

SOC 590 Labor Market Stratification: A Sociological Approach

Time and Location

Spring 2026
Mondays 3:05–5:35PM
Old Chemistry Building, Room 201, Main Campus

Instructor Information

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Office Hours Wednesdays 10–11:20AM or by appointment

Course Overview

This graduate seminar examines labor markets as socially embedded, institutionally organized, and stratified arenas of economic life. Rather than approaching labor markets solely as mechanisms of allocation or matching, the course treats them as social systems shaped by institutions, social identities, and family, spatial, and cultural contexts. Drawing on both canonical sociological research in labor market stratification and social mobility as well as influential and more interpretive perspectives from economic sociology, the course develops a shared analytical framework for understanding how labor markets are constituted, stabilized, and transformed. The opening portion of the course introduces perspectives through foundational discussions of social embeddedness of the (labor) market, the institutional and organizational structuring of labor markets, and inter- and intra-generational stratification processes, establishing a common conceptual vocabulary for subsequent analysis.

Building on this foundation, the course turns to a set of core mechanisms through which labor market outcomes are generated and reproduced. These include categorical inequalities such as gender and race, segregation of employment opportunities by geography and neighborhood, social networks and social capital, and cultural and moral evaluations of work and workers. Rather than treating these mechanisms as discrete or competing explanations, the course emphasizes their interaction and cumulative effects within labor markets. The latter portion of the course extends this analytical lens to contemporary transformations of labor markets, including migration and global labor integration, technological and algorithmic forms of governance, and financialization. Across these weeks, students engage with scholarship that combines formal, comparative, and quantitative analysis with ethnographic, historical, and interpretive approaches. The goal of the course is to equip students with a multi-layered sociological

understanding of labor markets as simultaneously durable structures of inequality and evolving social arrangements shaped by economic, social, and cultural change.

Requirements

Brief Responses (20%)

For selected weeks of the course, you will post a brief response to the readings. These brief responses (200–400 words) are an opportunity to raise questions you have about the readings, critiques of the articles, or simply something you'd like us to be sure to discuss in class. These responses should be informal and are meant to offer you an opportunity to pull your thoughts together prior to class. They also provide an opportunity to see what your classmates are thinking. They will be graded on a completion basis.

These responses will be due in the *Discussion* section on *Canvas*, Sunday at 11:59PM before the Monday class. In total, you should produce 7 brief responses. For students who are pursuing the research memo route below, brief responses should be completed in different weeks.

In-Depth Writing (60%)

I want this course to be useful and productive for each of you. Therefore, in addition to the readings and brief responses, you may choose one of the following larger projects.

1. Three in-depth reading memos on weeks of your choosing.
2. A 10–15 page (12-point font size, 1.5-spaced, excluding references) research project in which you either develop an empirical project (e.g., a pilot study) or a research proposal. Graduate students who are coming to this course with research ideas or who want to use the course to develop an idea may benefit from the second option.

For route 1, you will write a reading memo (1000–1200 words, excluding references) for three weeks of the course. You may choose any three weeks between Week 2 and Week 15. The purpose of the memo is to engage more deeply with the readings. These should not be summaries, but instead are intended to raise critiques, discuss how successful the readings are in answering their own questions, and explore what new research ideas the readings generate. You do not need to discuss all of the readings, but your memo should cover at least two. These will be due in the *Assignments* folder the day before that week's class, Sunday at 11:59PM.

For route 2, if you would like to use this class to develop your own research idea, you are encouraged to develop a research proposal. This will take the form of a final paper due at the end of the course (May 2). The only requirements for this paper are that it must (i) address a topic related to the broad area of labor market stratification and inequality, (ii) cite some of the readings from the class, and (iii) either present an empirical project (using data from, for example, a pilot study) or consist of a research proposal (i.e., the "front end" of a paper prior to data collection).

Discussion (20%)

During the first class, we will discuss the syllabus and the overview and goals of the course. After the second class, students will participate in leading off the discussion on at least one occasion. This will involve a short (10–15 minute) focused presentation of key analytic issues raised by the readings (no slides are expected, but they are welcome).

Format

As is typical of graduate seminars in sociology, this course is discussion-based. Most weeks will begin with a brief lecture (approximately 20 minutes) that introduces the broader questions, central debates, and intellectual development of the week's topic. Student participants will then lead the discussion of the *first two* assigned readings, when applicable. These discussions may include, but are not limited to, clarification of theoretical and conceptual arguments, as well as engagement with the methodological approaches and substantive findings of the readings. Discussion leaders may also draw on short written responses from the *Discussion* section—including their own—to help seed a productive and focused conversation. The discussion will then be opened to the remaining readings, which are typically more empirically oriented.

I am committed to fostering an inclusive and respectful classroom environment in which all students feel comfortable participating, asking questions, and engaging critically with course materials. Seminar participants are encouraged to disagree with one another and with the instructor, provided that critiques are offered in a respectful, professional, and constructive manner. If at any point you feel that classroom dynamics fall short of these goals, please raise your concerns so that we can address them collectively.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of artificial intelligence–based tools (e.g., large language models and generative AI systems) is strictly limited in this course. Students may not use AI tools to generate ideas, arguments, outlines, or written text for any discussions or writing tasks. All written work must reflect the student's own independent thinking, analysis, and writing. Limited use of AI is permitted only for mechanical assistance, such as grammar or spelling checks, and for asking clarifying questions about assigned readings (e.g., terminology or factual clarification), provided that such use does not substitute for close reading or original interpretation. Any use of AI beyond these narrow purposes is considered a violation of academic integrity. Students are responsible for ensuring that their work complies with this policy.

Schedule

A detailed schedule of topics and readings, by class session, appears below. You are expected to complete the *required readings* prior to each class session in order to prepare written responses and to engage in class discussions.

Week	Date	Topic
1	Jan 7	The Sociological Approach to Labor Market
2	Jan 12	Social Embeddedness of Labor Market
3	Jan 19	<i>No class scheduled</i>
4	Jan 26	Institution, Power, and Internal Labor Market
4	Feb 2	<i>Inter-generational Processes of Stratification (Family & Education)</i>
6	Feb 9	<i>Intra-generational Processes of Labor Market Stratification</i>
7	Feb 16	Gendered Labor Market
8	Feb 23	Racialized Labor Market
9	Mar 2	Neighborhood, Geography & the Segregation of Opportunities
10	Mar 9	<i>No class scheduled</i>
11	Mar 16	Social Capital and Network
12	Mar 23	Culture and Morality
13	Mar 30	Migration and the Global Labor Market
14	Apr 6	Technology and Algorithm
15	Apr 13	Financialization

Jan 7: The Sociological Approach to Labor Markets

In the first week, I will provide an overview of the course, outline its objectives, and highlight what the course will and will *not* cover. One reading is assigned to set the tone for the course by showing how labor market stratification is shaped by organizational contexts, thereby bridging traditional stratification research on inequality with economic sociological approaches to institutions and social structure.

Required readings

- (optional for the first class but encouraged; will revisit in the next week) Baron, James N., and William T. Bielby. 1980. "Bringing the Firms Back in: Stratification, Segmentation, and the Organization of Work." *American Sociological Review*, 45(5): 737–765.

Additional readings

- Kalleberg, Arne L., and Aage B. Sørensen. 1979. "The Sociology of Labor Markets." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 5: 351-379.

Jan 12: Social Embeddedness of Labor Market

One of the most important concepts in sociological studies of (labor) markets is embeddedness. While traditional social stratification research has often placed greater emphasis on distributions and outcomes, it is broadly consistent with—and in many cases implicitly relies on—the insight that individuals are not atomized agents, but are embedded in social relations, organizations, and cultural contexts. These social environments, particularly family structures, educational institutions, and workplaces, shape

access to information, opportunities, and constraints in the labor market. This week introduces embeddedness as a foundational theoretical perspective for understanding how labor markets are structured by social ties, organizational arrangements, and cultural alignment, and how these forms of embeddedness generate patterned inequalities in labor market outcomes.

Required readings

- Granovetter, Mark. 1985. "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness." *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(3): 481-510.
- (A revisit) Baron, James N., and William T. Bielby. 1980. "Bringing the Firms Back in: Stratification, Segmentation, and the Organization of Work." *American Sociological Review*, 45(5): 737-765.
- Goldberg, Amir, Sameer B. Srivastava, V. Govind Manian, William Monroe, and Christopher Potts. 2016. "Fitting In or Standing Out? The Tradeoffs of Structural and Cultural Embeddedness." *American Sociological Review*, 81(6): 1190-1222.

Additional readings

- Polanyi, Karl. 1957. "The Economy as Instituted Process." in *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*. 243-270.
- DiMaggio, Paul, and Filiz Garip. 2012. "Network Effects and Social Inequality." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 38(1): 93-118.
- (local optional) Ruef, Martin, Howard E. Aldrich, and Nancy M. Carter. 2003. "The Structure of Founding Teams: Homophily, Strong Ties, and Isolation Among US Entrepreneurs." *American Sociological Review*, 68(2): 195-222.
- Srivastava, Sameer B., Amir Goldberg, V. Govind Manian, and Christopher Potts. 2018. "Enculturation Trajectories: Language, Cultural Adaptation, and Individual Outcomes in Organizations." *Management Science*, 64(3): 1348-1364.

Jan 19: No class scheduled

Jan 26: Institution, Power, and Internal Labor Market

We continue our discussion of the embeddedness of labor markets by focusing on the institutional arrangements and power dynamics that shape the allocation of jobs and wages. This week examines how inequality is produced and maintained within organizations and occupations through relational processes as well as formal and informal institutions. We begin with Tomaskovic-Devey's (2014) relational approach to workplace inequality, which emphasizes that stratification is not lodged in positions or occupations alone, but emerges from the relationships between positions within organizational structures. We then examine the role of institutional mechanisms—including unions and norms (Western and Rosenfeld 2011), occupational closure (Weeden 2002), and internal versus external hiring practices (Bidwell 2011)—with particular attention to how power is exercised through organizational practices. We conclude with Chu and Davis (2016), which analyzes changes in corporate interlock networks and their implications for organizational governance and labor market stratification.

Required readings

- Tomaskovic-Devey, Donald. 2014. "The Relational Generation of Workplace Inequalities." *Social Currents*, 1(1): 51-73.
- Western, Bruce, and Jake Rosenfeld. 2011. "Unions, Norms, and the Rise in US Wage Inequality." *American Sociological Review*, 76(4): 513-537.
- 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.
- Bidwell, Matthew. 2011. "Paying More to Get Less: The Effects of External Hiring Versus Internal Mobility." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 56(3): 369-407.
- Chu, Johan, and Gerald F. Davis. 2016. "Who Killed the Inner Circle? The Decline of the American Corporate Interlock Network." *American Journal of Sociology*, 122(3): 714-754.

Feb 2: *Inter-generational Processes of Labor Market Stratification*

The study of *inter-generational* persistence and change in labor market advantages and disadvantages has been one of the most influential contributions of social stratification scholarship, generating extensive cross-disciplinary debate as well as major methodological innovations (e.g., mobility tables and log-linear models). We begin this inquiry with the foundational text of the field (the "Bible of stratification"), *The American Occupational Structure*, focusing on its formulation of the stratification process and its central insight that labor market attainment is fundamentally shaped by family background and educational institutions. Following Blau and Duncan's (1967) framework, we organize the discussion into two analytic steps. The first centers on the mediating role of education, examining how college attainment and graduate education can both mitigate and exacerbate the intergenerational persistence of advantage and disadvantage (education-to-occupation mobility; Torche 2011). The second examines the association between parental and offspring positions in the labor market (occupation-to-occupation mobility), with Engzell and Wilmers (2025) explicitly incorporating the role of firms, and Zhu and Grusky (2022) analyzing its consequences for gender segregation in the labor market. We conclude with Streib's (2020) analysis of downward intergenerational mobility—an underexplored dimension of stratification—and discuss the roles of culture and education in shaping processes of decline as well as reproduction.

Required readings

- Blau M. Peter and Otis Dudley Duncan. 1967. *The American Occupational Structure*. Free Press. *Chapter 5: The Process of Stratification*.
- 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.
- Engzell, Per, and Nathan Wilmers. 2025. "Firms and the Intergenerational Transmission of Labor Market Advantage." *American Journal of Sociology*, 131(2): 322-

370.

- Zhu, Ling, and David B. Grusky. 2022. "The Intergenerational Sources of the U-Turn in Gender Segregation." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 119(32): e2121439119.
- (local) Streib, Jessi. 2020. *Privilege Lost: Who Leaves the Upper Middle Class and How They Fall*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 1

Additional readings

- 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): 223-243.
- Hout, Michael. 1988. "More Universalism, Less Structural Mobility: The American Occupational Structure in the 1980s." *American Journal of Sociology*, 93(6): 1358-1400.
- Hout, Michael. 2018. "Americans' Occupational Status Reflects the Status of Both of Their Parents." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(38): 9527-9532.
- Engzell, Per, and Carina Mood. 2023. "Understanding Patterns and Trends in Income Mobility Through Multiverse Analysis." *American Sociological Review*, 88(4): 600-626.
- (for one of the best studies of wage returns to education and its heterogeneity, see) Brand, Jennie E., Jiahui Xu, Bernard Koch, and Pablo Geraldo. 2021. "Uncovering Sociological Effect Heterogeneity Using Tree-Based Machine Learning." *Sociological Methodology*, 51(2): 189-223.

Feb 9: Intra-generational Processes of Labor Market Stratification

While *inter*-generational processes have long been a hallmark of research in social stratification, *intra*-generational processes—the movement of workers over the course of their own life trajectories—received comparatively limited scholarly attention until more recent years. We begin this discussion with Spilerman's (1977) classic formulation of careers as a strategic link between the structural features of labor markets and individual socioeconomic attainment. We then turn to Kalleberg and Mouw (2018), which synthesizes recent developments in the literature and highlights the importance of organizational contexts and cross-national comparison in shaping career mobility. Lin et al. (2025) examine how workplace characteristics and the co-presence of workers from different segments of the occupational hierarchy influence intragenerational mobility processes, while Jarvis and Song (2017) extend the analysis to an even more granular level of career dynamics. Although Cheng and Park (2020) is not required, it represents a pioneering contribution that applies a network-based perspective to the study of career mobility.

Required readings

- Spilerman, Seymour. 1977. "Careers, Labor Market Structure, and Socioeconomic Achievement." *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(3): 551-593.

- (local) Kalleberg, Arne L., and Ted Mouw. 2018. "Occupations, Organizations, and Intragenerational Career Mobility." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 44(1): 283-303.
- Lin, Ken-Hou, Koit Hung, David Piccone, Elizabeth Weber Handwerker, Matthew Dey, and Théo Voldoire. 2025. "The Contagion of Labor: Linking Workplace Copresence and Occupational Mobility Patterns." *American Journal of Sociology*, 131(1): 200–237
- Jarvis, Benjamin F., and Xi Song. 2017. "Rising Intragenerational Occupational Mobility in the United States, 1969 to 2011." *American Sociological Review*, 82(3): 568-599.
- (local) Mouw, Ted, Arne L. Kalleberg, and Michael A. Schultz. 2024. "Stepping-Stone Versus Dead-End Jobs: Occupational Structure, Work Experience, and Mobility out of Low-Wage Jobs." *American Sociological Review*, 89(2): 298-345.

Additional readings

- (optional but recommended for a network approach of employment mobility) Cheng, Siwei, and Barum Park. 2020. "Flows and Boundaries: A Network Approach to Studying Occupational Mobility in the Labor Market." *American Journal of Sociology*, 126(3): 577-631.

Feb 16: Gendered Labor Market

Gender inequality, primarily manifested through occupational segregation and gender pay gaps, has long been a central concern in the study of labor market stratification. This week begins with the classic contribution by England (2010), which documents the historical convergence of gender inequality across multiple dimensions of employment and its subsequent slowing or stalling in recent decades. The central argument of this work is fundamentally cultural, a dimension that has often been underemphasized in subsequent research drawing on these findings. This perspective is further examined in more detail (including gender segregation in field of study) in Levanon and Grusky (2016) and Charles and Bradley (2009) in optional readings. The cultural account is challenged by Goldin (2014), who argues that the remaining gender pay gap is driven less by cultural or discriminatory processes than by labor markets' disproportionate rewards for long and inflexible hours (see also Cha and Weeden 2014 for a sociological formulation of this argument). Rivera and Tilcsik (2016) and Bertrand et al. (2010) further complicate this account by identifying intersecting processes related to social class and family formation, particularly motherhood (also see the classic work of Correll et al. 2007). The week concludes with Mize (2016), which examines labor market stratification by sexual orientation, extending the analysis beyond approaches that implicitly treat gender as a binary category.

Required readings

- England, Paula. 2010. "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled." *Gender & Society*, 24(2): 149-166.
- Goldin, Claudia. 2014. "A Grand Gender Convergence: Its Last Chapter." *Amer-*

ican Economic Review, 104(4): 1091-1119.

- Rivera, Lauren A., and András Tilcsik. 2016. "Class Advantage, Commitment Penalty: The Gendered Effect of Social Class Signals in an Elite Labor Market." *American Sociological Review*, 81(6): 1097-1131.
- Bertrand, Marianne, Claudia Goldin, and Lawrence F. Katz. 2010. "Dynamics of the Gender Gap for Young Professionals in the Financial and Corporate Sectors." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 2(3): 228-255.
- Mize, Trenton D. 2016. "Sexual Orientation in the Labor Market." *American Sociological Review* 81, no. 6 (2016): 1132-1160.

Additional readings

- Levanon, Asaf, and David B. Grusky. 2016. "The Persistence of Extreme Gender Segregation in the Twenty-First Century." *American Journal of Sociology*, 122(2): 573-619.
- Charles, Maria, and Karen Bradley. 2009. "Indulging our Gendered Selves? Sex Segregation by Field of Study in 44 Countries." *American Journal of Sociology*, 114(4): 924-976.
- Correll, Shelley J., Stephen Benard, and In Paik. 2007. "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?." *American Journal of Sociology*, 112(5): 1297-1338.
- Cha, Youngjoo, and Kim A. Weeden. 2014. "Overwork and the Slow Convergence in the Gender Gap in Wages." *American Sociological Review*, 79(3): 457-484.
- Reskin, Barbara, and Patricia A. Roos. 1990. *Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads into Male Occupations*. Temple University Press.
- Quadlin, Natasha. 2018. "The Mark of a Woman's Record: Gender and Academic Performance in Hiring." *American Sociological Review*, 83(2): 331-360.

Feb 23: Racialized Labor Market

Race and ethnicity constitute central axes of stratification that intersect with gender and play a significant role in shaping labor market inequality. This week begins with William Julius Wilson's classic account of racial inequality, which situates racial stratification within broader transformations of the system of production and the polity. Wilson's argument will be revisited later in the course through *When Work Disappears* (2011) in the week on neighborhoods and the segregation of opportunities. We then turn to Bloome (2014), which analyzes racial income inequality through the lens of intergenerational persistence in labor market advantages and disadvantages, alongside changes in family structure. The week also examines classic experimental research that identifies the causal effects of racial signals on labor market opportunities. We conclude with Matlon (2016) and Saperstein and Penner (2012), which complicate conventional accounts of racial stratification by demonstrating the fluidity of racial identity and classification in relation to individuals' labor market positions. Monk (2015), which brings in the concept of colorism in stratification studies, is optional but strongly recommended for students interested in perspectives that move beyond rigid racial categories.

Required readings

- Wilson, William Julius. 1978. *The Declining Significance of Race*. University of Chicago Press. *Chapter 1 and 7*.
- Bloome, Deirdre. 2014. "Racial Inequality Trends and the Intergenerational Persistence of Income and Family Structure." *American Sociological Review*, 79(6): 1196-1225.
- Matlon, Jordanna. 2016. "Racial Capitalism and the Crisis of Black Masculinity." *American Sociological Review*, 81(5): 1014-1038.
- Pager, Devah, Bart Bonikowski, and Bruce Western. 2009. "Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment." *American Sociological Review*, 74(5): 777-799.
- Saperstein, Aliya, and Andrew M. Penner. 2012. "Racial Fluidity and Inequality in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology*, 118(3): 676-727.
- (optional but encouraged) Monk, Ellis. 2015. "The Cost of Color: Skin Color, Discrimination, and Health Among African-Americans." *American Journal of Sociology*, 121(2): 396-444.

Additional readings

- Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(5): 937-975.
- Bertrand, Marianne, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2004. "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination." *American Economic Review*, 94(4): 991-1013.
- (recommended for studying Asian Americans) Lee, Jennifer, Kimberly Goyette, Xi Song, and Yu Xie. 2024. "Presumed Competent: The Strategic Adaptation of Asian Americans in Education and the Labor Market." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 50:455-474.
- (a fun read if you like pets!) Quadlin, Natasha, and Bradley Montgomery. 2022. "When a Name Gives You Pause: Racialized Names and Time to Adoption in a County Dog Shelter." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 85(2): 210-235.
- (for intersectionality) Browne, Irene, and Joya Misra. 2003. "The Intersection of Gender and Race in the Labor Market." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29(1): 487-513.

Mar 2: Neighborhood, Geography, and the Segregation of Opportunities

The study of neighborhoods is closely linked to the segregation of labor market opportunities along racial and socioeconomic lines. This week begins with William Julius Wilson's classic argument concerning the displacement of job opportunities from the urban core and the emergence of a new urban poverty class. We then turn to Sharkey and Elwert (2011), which examines the intergenerational persistence of labor market disadvantage—manifested in outcomes such as cognitive ability and human capital accumulation—using a multigenerational framework (explanations of the methodological details expected in lecture). The discussion proceeds to experimental evidence from the Moving to Opportunity program, which generated extensive debate over the magnitude and mechanisms of neighborhood effects on labor market inequality. Key

contributions to this debate include Clampet-Lundquist and Massey (2008), Le Barbanchon et al. (2008), and Sampson (2008), which synthesizes and evaluates competing interpretations. More recently, economists—most notably Chetty et al. (2014) and Chetty and Hendren (2018)—have played an increasingly influential role in disentangling neighborhood and geographic effects on intergenerational mobility and occupational attainment. The week concludes with an insightful reading that examines how the geographic separation of work and residence contributes to emerging forms of gender pay inequality.

Required readings

- Wilson, William Julius. 1997. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. Vintage. Chapter 1 and 2.
- Sharkey Patrick and Felix Elwert. 2011. “The Legacy of Disadvantage: Multi-Generational Neighborhood Effects on Cognitive Ability.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 116(6), 1934-1981.
- Sampson, Robert J. 2008. “Moving to Inequality: Neighborhood Effects and Experiments Meet Social Structure.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 114(1): 189-231.
- Chetty, Raj, and Nathaniel Hendren. 2018. “The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility: Childhood Exposure Effects.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 133(3): 1107-1162.
- Le Barbanchon, Thomas, Roland Rathelot, and Alexandra Roulet. 2021. “Gender Differences in Job Search: Trading Off Commute Against Wage.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136(1): 381-426.

Additional readings

- Clampet-Lundquist, Susan, and Douglas S. Massey. 2008. “Neighborhood Effects on Economic Self-Sufficiency: A Reconsideration of the Moving to Opportunity Experiment.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 114(1): 107-143.
- Ludwig, Jens, Jeffrey B. Liebman, Jeffrey R. Kling, Greg J. Duncan, Lawrence F. Katz, Ronald C. Kessler, and Lisa Sanbonmatsu. 2008. “What Can We Learn About Neighborhood Effects from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment?.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 114(1): 144-188.
- Chetty, Raj, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline, and Emmanuel Saez. 2014. “Where Is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the United States.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(4): 1553-1623.

Mar 9: No class scheduled

Mar 16: Social Capital and Network

The study of social networks and social capital in relation to occupational attainment and economic mobility represents one of the clearest points of convergence between labor market stratification research and core concerns in economic sociology, as exemplified by the classic formulation of the strength of weak ties. We begin with Bourdieu’s foundational discussion of social and cultural capital (2018) and Granovetter’s (1973)

highlight of weak ties, followed by Lin's (1999) work, which explicitly integrates social capital into the status-attainment model introduced earlier in the course. We then turn to two studies that situate social capital and network ties at the neighborhood level. The first uses large-scale online network data (Chetty et al. 2022) to examine multiple dimensions of social capital and their effects on intergenerational mobility. The second is Smith's (2007) ethnographic study of poor Black communities, which shows how job-holders may be reluctant to mobilize peer referrals even when social ties are present. We conclude with Ruef (2002), which shows that entrepreneurs—understood as essential actors in labor markets—generate innovation by balancing weak ties that provide access to diverse, non-redundant information with strong ties that supply the trust and support necessary for complex innovation.

Required readings

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forms of Capital." In Richardson, J. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, 241–58. Greenwood.
- Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6): 1360-1380.
- (local) Lin, Nan. 1999. "Social Networks and Status Attainment." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25(1): 467-487.
- Chetty, Raj et al. 2022. "Social Capital I: Measurement and Associations with Economic Mobility." *Nature*, 608(7921): 108-121.
- (local) Ruef, Martin. 2002. "Strong Ties, Weak Ties, and Islands: Structural and Cultural Predictors of Organizational Innovation." *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 11(3): 427-449.
- Smith, Sandra Susan. 2007. *Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism Among the Black Poor*. Russell Sage Foundation. Chapter 1 and 2.

Additional readings

- (local optional in implicit conversation with Chetty et al. 2022 with an additional dimension of neighborhood associations) Ruef, Martin, and Seok-Woo Kwon. 2016. "Neighborhood Associations and Social Capital." *Social Forces*, 95(1), no: 159-190.
- Burt, Ronald S. 2004. "Structural Holes and Good Ideas." *American Journal of Sociology*, 110(2):349-399.
- Ingram, Paul, and Peter W. Roberts. 2000. "Friendships Among Competitors in the Sydney Hotel Industry." *American Journal of Sociology*, 106(2): 387-423.
- Uzzi, Brian, and Jarrett Spiro. 2005. "Collaboration and Creativity: The Small World Problem." *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(2): 447-504.
- (local optional) Mouw, Ted. 2003. "Social Capital and Finding a Job: Do Contacts Matter?" *American Sociological Review*, 68(6): 868-898.
- Small, Mario Luis. 2009. *Unanticipated Gains: Origins of Network Inequality in Everyday Life*. Oxford University Press.
- Rajkumar, Karthik, Guillaume Saint-Jacques, Iavor Bojinov, Erik Brynjolfsson, and Sinan Aral. 2022. "A Causal Test of the Strength of Weak Ties." *Science*, 377(6612): 1304-1310.

Mar 23: Culture and Morality

The role of culture and morality in shaping labor market processes has received relatively limited attention in traditional stratification research but has become one of the central focuses in economic sociology. This week begins with Sennett's (2007) analysis of how contemporary global capitalism reshapes work and values, devaluing craftsmanship in favor of adaptability and fostering insecurity and a "specter of uselessness" through the erosion of stable career trajectories in favor of short-term employment arrangements. We then turn to Lamont (2009), who shows how working-class men deploy moral boundaries as symbolic resources to maintain dignity and to distinguish themselves from both the poor and the wealthy. The discussion next shifts to two firm-level empirical studies: Rivera (2012), which conceptualizes hiring as a process of cultural matching, and Corritore et al. (2020), which draw on Swidler's (1986) notion of culture as a "toolkit" to demonstrate how individual cultural repertoires are linked to work productivity and firm performance in financial markets. The week concludes with Cohn (2013), which provides experimental evidence on how occupational roles can shape cultural orientations and norms of honesty.

Required readings

- Sennett, Richard. 2007. *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. Yale University Press. *Introduction and Chapter 2*
- Lamont, Michèle. 2009. *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration*. Harvard University Press. *Introduction and Chapter 1*
- Rivera, Lauren A. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review*, 77(6): 999-1022.
- Corritore, Matthew, Amir Goldberg, and Sameer B. Srivastava. 2020. "Duality in Diversity: How Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Cultural Heterogeneity Relate to Firm Performance." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 65(2): 359-394.
- Cohn, Alain, Ernst Fehr, and Michel André Maréchal. 2014. "Business Culture and Dishonesty in the Banking Industry." *Nature*, 516(7529): 86-89.

Additional readings

- (Recommended as a classic introduction to the analysis of moralized markets as cultural phenomena and moral projects in their own right; labor markets can be understood as one such case.) Fourcade, Marion, and Kieran Healy. 2007. "Moral Views of Market Society." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33(1): 285-311.
- Kiviat, Barbara, and Carly R. Knight. 2025. "Seeing Like a Company or a Customer: Selective Empathy in Pricing." *American Sociological Review*, 0(0).
- Thompson, Edward P. 1971. "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century." *Past and Present*, 50(1): 76-136.
- Mears, Ashley. 2015. "Working for Free in the VIP: Relational Work and the Production of Consent." *American Sociological Review*, 80(6): 1099-1122.
- Sharone, Ofer. 2013. *Flawed System/Flawed Self: Job Searching and Unemployment Experiences*. University of Chicago Press, 2013. *Chapter 2 and 3*.

Mar 30: Migration and the Global Labor Market

Migration has been a central theme in social stratification research since Blau and Duncan's (1967) analysis of geographic mobility and migration in *The American Occupational Structure*. We begin with selections from this foundational work and discuss its implications for understanding geography and spatial segregation, building on themes introduced in the previous week. We then turn to Hochschild's classic analysis of global care chains (2015), which examines how emotional and caregiving labor is transferred from poorer to richer countries, generating emotional surplus value for receiving societies while producing new forms of inequality and loss in sending communities. The argument that migrants occupy distinct positions in low-paying secondary sectors of the labor market, as developed in Piore's (1979) theory of segmented labor markets, is subsequently revisited. This perspective is contrasted with Card's (2009) empirical analysis, which contends that claims about immigration as a major driver of rising wage inequality are overstated. We conclude with Ye's (2025) pioneering study of undocumented immigrants and their wage trajectories. Students interested in broader debates on immigrant assimilation are encouraged to read Portes and Zhou (1993).

Required readings

- Piore, Michael J. 1979. *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labour in Industrial Societies*. Cambridge University Press. *Chapter 2: The Jobs*.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2015. "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value." In *Justice, Politics, and the Family*, 249-261. Routledge.
- Card, David. 2009. "Immigration and Inequality." *American Economic Review*, 99(2): 1-21.
- Damm, Anna P. 2009. "Ethnic Enclaves and Immigrant Labor Market Outcomes: Quasi-Experimental Evidence." *Journal of Labor Economics*, 27(2): 281-314.
- Hall, Matthew, Giulia Olivero, and Shannon Gleeson. 2025. "The Impact of Undocumented Status in the United States: Empirical Challenges and New Frontiers." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 51:291-309.

Additional readings

- Borjas, George J. 1985. "Assimilation, Changes in Cohort Quality, and the Earnings of Immigrants." *Journal of Labor Economics*, 3(4): 463-489.
- Portes, Alejandro, and Min Zhou. 1993. "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 530(1): 74-96.
- Parreñas, Rhacel. 2015. *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work*. Stanford University Press.
- Zeng, D., Wu, X. and Chen, W. 2023. "Spatial Concentration and the Social Distance of Migrants: Evidence from Shanghai." *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, 9(1): 72-94.

Apr 6: Technology and Algorithm

While scholars of social stratification have often ceded the study of new technologies

and their labor market effects to economists, economic sociologists have emphasized a more fundamental transformation of market stratification through algorithmic classification and control. We begin with the classic economic account by Goldin and Katz (2008), which argues that the impact of technological change on labor market inequality depends on the relative pace of skill-biased technological change and the expansion of educational attainment. (Students interested in this line of work are encouraged to further explore research on skill-biased and routine-biased technological change and their implications for labor market polarization in optional readings). We then turn to Fourcade and Healy's (2017) sociological intervention, which shifts the focus from how workers use technology to how new technologies increasingly classify and sort workers using large-scale digital traces. This process produces a new, rationalized form of market stratification, in which the technological inscription of social and economic capital generates differentiated opportunities and life chances. We next examine recent work on the labor market impacts of large language models, a class of technologies that relies heavily on digital data, focusing on Eloundou et al. (2024), which assesses which occupations are likely—and unlikely—to be affected by generative AI and the implications for emerging patterns of labor market polarization. The week concludes with Rosenblat and Stark's (2016) study of algorithmic management and labor control, alongside Vallas and Schor's (2020) synthesis of sociological research on the gig and platform economy.

Required readings

- Goldin, Claudia and Lawrence Katz. 2008. [“The Race Between Education and Technology.”](#) In Grusky et al. *Social Stratification* (4th ed.). 73-80.
- Fourcade, Marion, and Kieran Healy. 2017. [“Seeing Like a Market.”](#) *Socio-Economic Review*, 15(1): 9-29.
 - (local optional) A more recent and summarizing reading can be found in Fourcade, Marion, and Kieran Healy. Forthcoming. [“Rationalized Stratification.”](#) In Grusky et al. *Social Stratification* (5th ed.).
- Hershbein, Brad and Lisa B. Kahn. 2018. [“Do Recessions Accelerate Routine-Biased Technological Change? Evidence from Vacancy Postings”.](#) *American Economic Review*, 108(7): 1737-1772.
- Maxim Massenkoff and Peter McCrory. 2026. [“Labor Market Impacts of AI: A New Measure and Early Evidence.”](#) *Anthropic Economic Research*.
 - (OpenAI's earlier summary is optional) Eloundou, Tyna, Sam Manning, Pamela Mishkin, and Daniel Rock. 2024. [“GPTs Are GPTs: Labor Market Impact Potential of LLMs.”](#) *Science*, 384(6702): 1306-1308.
- Rosenblat, Alex, and Luke Stark. 2016. [“Algorithmic Labor and Information Asymmetries: A Case Study of Uber's Drivers.”](#) *International Journal of Communication*, 10: 27.

Additional readings

- Goos, Maarten, Alan Manning, and Anna Salomons. 2014. [“Explaining Job Polarization: Routine-Biased Technological Change and Offshoring.”](#) *American Economic Review*, 104(8): 2509-2526.

- Card, David, and John E. DiNardo. 2002. "Skill-Biased Technological Change and Rising Wage Inequality: Some Problems and Puzzles." *Journal of Labor Economics*, 20(4): 733-783.
- Dwyer, Rachel E. 2013. "The Care Economy? Gender, Economic Restructuring, and Job Polarization in the US Labor Market." *American Sociological Review*, 78(3): 390-416.
- Kellogg, Katherine C., Melissa A. Valentine, and Angele Christin. 2020. "Algorithms at Work: The New Contested Terrain of Control." *Academy of Management Annals*, 14(1): 366-410.
- Krippner, Greta R. 2023. "Unmasked: A History of the Individualization of Risk." *Sociological Theory*, 41(2): 83-104.
- Vallas, Steven, and Juliet B. Schor. 2020. "What Do Platforms Do? Understanding the Gig Economy." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46(1): 273-294.

Apr 13: Financialization

The final seminar examines financialization as a changing mode of economic growth and wealth accumulation and its structuring role in contemporary systems of social stratification. We begin with Krippner's (2012) influential account, which argues that financialization and the deregulation of financial markets were not the product of a coherent political project, but rather emerged through a series of policy responses to recurring economic crises, including credit scarcity, inflation, and fiscal deficits. We then turn to two studies that examine the consequences of financialization for inequality: Lin and Tomaskovic-Devey (2013), which analyzes industry-level variation in wage inequality, and Fligstein and Goldstein (2015), which focuses on household-level financial behaviors and exposure to financial risk. The discussion continues with Goldstein and Knight (2023), which demonstrates how a growing culture of financial investment has generated new axes of stratification among workers who are differentially exposed to financial markets through retirement plans and asset-based compensation. The seminar concludes with Pattillo and Gabriela (2021), which documents what the authors term "layaway freedom" as a form of coercive financialization imposed on marginal actors in the labor market (noting, historically, that "inmate" was classified as an occupation in the official 1950 census classification).

Required readings

- Krippner, Greta R. 2012. *Capitalizing on Crisis: The Political Origins of the Rise of Finance*. Harvard University Press. Chapter 1 and 4.
- Lin, Ken-Hou, and Donald Tomaskovic-Devey. 2013. "Financialization and US Income Inequality, 1970–2008." *American Journal of Sociology*, 118(5), 1284-1329.
- Fligstein, Neil, and Adam Goldstein. 2015. "The Emergence of a Finance Culture in American Households, 1989–2007." *Socio-Economic Review*, 13(3): 575-601.
- Goldstein, Adam, and Carly R. Knight. 2023. "Boom, Bust, Repeat: Financial Market Participation and Cycles of Speculation." *American Journal of Sociology*, 128(5), 1430-1471.
- Pattillo, Mary, and Gabriela Kirk. 2021. "Layaway Freedom: Coercive Finan-

cialization in the Criminal Legal System." *American Journal of Sociology*, 126(4), 889-930.

Additional readings

- Davis, Gerald F., and Suntae Kim. 2015. "Financialization of the Economy." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 41(1), 203-221.
- Dwyer, Rachel E. 2018. "Credit, Debt, and Inequality." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 44(1), 237-261.