

Social Inequalities and Social Exclusion

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Course description

Social inequality is a core area in sociology and, unfortunately, a universal feature of human societies. This module examines the nature, causes, forms and consequences of social inequality.

In the first section, the course introduces to key sociological approaches to social inequality and difference in terms of social variables, including class and status, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, and examines the ways in which social inequalities are produced, reproduced and experienced.

In the second section, the course critically examines “social exclusion”, as the new “paradigm” of understanding social inequality. It addresses the question of whether the concept of social exclusion is a useful way of understanding social inequality, discusses the relationship between “social exclusion” and alternative concepts and debates, such as poverty, relative deprivation, social discrimination and vulnerability, analyses the basic characteristics of social exclusion and discusses the methodological problems arising when it comes to the empirical investigation of the phenomenon.

The course concludes with a consideration of the role of social policy in creating and alleviating inequality, poverty and social exclusion, with particular reference to interventions at the EU and national level.

Objectives

The aims of the course are:

- To critically examine classical and contemporary sociological theories on social stratification and inequality
- To critically examine “social exclusion” as a new paradigm of understanding social inequalities
- To critically examine the role of social policy in creating and alleviating inequality, poverty and social exclusion
- To encourage students to read critically, to think analytically and to write clearly

Learning outcomes

By the end of this module students should be able:

- To demonstrate knowledge on theoretical conceptions of social stratification and inequality
- To analyse and apply classical and contemporary theoretical perspectives to the various dimensions of social inequality
 - To demonstrate a critical understanding of social exclusion, its causes, factors, forms and consequences.
 - To demonstrate an understanding of the intersectionality of issues of inequality and social exclusion, especially along the dimensions of class, gender, race and ethnicity
 - To understand the structural forces that shape, maintain, and reinforce inequality and social exclusion in society
 - To consider ways in which social inequality and social exclusion might be reduced through public policies

Structure:

8 three-hour lectures.

Students' Assessment

Written examination. The students may improve their final grade by up to 2 points writing an essay of 1500 words max.

Bibliography:

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