Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to cross-national comparative research, with a focus on socio-economic outcomes and on the policies and institutions that shape those outcomes. The course will draw heavily on research based on data available through LIS, a data archive located in Luxembourg, with a satellite office here at the Graduate Center. (See https://www.lisdatacenter.org for details).

LIS contains two main micro-databases. The Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database includes 300+ micro-datasets from over 50 high- and middle-income countries. These datasets contain comprehensive measures of income, employment, and household characteristics. A smaller, companion dataset – the Luxembourg Wealth Study (LWS) Database – provides microdata on assets and debt. Since the mid-1980s, the LIS data have been used by more than 8000 researchers – mostly sociologists, economists, and political scientists – to analyze cross-country and over-time variation in diverse outcomes such as poverty, income inequality, employment status, wage patterns, gender inequality and family structure. Many researchers have combined LIS’ microdata with various macro-datasets to study, for example, the effects of national social or labor market policies on socio-economic outcomes, or to link socio-economic variation to national-level outcomes such as immigration, child well-being, health status, political attitudes and voting behavior.

The course has two goals: (1) to review and synthesize 30+ years of research results based on the LIS data; and (2) to enable students with programming skills (in SAS, SPSS, Stata, or R) to carry out and complete an original piece of empirical research. (The LIS and LWS data are accessed through an internet-based “remote-execution system”. All students are permitted to use the LIS microdata at no cost and without limit.)

The course will require a semester-long research project. Students with programming skills (which will not be taught in the course) will be encouraged to complete an empirical analysis, reported in a term paper. Ideally, these term papers will be circulated as LIS/LWS Working Papers – and ultimately in published venues. Students without programming skills will have the option to write a synthetic research paper. A minimum requirement is the capacity to read articles that present quantitative research results.
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1 Note that class will not meet on April 7 or April 14.
LOGISTICS

● Instructor:

Janet Gornick
Professor of Political Science and Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY
Director, Stone Center on Socio-Economic Inequality (Graduate Center, CUNY)
Director, US Office of LIS: Cross-National Data Center in Luxembourg

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Stone Center on Socio-Economic Inequality
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Office hours will be held at the Graduate Center and will be by appointment.

● Assignments:

Semester-long research project culminating in a final paper 60%
Weekly summaries of class readings (classes #3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11) [N=8] 20%
Attendance and class participation (including [co]leading one class discussion) 20%

The research project includes a series of “installments”, to be turned in throughout the semester. While the installments will not be graded individually, they are required. On February 4, three handouts will be distributed, describing the weekly summaries, the class presentations, and the research project.

Grading will reflect the timeliness and completion of all assignments.

● Note about Required Readings:

There is one required book:
It is available from Amazon or from Stanford for approximately $20 (paperback).

All other readings will be distributed on a flash drive on the first day of class.

● Learning Goals:

- develop understanding of cross-national research on social policy and socio-economic outcomes
- gain familiarity with the LIS/LWS data and carry out a semester-long project related to the data

● Study Groups:

Students are strongly encouraged to form study groups. Groups might include students using the same software; or exploring similar methodological approaches; or sharing common substantive areas of interest/research. Note that neither programming nor statistical techniques will be taught in class.
REQUIRED READING

CLASS #1
January 28
Introduction to the Course – 1

No Required Reading.

CLASS #2
February 4
Introduction to the Course – 2

Required Reading:


Also: Thoroughly explore the LIS website: www.lisdatacenter.org.

Register for access to LISSY (the remote-execution system).

Learn how to use METIS.

Get acquainted with the LIS Working Papers search engine.

Begin to review the Self-Teaching Materials.
CLASS #3
February 11
Poverty - 1

Required Reading:


CLASS #4
February 18
Poverty - 2

Required Reading:


CLASS #5
February 25
Inequality

Required Reading:


Ólafsson, Stefan, and Armaldur Kristjansson. 2013. Chapter 15. “Income Inequality in Boom and Bust – A Tale from Iceland’s Bubble Economy”


Gornick, Janet C., and Markus Jäntti. 2013. “Conclusion”

CLASS #6
March 3
The “Middle Class”

Required Reading:


Kenworthy, Lane. 2013. Chapter 3. “Has Rising Inequality Reduced Middle-Class Income Growth?”


Also:


CLASS #7
March 10
Wealth

Required Reading:


Also:


CLASS #8
March 17
Politics

Required Reading:


Also:


CLASS #9
March 24
Student presentations: research project designs.

CLASS #10
March 31
Gender, Women, Work, and Family - 1

Required Reading:


**CLASS #11**
April 21
**Gender, Women, Work, and Family - 2**


**CLASS #12**
April 28
Student Presentations – to be scheduled

**CLASS #13**
May 5
Student Presentations – to be scheduled

**CLASS #14**
May 12
Student Presentations – to be scheduled