

SOS2950 – Social Science Genetics

Course content

This course introduces you to genetically informed social science, with a focus on how genetic factors and environments that siblings do not share influence social inequality. You will learn how to think critically and creatively about the complex interplay between genetics, randomness/luck and social structures in modern societies.

In this course, we will explore questions such as:

- Should sociologists care about genetics?
- How do genes influence education, income, social mobility, and other topics of sociological interest?
- Are siblings in the same family that similar? Or are “randomness” and non-shared environments more important?
- How do social forces such as schools, the welfare state, socio-economic status mediate or moderate the impact of genes?
- Are there normative implications of genetically informed social science and chance events?
- Can genes eat your homework?

You will learn about the theoretical framework of gene-environment interplay, which acknowledges that both genetic and environmental influences depend on one another. We will cover a breadth of readings from various fields in the social sciences, which will allow you to see sociology with a new lens.

This course will expose you to a research field that is moving at break-neck speed following the sequencing of the human genome. As is often the case with new knowledge following technological advances, we have more questions than answers regarding how we as societies should interpret this newfound knowledge.

Learning outcomes

- Ability to critically evaluate findings (and dissemination) from genetically informed research in relation to traditional sociological approaches
- Have an overview of what a non-shared environment is, i.e. luck, randomness, epigenetics, and birth order, and their role in our lives
- Apply concepts from social science genetics to answer sociological questions
- Reflect on the ethical, normative, and policy issues related to genetics and social science
- A broader understanding of sociology as a scientific discipline, and why sociological perspectives benefit other disciplines working with complex human data
- Grasp how genetics operate in relation to different social structures
- Attain a basic understanding of causality from a philosophy of science viewpoint

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](#).

Teaching

- Lectures

Examination

- 4 hours written school exam

Language of examination

The examination text is given in English. You may submit your response 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

- [Explanation of grades and appeals](#)

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](#).