

Spring 2017

SOCIOLOGY 401 B

5 Credits (I&S) : SLN 19266

Monday & Wednesday 11:30-1:20

THE NEW INEQUALITY:

Prosperity, Poverty, and Power in the Contemporary U.S.



- How does power work in 21st century America?
- Is America more or less of a meritocracy than it was in the past?
- Are advances in technology likely to change the future of stratification in the U.S.?

This course examines “who gets what” in 21st century America. We will see not only how income, wealth, housing, health, and control over one’s time are unequally distributed, but how individuals or groups differ in access (to other people, to information, to educational opportunities) and in the protection of rights and liberties (e.g., personal safety in public space; the ability to travel).

How can we understand trends in poverty, employment, debt, and various forms of disenfranchisement? Can we find echoes of today’s situation in the past? What does the latest social science have to say about centers of power and prosperity in American society? What roles do policy, social movements, or other forms of activism play in challenging inequalities, and how successful are they? And what about the future? This class will consider recent breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and other technologies that portend the automation of knowledge work, and what the path of climate change suggests for the future of inequalities in the US and abroad.

SOC 401B is offered for writing (W) credit, and will require a take-home midterm, a poster presentation, and a 10-15 page research paper. Among other readings, students will discuss the books *Evicted* by Matthew Desmond and *Strangers in Their Own Land* by Arlie Hochschild.

**For more info, contact Instructor Julie Brines
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