

SOS4100 – Social Inequality in the 21st Century: Egalitarian Norway in Comparative Perspective

Course content

This course provides a comprehensive presentation of key dimensions of social inequality in contemporary societies in the early 21st century. We address core issues such as economic inequality and intergenerational mobility, immigration and ethnic inequalities, and gender inequality in education and work.

The aim of the course is two-fold:

- First, we provide students with an empirical understanding of how patterns of social inequality in the Norwegian welfare state society compares to other rich, developed countries.
- Second, we provide students with a set of theoretical perspectives and analytical tools to make sense of both cross-national variations in inequality patterns at the macro level and the mechanisms that shape social regularities and individual outcomes at the micro level.

The course will address these and related questions:

- What are driving forces behind increasing socioeconomic inequalities in Western societies since the latter quarter of the 20th century?
- To what extent is the impact of "the birth lottery" – i.e., which parents you are born to – on future life chances and social mobility related to the level of economic inequality in a given society?
- Do ethnic inequalities relative to native majority populations tend to widen or narrow when we compare immigrants who arrived as adults to their native-born children, and what are the key mechanisms behind immigrant socioeconomic integration?
- Why do men still earn higher wages than women despite the fact that women now complete more education than men in most developed countries?

Throughout, we focus on how societal institutions, such as a strong welfare state, shape countries' level and dynamics of inequality related to socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender.

The syllabus primarily focuses on recent empirical studies and state-of-the-art literature reviews but also covers some foundational theoretical texts. We emphasize the link between good research questions and suitable empirical research designs to address these, which will be useful for later work on your master thesis.

The course will provide you with knowledge that is highly relevant for your employment opportunities, such as employers' hiring policy, authority relations, organizational analysis, economic growth, human capital, and equal opportunities.

Learning outcome

Knowledge

This course will provide you with:

- An overview of recent empirical studies of inequality related to ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status
- An analytical perspective on the links between sociological theories on inequality and empirical research

Skills

You will be able to:

- Extract the most central concepts from a scientific article
- Provide a critical discussion on choice of theory and analytical design, given the topic of investigation
- Provide a critical discussion on the topics covered in the empirical studies included in the syllabus
- Give a written and oral presentation of an empirical study, and provide a justification of your choice design solid empirical studies of social inequalities
- Develop a master thesis topic associated with this course

Competences

- Gain a deeper respect for the distinction between academic knowledge based on solid empirical evidence versus perceptions based on opinions and other personal perceptions
- Gain a deeper respect for ethical considerations involved in scientific work in general and studies of social inequality in particular

Admission

Students who are admitted to study programmes at UiO must each semester register which courses and exams they wish to sign up for [in Studentweb](#).

If you are not already enrolled as a student at UiO, please see our information about [admission requirements and procedures](#).

This course is not available for single course students.

This course is a part of the Master's programme in Sociology. The course is also open for master's students on Lektorprogrammet and Organisasjon, ledelse og arbeid at UiO.

Students enrolled in other Master's Degree Programmes can, on application, be admitted to the course as [guest student](#) if this is cleared by their own study programme. Admission as a guest student will vary from semester to semester, as guest students will be allotted any vacant seats on the course.

Teaching

- The course will be organized as 12 seminars including lectures and discussions two-three times a week.
- The lectures are given in English.
- In relation to the semester paper, each student is offered one hour individual counselling (including counselling and preparation).

Examination

- Term paper

Assessment is based on a term paper (4000 Words). Grades are awarded on a scale from A to F, where A is the best grade and F is a fail.

- [Guidelines for the term paper](#)
- [An introduction to writing of assignments in sociology](#)
- [Previous exams](#)

Written examination

~~The written examination is conducted in the digital examination system Inspera. You will need to familiarize yourself with the digital examination arrangements in Inspera.~~

~~[Read more about written examinations using Inspera.](#)~~

Submit assignments in Inspera

You submit your assignment in the digital examination system Inspera. [Read more about how to submit assignments in Inspera.](#)

Use of sources and citation

You should familiarize yourself with the rules that apply to [the use of sources and citations](#). If you violate the rules, you may be suspected of [cheating/attempted cheating](#).

~~Examination support material~~

~~Students may use dictionaries at this exam. Dictionaries must be handed in before the examination. Please read [regulations for dictionaries permitted at the examination](#).~~

Language of examination

You may write your examination in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish or English.

Grading scale

Grades are awarded on a scale from A to F, where A is the best grade and F is a fail. Read more about [the grading system](#).

Explanations and appeals

It is recommended to request an explanation of your grade before you decide to appeal.

Appeal

- [Appeal against grades](#)
- [Complaint about formal exam errors](#)

Explanation

The deadline to request an explanation is one week after the grade is published. For oral and practical examinations, the deadline is immediately after you have received your grade.

The explanation should normally be given within two weeks after you have asked for it. The examiner decides whether the explanation is to be given in writing or verbally.

Ask for explanation of your grade in this course:

- [Term paper](#)
- ~~[School exam](#)~~
- ~~[Post-poned school exam](#)~~

Resit an examination

If you are sick or have another valid reason for not attending the regular exam, we offer a [postponed exam](#) later in the same semester.

See also our information about [resitting an exam](#).

Withdrawal from an examination

It is possible to take the exam up to 3 times. If you [withdraw from the exam](#) after the deadline or during the exam, this will be counted as an examination attempt.

Special examination arrangements

Application form, deadline and requirements for [special examination arrangements](#).

Evaluation

The course is subject to continuous evaluation. At regular intervals we also ask students to participate in a more comprehensive evaluation.