Rethinking Class Analysis

Lecturer


Course description

The social stratification of a society can be most straightforwardly defined as its internal division into a hierarchy of distinct social groups, each having distinct life chances and a distinct style of life (John Scott 1996). Historically the concept of ‘class’ has been the most frequently used concept when describing stratification in modern societies. However, the question is if ‘class’ is still a relevant concept. Have modern advanced societies such as the Danish developed into a society where ‘class’ has little if any relevance for individual or social identity? Some sociologists have claimed that class is ceasing to have any relevance and that other divisions such as gender, ethnicity, age and sexuality are much more important. ‘Class’ is dead it is claimed. However according to e.g. John Scott the question ‘Is class dead?’ is not one that can be resolved through the mere accumulation of empirical data, as an answer to the question depends on what is meant by ‘class’? Hence if we want to discuss the theoretical as well as the empirical relevance of social stratification and the concept of class for societies today, it is necessary to discuss the usage of ‘class’ as a concept, how it has been operationalized in empirical research and to what extend there is a need to renew/rethink social stratification approaches and class analysis. Participants will be introduced to current debates about stratification and class with a particular weight on recent British contributors representing different theoretical and empirical approaches to class analysis today. Examples of Danish, British and American research will be used to discuss social mobility and how different kinds of resources affect ones life chances in terms of education, employment, health and crime. To what extend does children reproduce their parents’ social positions? Is it still meaningful to talk of a working class, a middle class, and an upper class? Do some groups in our society still have very limited opportunities to acquire the necessary resources to rise above their initial social positions? The purpose of the seminar is to give participants insights into the different theoretical approaches to analyses of social stratification and enable them to assess the presented theories as well as the advantages and disadvantages to their empirical application. This should provide the participants with analytical tools to proceed with their own empirical analyses e.g. in other courses or in their dissertation.

The objectives of the course are:

1. To introduce the students to theories of social stratification, class analysis, and social mobility.

2. Enable the students to assess the presented theories and their advantages and disadvantages to empirical application.

3. To provide the participants with analytical tools to proceed with their own empirical analyses e.g. in other courses or in their dissertation.
## Time schedule and course outline

Time of teaching is from 9.15 to 10.45 and from 11.00 to 12.30. The course will be a mixture of lectures and oral presentations from the students. First day of teaching is Wednesday the 1st of August.

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<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Lecture topics</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Social stratification, class analysis, and social mobility</td>
<td>Stratification and power: reconceptualization of the Weberian argument</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
<td>Governing social marginality</td>
<td>Punishing the poor</td>
<td>Balvig (2004)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Exam preparation</th>
<th>We will arrange a two hour lesson where the students can ask questions before the exam</th>
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### Textbooks and reading materials


Students can access the scientific papers via Statsbiblioteket as long as they are on the Campus network. The rest of the texts will be available on AULA. Further reading instructions are forthcoming.

### Exam

Six hour, closed book written exam on date scheduled by the university (likely August 24th).

### References


Bengtson, T. T. (forthcoming). Learning to become a 'gangster'?


