

WWS 594

Psychological Studies of Inequality

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Class Hours: T 1:30 - 4:30pm
Class Room: Green Hall 1-N-11

Course Description

This PhD course focuses on psychological processes related to group-based inequality and relevant policy-making.

Class inequality and the burgeoning psychological literature on this phenomenon is the organizing focus of this class. We will also examine the intersections of class with identities like race, nationality, and gender, using research that questions how these intersections introduce, reinforce, and concentrate inequality. The half-term class is organized around thematic questions. We begin with questions about whether traces of class distinctions may be found in basic psychological phenomena such as memory, attention, emotion, nonverbal communication, and social cognition. We then question the relationship between inequality and psychological phenomena such as: ideology, group-based identity, and moral, relational, and cultural behaviors and processes. We review some research programs on the policy-relevant psychological effects of inequality, and we finish with a “view from the top”—psychological research on the privileged and the powerful. Throughout, we will discuss broader traditions of psychological theory and method, particularly the experimental method and its utility for examining policy ideas about reducing inequality or alleviating some of its negative effects.

Course requirements

The course has two kinds of written assignments (discussion comments and project bibliography), and two kinds of participation requirements (leaders and regular participation).

Written Assignments

Written assignments are due the first meeting of the course and weekly for the remaining five

weeks, but each student may skip one week's written assignment without need for explanation (but do inform the instructor that she should not expect your assignment that week). Of course, all students will do the course readings before every scheduled class meeting and will be fully prepared to participate in the discussion.

A. Discussion comments

Each student will write five short discussion comments. For each reading, please address what's interesting, convincing, unconvincing, confusing, or pointless and why. Please keep any summary of the article to a minimum (no more than two sentences per reading). Please write only one brief paragraph per reading (often, less is more). In a final paragraph, bring together some themes or connective thoughts from the readings, or address any policy relevance you may see. Your total comments should not exceed 1200 words. In class, use your comments, summaries, and objections as a basis for your contributions. Completed assignments should be submitted by email to Prof. Paluck by 9pm on the Monday before the Tuesday class for which they are assigned.

B. Project bibliography

Students will write an annotated bibliography related to their research and policy interests. You should include ten or so references from journals and books in psychological science. This bibliography should include the major scholarly contributions as well as recent developments. It should also reflect the main questions and controversies that have arisen in the research area. The goal is for students to gain an understanding of the literature on their topic outside of their current expertise. The project bibliography is due by dean's date at the end of the semester, submitted by email to the instructor.

Sources:

- Start with an article from a review journal such as Annual Review of Psychology, Psychological Bulletin, Social Psychology and Personality Review, Current Directions in Psychological Science.
- You could also start with a journal special issue collecting articles on policy-related topics: Journal of Social Issues, Policy Insights from Behavioral and Brain Sciences, Psychological Science in the Public Interest.
- Use these journals to branch out; top empirical journals are Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Psychological Science, Social Psychology and Personality Science, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin.
- Use other journals with caution; check with the psychology librarian or ask the instructor.

Discussion Leaders

In each session (except in the first one) students will team up to act as discussion leaders for the class following the professor's presentation (the latter will usually give a broad overview of the topic and of the state of the literature). In a brief presentation (not to exceed fifteen minutes) student discussion leaders will identify common themes for discussion and raise questions arising

from the readings. Following the presentation they will help facilitate discussion of the readings' arguments and findings. Discussion leaders should coordinate with each other before class.

At the start of the course, we will circulate a roster to allow signups to allocate discussion leader assignments to each student over the weeks of the class. You will be permitted to trade assignments with each other, but a trade will be official only after approved by the course instructor.

Readings

Week 01, 11/04 - 11/08: Are class distinctions truly “inscribed in the mind”? (Bourdieu 1984). The psychology of scarcity, the psychology and biology of poverty, stereotypes and social perception of social class, and stereotype “threat” (the phenomenon, the antidotes, and ongoing research questions).

- Haushofer, J., & Fehr, E. (2014). **On the psychology of poverty**. *Science*, 344 (6184), 862-867.
- Shah, A. K., Mullainathan, S., & Shafir, E. (2012). **Some consequences of having too little**. *Science*, 338(6107), 682-685.
- Kraus, M. W., Park, J. W., & Tan, J. J. (2017). **Signs of social class: The experience of economic inequality in everyday life**. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12(3), 422-435. **Please read selection: 422 to the first paragraph of 427.**
- Lewis Jr, N., & Michalak, N. M. (2019). **Has Stereotype Threat Dissipated Over Time? A Cross-Temporal Meta-Analysis**. **Please read selection: 1 to page 13.**

Week 02, 11/11 - 11/15: How does identity and conflict between identities reinforce economic inequality? Intersections with class and other identities: race, nationality, geography. Misperception, conflict, and affiliation within and across group lines.

- Côté, S., Kraus, M. W., Carpenter, N. C., Piff, P. K., Beermann, U., & Keltner, D. (2017). **Social affiliation in same-class and cross-class interactions**. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 146, 269-285.
- Dambrun, M., Taylor, D. M., McDonald, D. A., Crush, J., & Méot, A. (2006). **The relative deprivation-gratification continuum and the attitudes of South Africans toward immigrants: A test of the V-curve hypothesis**. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91(6), 1032.
- Kraus, M. W., Rucker, J. M., & Richeson, J. A. (2017). **Americans misperceive racial economic equality**. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(39), 10324-10331
- Destin, M., Rheinschmidt-Same, M., & Richeson, J. A. (2017). **Status-based identity: A conceptual approach integrating the social psychological study of socioeconomic status and identity**. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12(2), 270-289.
- Côté, S., House, J., & Willer, R. (2015). **High economic inequality leads higher income individuals to be less generous**. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 112, 15838-15843.

Week 03, 11/18 - 11/22: Does ideology reinforce economic inequality? The role of social dominance, egalitarianism, system justification. "Basic" human conceptions of fairness and cooperation, and the developmental influence of market and cultural processes.

- Kteily, N. S., Sheehy-Skeffington, J., & Ho, A. K. (2017). **Hierarchy in the eye of the beholder:(Anti-) egalitarianism shapes perceived levels of social inequality.** *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 112(1), 136.
- Jost, J. T., Banaji, M. R., & Nosek, B. A. (2004). **A decade of system justification theory: Accumulated evidence of conscious and unconscious bolstering of the status quo.** *Political psychology*, 25(6), 881-919.
- Blake, P. R., McAuliffe, K., Corbit, J., Callaghan, T. C., Barry, O., Bowie, A., ... & Wrangham, R. (2015). **The ontogeny of fairness in seven societies.** *Nature*, 528(7581), 258.
- Henrich, J., Boyd, R., Bowles, S., Camerer, C., Fehr, E., Gintis, H., ... & Henrich, N. S. (2005). **"Economic man" in cross-cultural perspective: Behavioral experiments in 15 small-scale societies.** *Behavioral and brain sciences*, 28(6), 795-815. **Please read selection: up to page 814 (peer commentary optional)**
- Pratto, F., & Walker, A. (2004). The bases of gendered power. In *The Psychology of Gender*, Ed Alice Eagly, Anne Beall, & Robert Sternberg. NY: Guilford Press.

Week 04, 11/25 - 11/29: How do moral, relational, and cultural processes concentrate inequality? Class conceptualized as culture in psychology; social norms; hierarchy and authority; normatively pro- and anti-social behavior and its antecedents.

- Miller, D. T. (1999). **The norm of self-interest.** *American Psychologist*, 54(12), 1053.
- Stephens, N. M., Fryberg, S. A., Markus, H. R., Johnson, C. S., & Covarrubias, R. (2012). **Unseen disadvantage: How the American universities' focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students.** *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102, 1178-1197.
- Stephens, N. M., Markus, H. R., & Townsend, S. S. M. (2007). **Choice as an act of meaning: The case of social class.** *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 93(5), 814-830. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.93.5.814
- Piff, P. K., & Robinson, A. R. (2017). Social class and prosocial behavior: Current evidence, caveats, and questions. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 18, 6-10.
- Wu, S.J. & Paluck, E.L. (under review). Participatory practices at work change attitudes and behavior toward societal authority and justice.

Week 05, 12/02 - 12/06: What are the policy-relevant psychological effects of benefiting from or suffering from group inequality? Some recent research programs on: policing, human trafficking, interpersonal negotiations.

- Correll, J., Hudson, S., Guillermo, S., & Ma, D. (2014). *The police officer's dilemma: A decade of research on racial bias in the decision to shoot*. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 8(5), 201-213.
- Voigt, R., Camp, N. P., Prabhakaran, V., Hamilton, W. L., Hetey, R. C., Griffiths, C. M., ... & Eberhardt, J. L. (2017). *Language from police body camera footage shows racial disparities in officer respect*. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(25), 6521-6526.
- Mo, C. H. (2018). *Perceived Relative Deprivation and Risk: An Aspiration-Based Model of Human Trafficking Vulnerability*. *Political Behavior*, 40(1), 247-277.
- Kraus, M. W., & Mendes, W. B. (2014). *Sartorial symbols of social class elicit class-consistent behavioral and physiological responses: A dyadic approach*. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 143(6), 2330.

Week 06, 12/09 - 12/13: What is the "view from the top"? Research on the privileged classes and the powerful. More perspectives on power and its effects; entitlement, sense of control, meaning-making in the social sphere, and attempts to ask the powerful to relinquish power or to "see" disadvantage.

- Galinsky, A. D., Magee, J. C., Inesi, M. E., & Gruenfeld, D. H. (2006). *Power and perspectives not taken*. *Psychological Science*, 17(12), 1068-1074.
- Piff, P. K. (2014). *Wealth and the inflated self: Class, entitlement, and narcissism*. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40(1), 34-43.
- Kraus, M. W., Piff, P. K., & Keltner, D. (2009). *Social class, sense of control, and social explanation*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(6), 992-1004.
- Annan, J., Boyer, C., Cooper, J., Heise, L., & Paluck, E.L. (under review). *Religious counsel can motivate men to cede power and reduce intimate partner violence: Experimental evidence from Uganda*.
- Mo, C. H., & Conn, K. M. (2018). *When Do the Advantaged See the Disadvantages of Others? A Quasi-Experimental Study of National Service*. *American Political Science Review*, 112(4), 721-741.