

Department of Sociology
Faculty of Social Sciences
South Asian University

Social Stratification

(MA Compulsory Course)

Total Credits: 4

Objectives of the course

In all known societies we find a hierarchy of power, prestige, and property even though nature, forms, and intensity of the hierarchy differ from society to society. Human society can be thus viewed as divided into various strata with distinct institutions and practices underpinning them. The study of social stratification examines these strata and underlying processes, causes, and consequences. This course offers theoretical and empirical works that discuss different forms of social stratification in historical and contemporary societies. It examines how people are allocated into different strata and how a person's location in the strata, in turn, shapes their life chances and probability of enjoying socially-valued good things and services. In addition, we will also examine how social theorists, critics, and thinkers have imagined alternative to contemporary forms of social stratification. Finally, it offers case studies from South Asia and beyond that focus on how different forms of stratification interact with each other.

Unit I. Introduction and Universality of Stratification

In this unit, we discuss basic concepts and vocabularies used in the field of social stratification studies. We will also critically examine the claims that social stratification is inevitable and that it is the "efficient" way of organizing society.

Readings

Davis, Kingsley and Wilbert E. Moore. 1945. "Some Principles of Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 10(2):242-249.

Grusky, David. 2008. *Social Stratification: Race, Class, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*. Colorado: Westview Press [Chapter I].

Gupta, Dipankar. 1991. *Social Stratification*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press [Chapter I]

Simpson, Richard. 1956. "A Modification of the functional theory of Social Stratification." *Social Forces* 35(2):132-137.

Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1963. "Some Empirical Consequences of the Davis-Moore Theory of Stratification." *American Sociological Review* 28(5): 805-808.

Tumin, Melvin M. 1953. "Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis." *American Sociological Review* 18(4):387-394.

Unit II: Class Stratification

Unit II deals with forms of contemporary stratification, in particular (economic) class stratification. We will discuss similarities and differences between Karl Marx and Max Weber's approach to class analysis. We will also examine those theories under the rubric neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian theories of social stratification. This unit also deals with elite theories of stratification, which considerably expands the scope of class theories by incorporating entities such as corporate houses, military, political class, and elites.

Readings:

Gupta, Dipankar. 1991. *Social Stratification*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press [Selected chapters].

Marx, Karl. 2008. "Classes in Capitalism and Pre-Capitalism"; "Ideology and Class"; in *Social Stratification: Race, Class, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* edited by David Grusky. Colorado: Westview Press.

Mills, C Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press [selected chapters].

Mosca, Gaetano. 2008. "The Ruling Class." in *Social Stratification: Race, Class, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* edited by David Grusky. Colorado: Westview Press.

Parkin, Frank. 2008. "Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique." Pp. 162-177 in *Social Stratification: Race, Class, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* edited by David Grusky. Colorado: Westview Press.

Useem, Michael. 2008. "The Inner Circle." in *Social Stratification: Race, Class, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* edited by David Grusky. Colorado: Westview Press.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2001. "Class Conflict in the Capitalist World Economy." Pp. 128-131 in *Social Stratification: Race, Class, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* edited by David Grusky. Colorado: Westview Press.

Weber, Max. 1958. "Class, Status and Party." Pp. 180-195 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* edited and translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wright, Erik Olin. 2005. *Approaches to Class Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [Selected chapters]

Unit III: Ascriptive Processes

Despite modernity's promise that "traditional" loyalties and strata will wither away in the face of rationalization and modernization, "ascribed status" groups remain powerful forces in social life. Unit III examines social stratification and processes based on ascriptive statuses: sex and gender; race and ethnicity; and caste.

Readings:

Dumont, L. 1980. *Homo hierarchicus: the caste system and its implications*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Firestone, Shulamith. 2001. "The Dialect of Sex." Pp. 671-673 in *Social Stratification: Race, Class, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* edited by David Grusky. Colorado: Westview Press.

Gupta, Dipankar. 1991. *Social Stratification*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press [Selected chapters].

Hartman, Heidi. 2001. "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Toward a More Progressive Union." Pp. 673- 680 in *Social Stratification: Race, Class, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* edited by David Grusky. Colorado: Westview Press.

Mills, Mary Beth. 2003. "Gender and Inequality in the Global Labor Force." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32:41-62.

Milton, Yinger. 1985. "Ethnicity" *Annual Review of Sociology* 11:211-239.

Quigley, D. 1993. *The Interpretation of caste*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press [Selected chapters]

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 1997. "Interaction and the Conservation of Gender Inequality: Considering Employment." *American Sociological Review* 62(6):218-235.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2009. "Framed Before We Know It." *Gender & Society* 23:145-160.

West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender and Society* 1:125-151.

Winant, Howard. 2000. "Race and Race Theory." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:169-185.

Unit V: Case Studies

This unit focuses on case studies from South Asia and beyond. The goal is to examine intersection of state, economy, caste, class, gender, and ethnicity.

Readings:

Beteille, A. 1996 [1965]. *Caste, Class and Power*: Berkeley. University of California [Selected Chapters].

Chakravarti, U. 1995. "Gender, Caste, and Labor: Ideological and Material Structure of Widowhood." *Economic and Political Weekly*: 2248-2256.

Chakravarti, U. 1993. "Conceptualising Brahmanical patriarchy in early India: Gender, caste, class and state." *Economic and Political Weekly* 28:579-585.

Domhoff, G.W. 2006. *Who rules America? Power, politics, and social change*. New York: McGraw-Hill [Selected chapters]

Gunewardena, Nandini. 2010. "Bitter Cane: Gendered Fields of Power in Sri Lanka's Sugar Economy." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 35:371-396.

Gupta, Dipankar. 1991. *Social Stratification*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press [Selected chapters].

Gupta, Dipankar. 2000. *Interrogating caste: Understanding hierarchy and difference in Indian society*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India [Selected Chapters].

Kabeer, Naila and Simeen Mahmud. 2004. "Globalization, gender and poverty: Bangladeshi women workers in export and local markets." *Journal of International Development* 16:93-109.

Leung, A.S.M. 2003. "Feminism in transition: Chinese culture, ideology and the development of the women's movement in China." *Asia Pacific journal of management* 20:359-374.

Liechty, Mark. 2005. "Carnal Economies: The Commodification of Food and Sex in Kathmandu." *Cultural Anthropology* 20:1-38.

Madan, TN. 1998. "Coping with ethnicity in South Asia: Bangladesh, Punjab and Kashmir compared." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21:969-989.

Sharma, P.R. 1977. "Caste, Social Mobility and Sanskritization: A Study of Nepal's Old Legal Code." *Kailash* 4:277-299.

Sharma, PR. 1978. "Nepal: Hindu-tribal interface." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 6:1-13.

Shneiderman, Sara. 2009. Ethnic (P)reservations: Comparing Ethnic Activism in Nepal and India. In *Ethnic Activism and Civil Society in South Asia*, edited by David Gellner. New Delhi: Sage