenting a new "Marxisant" post-liberal theory of stratification:

Jackson, Michelle, and David B. Grusky. 2018. "A Post-Liberal Theory of Stratification." *The British Journal of Sociology* 69(4):1096–1133. doi: [10.1111/1468-4446.12505](https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12505).

Lamont, Michèle, and Paul Pierson. 2019. "Inequality Generation & Persistence as Multidimensional Processes: An Interdisciplinary Agenda." *Daedalus* 148(3):5–18. doi: [10.1162/daed_a_01748](https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01748).

Additional readings (pick two):

Chapter discussing various research questions on social class, and highlights different approaches to social class:

Wright, Erik Olin. 2005. "Conclusion: If 'Class' Is the Answer, What Is the Question?" Pp. 180–92 in *Approaches to class analysis*, edited by E. O. Wright. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A classic on social class mobility, and a (critical) discussion of the functionalist liberal theory of industrialism (a.k.a. modernization theory):

Erikson, Robert, and John H. Goldthorpe. 1992. *The Constant Flux: A Study of Class Mobility in Industrial Societies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. (chapter 1: pp. 1-27).

Max Weber on social class, status and party.

Weber, Max. [1922]1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*. Univ of California Press. (Vol. 2, the section on Class, Status, Party, pp. 926-939).

Paper makes the case for occupations as micro-classes:

Weeden, Kim A., and David B. Grusky. 2005. "The Case for a New Class Map." *American Journal of Sociology* 111(1):141–212. doi: [10.1086/ajs.2005.111.issue-1](https://doi.org/10.1086/ajs.2005.111.issue-1).

This classic presents the status attainment model:

Blau, P. M., and O. D. Duncan. 1967. *The American Occupational Structure*. New York ; London: Wiley. (part of chapter 5: pp. 163-177).

A policy-oriented report by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound):

Eurofound. 2017. *Social Mobility in the EU*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

A Worldbank working paper with social mobility estimates from around the world:

van der Weide, Roy, Christoph Lakner, Daniel Gerszon Mahler, Ambar Narayan, and Rakesh Ramasubbaiah. 2021. *Intergenerational Mobility around the World. Working Paper*. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi: [10.1596/1813-9450-9707](https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-9707).

A study on long-term trends in social mobility mostly in 19th/20th century, interpreting from modernization theory:

Maas, Ineke, and Marco H. D. van Leeuwen. 2016. "Toward Open Societies? Trends in Male Intergenerational Class Mobility in European Countries during Industrialization." *American Journal of Sociology* 122(3):838–85. doi: [10.1086/689815](https://doi.org/10.1086/689815).

2. Education in the social mobility process

14 January 2025

Core readings:

Chapter of volume that presents state of the art “OED-triangle” class analysis:
Breen, Richard, and Walter Müller. 2020. *Education and Intergenerational Social Mobility in Europe and the United States*. Stanford University Press. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-19).

Book that presents the Direct Effect of Social Origin (DESO):
Bernardi, Fabrizio, and Gabriele Ballarino. 2016. *Education, Occupation and Social Origin: A Comparative Analysis of the Transmission of Socio-Economic Inequalities*. Edward Elgar Publishing. (chapter 1).

Article that advances on the claim that direct effect of social origin declines with more education (and instead increases again at the highest [post-graduate] level):
Torche, Florencia. 2011. “Is a College Degree Still the Great Equalizer? Intergenerational Mobility across Levels of Schooling in the United States.” *American Journal of Sociology* 117(3):763–807.

Article that studies the OED triangle in 40 countries:
van de Werfhorst, Herman G. 2024. “Is Meritocracy Not So Bad After All? Educational Expansion and Intergenerational Mobility in 40 Countries.” *American Sociological Review* 00031224241292352. doi: [10.1177/00031224241292352](https://doi.org/10.1177/00031224241292352).

Additional readings (pick one):

Article that develops a method to study compositional and effects changes:
Breen, Richard. 2010. “Educational Expansion and Social Mobility in the 20th Century.” *Social Forces* 89(2):365–88. doi: [10.1353/sof.2010.0076](https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2010.0076).

Article that explains the relevance of effects and compositions:
Bloome, Deirdre, Shauna Dyer, and Xiang Zhou. 2018. “Educational Inequality, Educational Expansion, and Intergenerational Income Persistence in the United States.” *American Sociological Review* 83(6):1215–53. doi: [10.1177/0003122418809374](https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418809374).

Friedman, Sam, and Daniel Laurison. 2020. *The Class Ceiling: Why It Pays to Be Privileged*. Policy Press.

3. 21 January 2025 Education, skills, and work

Chapter on the implications of various social processes for the validity of the meritocracy:

Solga, Heike. 2015. "The Social Investment State and the Myth of Meritocracy." Pp. 199–211 in *Combating Inequality: The Global North and South*, edited by A. Gallas, H. J. Herr, and C. Scherrer. London: Routledge.

A paper with a neoclassical economics perspective on the relevance of education and skills for economic growth:

Hanushek, Eric A., and Ludger Woessmann. 2012. "Do Better Schools Lead to More Growth? Cognitive Skills, Economic Outcomes, and Causation." *Journal of Economic Growth* 17(4):267–321. doi: [10.1007/s10887-012-9081-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10887-012-9081-x).

A paper that studies social closure of occupations, measured in various ways, as an alternative theory of labour markets to economic theories:

Weeden, Kim A. 2002. "Why Do Some Occupations Pay More than Others? Social Closure and Earnings Inequality in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(1):55–101. doi: [10.1086/344121](https://doi.org/10.1086/344121).

A presentation of three theoretical perspectives on school to work linkages:

van de Werfhorst, Herman G. 2011. "Skills, Positional Good or Social Closure? The Role of Education across Structural–Institutional Labour Market Settings." *Journal of Education and Work* 24(5):521–48. doi: [10.1080/13639080.2011.586994](https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2011.586994).

A philosophical contribution on positional goods in inequality research:

Brighouse, Harry, and Adam Swift. 2006. "Equality, Priority, and Positional Goods." *Ethics* 116(3):471–97. doi: [10.1086/500524](https://doi.org/10.1086/500524).

Additional readings (pick one):

Bills, David B. 2019. "The Problem of Meritocracy: The Belief in Achievement, Credentials and Justice" edited by R. Becker. *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Education* 88–105.

An overview paper of various mechanisms for the school-to-work relationship:

Bills, David B. 2003. "Credentials, Signals, and Screens: Explaining the Relationship Between Schooling and Job Assignment." *Review of Educational Research* 73(4):441–49. doi: [10.3102/00346543073004441](https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543073004441).

28 January there is no seminar

4. Labour relations and stratification **4 February 2025**

Godechot, Olivier, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, István Boza, Lasse Folke Henriksen, Are Skeie Hermansen, Feng Hou, Jiwook Jung, Naomi Kodama, Alena Křížková, Zoltán Lippényi, Silvia Maja Melzer, Eunmi Mun, Halil Sabanci, Max Thaning, Paula Apascaritei, Dustin Avent-Holt, Nina Bandelj, Alexis Baudour, David Cort, Marta M. Elvira, Gergely Hajdu, Aleksandra Kanjuo-Mrčela, Joseph King, Andrew Penner, Trond Petersen, Andreja Poje, Anthony Rainey, Mirna Safi, and Matthew Soener. 2024. "The Great Separation: Top Earner Segregation at Work in Advanced Capitalist Economies." *American Journal of Sociology* 130(2):439–95. Doi: [10.1086/731ds603](https://doi.org/10.1086/731ds603).

Muntaner, Carles. 2018. "Digital Platforms, Gig Economy, Precarious Employment, and the Invisible Hand of Social Class." *International Journal of Health Services* 48(4):597–600. Doi: [10.1177/0020731418801413](https://doi.org/10.1177/0020731418801413).

Ahlquist, John S. 2017. "Labor Unions, Political Representation, and Economic Inequality." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20(Volume 20, 2017):409–32. Doi: [10.1146/annurev-polisci-051215-023225](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051215-023225).

Additional readings (pick one):

Western, Bruce, and Jake Rosenfeld. 2011. "Unions, Norms, and the Rise in U.S. Wage Inequality." *American Sociological Review* 76(4):513–37. doi: [10.1177/0003122411414817](https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122411414817).

Streeck, Wolfgang. 2010. "12. The Sociology of Labor Markets and Trade Unions." Pp. 254–83 in *The Handbook of Economic Sociology, Second Edition*, edited by N. J. Smelser and R. Swedberg. Princeton University Press.

5. Midway presentation of paper ideas **11 February 2025**

6. Gender and Stratification **18 February 2025**

Core readings:

Review paper on women's position in labour markets

Charles, Maria. 2011. "A World of Difference: International Trends in Women's Economic Status." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37:355–71.

Factorial survey experiment on explaining the gender wage gap:

Auspurg, Katrin, Thomas Hinz, and Carsten Sauer. 2017. "Why Should Women Get Less? Evidence on the Gender Pay Gap from Multifactorial Survey Experiments." *American Sociological Review* 82(1):179–210. doi: [10.1177/0003122416683393](https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122416683393).

Life course events: Motherhood penalty as an example:

Gangl, Markus, and Andrea Ziefle. 2009. "Motherhood, Labor Force Behavior, and Women's Careers: An Empirical Assessment of the Wage Penalty for Motherhood in Britain, Germany, and the United States." *Demography* 46(2):341–69. doi: [10.1353/dem.0.0056](https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.0.0056).

A description of stalled trends towards gender equality:

England, Paula, Andrew Levine, and Emma Mishel. 2020. "Progress toward Gender Equality in the United States Has Slowed or Stalled." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117(13):6990–97. doi: [10.1073/pnas.1918891117](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1918891117).

Additional readings (pick one):

A "(somewhat) recent classic" on the motherhood penalty with fixed-effects design:
Budig, Michelle J., and Paula England. 2001. "The Wage Penalty for Motherhood." *American Sociological Review* 66(2):204–25. doi: [10.2307/2657415](https://doi.org/10.2307/2657415).

Paper using sequence analysis to associate whole life course patterns to other variables:

Aisenbrey, Silke, and Anette Fasang. 2017. "The Interplay of Work and Family Trajectories over the Life Course: Germany and the United States in Comparison." *American Journal of Sociology* 122(5):1448–84. doi: [10.1086/691128](https://doi.org/10.1086/691128).

7. Race/ethnicity and stratification
25 February 2025

Core readings:

A study using various methods to study racial/ethnic inequality in hiring practices:
Kang, Sonia K., Katherine A. DeCelles, András Tilcsik, and Sora Jun. 2016. "Whitened Résumés: Race and Self-Presentation in the Labor Market." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 61(3):469–502. doi: [10.1177/0001839216639577](https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839216639577).

Empirical study of labour market integration of migrants in Europe:

Gorodzeisky, Anastasia, and Moshe Semyonov. 2017. "Labor Force Participation, Unemployment and Occupational Attainment among Immigrants in West European Countries." *PLOS ONE* 12(5):e0176856. doi: [10.1371/journal.pone.0176856](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0176856).

Empirical study on selectivity of migration:

Ichou, Mathieu. 2014. "Who They Were There: Immigrants' Educational Selectivity and Their Children's Educational Attainment." *European Sociological Review* 30(6):750–65. doi: [10.1093/esr/jcu071](https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcu071).

Karlson, Kristian Bernt. 2023. "Black-White Trends in Intergenerational Educational Mobility: A Positional Analysis." *American Journal of Sociology* 128(6):1597–1649. doi: [10.1086/724884](https://doi.org/10.1086/724884).

Additional readings (pick one):

Meta-analysis of discrimination field experiments:

Quillian, Lincoln, Anthony Heath, Devah Pager, Arnfinn Midtbøen, Fenella Fleischmann, and Ole Hexel. 2019. "Do Some Countries Discriminate More than Others? Evidence from 97 Field Experiments of Racial Discrimination in Hiring." *Sociological Science* 6:467–96. doi: [10.15195/v6.a18](https://doi.org/10.15195/v6.a18).

**8. Comparative research on inequality and social stratification
4 March 2025**

Core readings:

Study that addresses the Great Gatsby Curve: does social mobility increase with less economic inequality?

Hertel, Florian R., and Olaf Groh-Samberg. 2019. "The Relation between Inequality and Intergenerational Class Mobility in 39 Countries." *American Sociological Review* 84(6):1099–1133. doi: [10.1177/0003122419885094](https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419885094).

Economics paper that compares intergenerational mobility in education, income and social class, for a number of countries:

Blanden, Jo. 2013. "Cross-Country Rankings in Intergenerational Mobility: A Comparison of Approaches from Economics and Sociology." *Journal of Economic Surveys* 27(1):38–73. doi: [10.1111/j.1467-6419.2011.00690.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6419.2011.00690.x).

Bol, Thijs, Christina Ciocca Eller, Herman G. van de Werfhorst, and Thomas A. DiPrete. 2019. "School-to-Work Linkages, Educational Mismatches, and Labor Market Outcomes." *American Sociological Review* 84(2):275–307. doi: [10.1177/0003122419836081](https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419836081).

A paper presenting inequalities over the life course in different welfare states:

Fasang, Anette Eva, Stefan Bastholm Andrade, Selçuk Bedük, Zafer Buyukkececi, and Aleksi Karhula. 2024. "Lives in Welfare States: Life Courses, Earnings Accumulation, and Relative Living Standards in Five European Countries." *American Journal of Sociology* 130(2):384–438. doi: [10.1086/730851](https://doi.org/10.1086/730851).

Additional readings (pick one):

Follow-up on the 'three generations of stratification research' paper that presents comparative research as one development in the field:

Treiman, Donald J., and Harry B. G. Ganzeboom. 2000. "The Fourth Generation of Comparative Stratification Research." Pp. 123–50 in *The International Handbook of Sociology*, edited by S. R. Quah and Sales, Arnaud. London: SAGE.

Important perspective to bridge context with microlevel mechanisms:

Barone, Carlo. 2019. "Towards an Education-Based Meritocracy?" *ISA E-Symposium for Sociology*.

9. The politics of inequality

11 March 2025

Core readings:

Political science study on the relationship between economic factors and attitudes towards immigration:

Dancygier, Rafaela M., and Michael J. Donnelly. 2013. "Sectoral Economies, Economic Contexts, and Attitudes toward Immigration." *The Journal of Politics* 75(1):17–35.

Two well-known scholars on the politics of inequality:

Kenworthy, Lane, and Jonas Pontusson. 2005. "Rising Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution in Affluent Countries." *Perspectives on Politics* 3(3):449–71. doi: [10.1017/S1537592705050292](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592705050292).

Comparative paper on the top-down and bottom-up reasonings of class voting:

Jansen, Giedo, Geoffrey Evans, and Nan Dirk de Graaf. 2013. "Class Voting and Left–Right Party Positions: A Comparative Study of 15 Western Democracies, 1960–2005." *Social Science Research* 42(2):376–400. doi: [10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.09.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.09.007).

Political economy of skill formation:

Bussemeyer, Marius R., and Julian L. Garritzmman. 2017. "Academic, Vocational or General? An Analysis of Public Opinion towards Education Policies with Evidence from a New Comparative Survey." *Journal of European Social Policy* 27(4):373–86. doi: [10.1177/0958928717728713](https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928717728713).

10. 18 March 2025, from 11:00-13:00

Final meeting, linking the various parts, final seminar paper discussions