Sociology 928, Fall 2014
Place Stratification

Wednesdays, 1:00 – 3:40 pm
Bolton Hall 757

Prof. Marcus Britton
NWQ, Room 7428
Office Hours: Thursday, 1 – 3 pm

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Course Description:

Place is a notoriously slippery concept. Moreover, the growing importance of telecommunications, computerization, and globalization has raised serious questions about its continued relevance in contemporary societies. And yet, mechanisms for “putting people in their place” arguably remain a fundamental aspect of social organization. These mechanisms allocate people to both positions in social hierarchies and locations in geographic space, not infrequently dramatically transforming the physical world in the process. This course focuses on the structure and development of hierarchical relationships between and among places, as well as the consequences of these relationships for broader systems of social stratification. We will devote particularly close attention to places such as more and less urbanized regions, metropolitan areas, cities and towns, and neighborhoods, especially but not exclusively in the United States. Students will play an active role in identifying relevant case studies and comparisons of specific places and introducing them into class discussions. Moreover, you will have the opportunity to write a research proposal, literature review or policy analysis paper that grapples with some aspect of place stratification that is of particular interest to you.

Required Texts:

None! All assigned readings will be posted to D2L.

Assignments & Grading

Class Participation: I expect each student in the class to complete all the assigned readings each week and to participate actively in the class discussion.

Response Papers: Each week, each student will be required to submit a two-page (double spaced) response paper reflecting on the assigned readings for that week at the beginning of class. While response papers do not need to present a formal argument, they should include coherent reflections that demonstrate that you have completed the assigned readings and given them some thought. Each response paper may include brief statements of what you see as the major themes that cut across the assigned readings, findings you thought were particularly surprising or significant, and critiques of specific authors’ logic, method or interpretation of evidence. Your response paper should end with 2 or 3 questions that will inform our class discussion.
Discussion Facilitation: During our first class meeting, I will ask each student to sign up to be the co-facilitator for one afternoon during the semester. As co-facilitator, you will initiate the afternoon’s discussion by making a brief, informal presentation in which you provide a broad overview of the assigned readings and your reaction to them. Your informal presentation should NOT summarize each reading in detail, but instead identify general themes and present critiques, either of arguments or interpretations offered by specific authors or of the overall approach to the topic taken by the assigned readings as whole. Your goals should be to get the discussion going—so don’t hesitate to be creative and even provocative. Toward that end, you should produce a brief handout that includes at least five discussion questions about each assigned reading. You will then take a lead role (in collaboration with me) in keeping the discussion going throughout the class period. Perhaps most importantly, it will be your responsibility to supply a snack to be shared by the class (nothing elaborate, just a bag of chips, some cookies, or whatever).

Presentations on Places: Also during our first class meeting, I will ask each student to commit to giving a short presentation during one class (on a different date than when he/she will serve as discussion co-facilitator). This presentation will present a critical summary of one to three scholarly sources that shed light on the relationship between (at least) two specific places. In most cases, these places should be metropolitan regions, cities/towns, or neighborhoods, either in the United States or in some other national context(s). Other interpretations of place may be acceptable, but should be discussed with me well in advance of your scheduled presentation. I will also expect you to identify and discuss the appropriateness of your scholarly sources with me at least two weeks prior to your presentation. Your presentation should be approximately 15 minutes and should explicitly relate your critical summary of your sources to the themes we have discussed in the course. Be prepared to answer questions from your classmates after presenting.

Final Paper: My goal with the final paper assignment is to give you an opportunity to reflect more deeply on some of the assigned readings from the semester, delve further into one of the topics we covered (or a closely related one), and make progress on a major task that you are required to complete to finish your degree (your master’s proposal or thesis, your dissertation, etc.). Accordingly, you may select some variation on one the following options: a literature review, a “white paper”/policy recommendation, or research proposal. Whichever option you choose, the final product should be approximately 15 double-spaced pages and should include complete documentation of your sources using ASA or APA format for both in-text citations and your reference list. Your cited sources should include, but not be limited to, several of the assigned readings from the course. Due dates associated with this assignment are as follows:

1) You must submit a one-page prospectus outlying your topic and approach at the beginning of class on November 12th. You should also be prepared to discuss your topic briefly with the class.

2) Your final paper must be uploaded to the Dropbox on D2L by noon on Wednesday, December 17th.
In addition, I strongly encourage you to submit a rough draft of your paper well in advance of the deadline, ideally by Friday, December 19th. I will do my best to provide feedback on your draft if I receive it after that, but I cannot guarantee that you will receive a detailed review.

**Grading Scale**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Facilitation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Places Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Papers</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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95% = A; 90% = A-; 87% = B+; 85% = B; 80% = B-; 70% = C-; 60% = D-; >60% = F

**Course Policies**

*Attendance and class participation.* As noted above, it is essential that you come to each class meeting prepared, having completed all the assigned readings and prepared to participate actively in class discussion. **Attendance is required. Repeated absences and/or failure to participate in discussions will result in a lower grade.**

*Classroom environment.* Many of the assigned readings express strong, controversial political views, explicitly or otherwise. I encourage you to challenge the perspectives offered by the assigned readings, by me, and by your fellow students. However, please voice opinions, disagreements and criticism in a respectful tone; I will make every effort to do the same. We all have a responsibility to ensure that the classroom environment provides both a venue for the free exchange of ideas and perspectives and a welcoming, respectful environment.

*Grading:* Except in cases of medical or family emergency, late work will not be accepted. Please come and talk to me in the event of such an emergency. **Grade appeals must be submitted in writing.**

**University Policies**

*Disability Accommodation:* To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the UWM Accessibility Resource Center and inform me as soon as possible about special accommodations so that I can best meet your needs. **Accessibility Resource Center, Mitchell Hall Room 112, (414) 229-6287, [http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/](http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/)**

*Academic Integrity:* Plagiarism, cheating, and other misconduct are serious violations of UWM policies and ethical obligations, and I will regard them as such. You are guilty of cheating whenever you present as your own work something that you did not do. You are also guilty of cheating if you help someone else to cheat. Buying, copying, or quoting work without proper citation will result in serious consequences. If you are unsure about how to cite your sources correctly (particularly for the final paper), please discuss your concerns with me directly.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I: Introductions & Basic Concepts

Week 1: Introductions (9/3)

Week 2: What are Places? (9/10)

Required readings:


Suggested supplementary readings:


**Week 3: Stratification and Inequality (9/17)**

**Required readings:**


**Suggested supplementary readings:**


Part II: Multilevel Systems of Place Stratification—From Nation-State to Neighborhood

Week 4: Global & National Urban Hierarchies, “Rural” Hinterlands? (9/24)

Required readings:


Suggested supplementary readings:


Week 5: Interregional Competition and Urban Political Economy (10/1)

Required readings:


Suggested supplementary reading:

General perspectives on interregional competition & urban governance:


Case studies, Milwaukee and Chicago:


Other case studies:


**Week 6: Metropolitan Sprawl and Socio-economic Segregation (10/8)**

*Required readings:*


*Suggested supplementary reading:*


University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. See http://www4.uwm.edu/ced/publications/sprawl99.cfm for the “Executive Summary.”


Week 7: Racial Residential Segregation in a Multiethnic Society (10/15)

Required readings:


Suggested supplementary readings:


**Note:** The above includes chapters on the following cities: Tokyo, Beijing, Hong Kong, Taipei, São Paulo, Paris, Copenhagen, Budapest, Madrid, Istanbul and Athens.


**Week 8: Racial Residential Segregation and Concentrated Disadvantage (10/22)**

**Required readings:**


**Suggested supplementary readings:**


**Week 9: Place Mobility and Contextual Mobility (10/29)**


*Suggested supplementary readings:*


Part III: Neighborhood Effects

Week 10: Conceptualizing Neighborhood Effects (11/5)


Week 11: Neighborhoods, Violence, Crime & Punishment (11/12)

Required reading:


Suggested supplementary readings:


Week 12: Neighborhoods, Housing and Schools (11/19)

Required readings:


Suggested supplementary reading:


Week 13: Unhealthy Places and Environmental Justice (12/3)


*Suggested supplementary reading:*


**Part IV: Responses to Place Stratification**

**Week 14: Responding to Place Stratification – Collective Violence and Urban Social Movements (12/10)**

*Required readings:*

(1) Academic articles & books


*(2) News reports:*


Supplementary Readings:

(1) Academic articles & books:


(2) News reports:


Websites:


Interoccupy.net: [http://interoccupy.net](http://interoccupy.net)

Occupy Wall Street: [http://occupywallst.org/](http://occupywallst.org/)

Occupy Sandy Recovery website: [http://interoccupy.net/occupysandy/](http://interoccupy.net/occupysandy/)