Course Description:
In this graduate-level seminar, we will explore how one's position in the social structure affects individual-level experiences and characteristics, including physical and psychological health, attitudes, personality, interpersonal relationships, and achievement patterns. The social structure and personality (SSP) paradigm does not focus solely on documenting these patterns; rather, we will explore the social psychological pathways that link characteristics such as race, class, gender, citizenship, occupation, birth cohort, and family roles with individual-level outcomes. We will begin the semester with an exploration of the theoretical precursors of the SSP paradigm, including Marx, Durkheim, and Inkeles. The major emphasis will be on recent empirical studies, including work of Kohn & Schooler, House, and Elder.

Prerequisites:
Graduate standing or permission of the instructor is required. Some familiarity with quantitative research methods is recommended. A handout distributed on the first day of class provides a basic review of statistical methodologies; students with limited backgrounds in statistics should familiarize themselves with this information.

Readings Assignments:
Most required and recommended readings are available on the CD distributed on the first day of class (CD). Several book chapters and journal articles are available via electronic and paper reserves at the Social Sciences Library (L). “Recommended” books and articles are not required for the course, yet may enrich your knowledge of the Social Structure and Personality paradigm. For the most part, these articles are either reference/background sources, or recent controversial works in the area of SSP. These reference sources also may help you to narrow your interests, as you develop your course paper.

Overview of Course Requirements and Grading:
The course is organized as a seminar. I will provide an overview of each week's readings, but instruction also will take place in the context of student discussions, presentations, and exchanges focused on the readings. Course grades will be based on three major requirements. I will not give grades of “incomplete.”

(1) Leading a class discussion (10 percent of class grade).
Each week, a student or pair of students will be responsible for leading discussion. The student leader(s) may base the discussion on the questions submitted by class participants, or may design a discussion that incorporates both assigned readings and his/her own research interests. Each week, class members will email 2-3 discussion questions to the discussion leader and professor, no later than 5 p.m. Monday on the day prior to class.
(2) **Participation in weekly discussion (20 percent of class grade).**  
This grade reflects participation in discussion, and the quality of the questions submitted each week. Students should read carefully so that they come to class with both insightful comments and questions. Students who read materials that are not on the syllabus but that are germane to the discussion should feel free to contribute this knowledge to the discussion; the class as a whole will benefit from the specialized knowledge of all participants.

(3) **Final research paper or proposal (70 percent of class grade).**  
The main course requirement is the preparation of an original research paper or research proposal (about 20-25 pages, double spaced). Each student will present a brief synopsis of their research project during the two final class sessions. Paper topics and methodology will be chosen in consultation with the instructor. The paper should define a research question, review relevant prior studies, and either: (1) analyze suitable data, and present the findings and their implications (research paper) or (2) propose a detailed strategy and justification for conducting an original research project (research proposal). Students are encouraged to use this class project to develop a master’s thesis, conference paper, dissertation prospectus, or journal article. Completion of the paper/proposal will proceed in four steps.

1. Each student will submit a brief (2-3 page) proposal **by the start of class on February 27.** This brief proposal should describe your research question, the data or methodology to be used, and the analyses to be undertaken. You are encouraged to meet with me early in the semester to discuss your research plan.
2. **OPTIONAL.** A first draft of the paper/proposal is due **by 5 p.m. on April 27 or Friday May 4.** Feedback will be given to students by Monday April 30 or May 7.
3. Each student will make a 15 minute presentation to the class on **May 1 or 8.** The deadline for your paper first draft is contingent upon the date of your class presentation.
4. The final draft of the paper/proposal is due **no later than Monday May 14 at noon.**

For students planning to conduct secondary data analyses, many data sets are available through University of Michigan’s Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (http://www.icpsr.umich.edu). Among these data sets are the Adolescent Health Study (AD-Health), General Social Survey (GSS), Health and Retirement Survey (HRS), Longitudinal Study of Aging (LSOA), Midlife in the United States (MIDUS), Monitoring the Future, National Longitudinal Study (NLS), National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA), National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) and the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS). Information on accessing data sets will be made available during the early weeks of the seminar.
READING SCHEDULE

January 23: Welcome and Introductions.


Recommended Readings


Historical Roots of SSP and Recent Innovations

February 6: “National Character” and Cultural Difference Studies


Recommended Readings


February 13: Macrolevel Economic, Social, and Normative Change

(L) Durkheim, Emile. 1951. Suicide. New York: Free Press. Book I: Introduction (pp. 41-53); Book II: Ch. 5 “Anomic Suicide” (pp. 241-276); Book III: Ch. 1 “The Social Element of Suicide” (pp. 297-325).


(L) Newman, Katherine S. 1988. Falling from Grace: The Experience of Downward Mobility in the American Middle Class. New York: Vintage Press. Ch. 2 “The Extent of Downward Mobility” (pp. 20-41) and Ch. 4 “The Downwardly Mobile Family” (pp.95-142).

Recommended Readings


February 20: “Generational” or Cohort Studies
(L) Elder, Glen H., Jr., 1974. Children of the Great Depression: Social Change in Life Experience. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1 “The Depression Experience” (pp. 3-24), Ch. 2 “Adaptations to Economic Deprivation” (pp. 24-40), Ch. 9 “Personality in Adult Experience” (pp. 240-268).


Recommended Readings


**Linking Structure and Personality: What are the Social Psychological Pathways?**

**February 27: Role Theory (Paper proposal due)**


**Recommended Readings**


**March 6: Reference Group Theories**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Social Structural Factors and Personal Outcomes**

**March 13: Early Influences**


(L) Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis. 1976. Schooling in Capitalist America. New York: Basic Books. Ch. 1 “Beyond the Educational Frontier: The Great American Dream Freeze,” (pp. 3-17) Ch. 2 “Broken Promises: School Reform in Retrospect” (pp. 18-49), and Ch. 5 “Education and Personal Development: The Long Shadow of Work” (pp. 125-148).


*Recommended Readings*


**March 20: Individual-Level Change and Crises**


**Recommended Readings**


**March 27: Ambition and Aspiration**


**Recommended Readings**


**April 3: Enjoy your spring break!**

**April 10: Occupational Characteristics and Work Conditions**


Recommended Readings


April 17: Race


Recommended Readings


April 24: Gender


Recommended Readings


May 1 and May 8: Student paper presentations

HAVE A WONDERFUL SUMMER!