Social Policy and Socio-Economic Outcomes in Industrialized Countries
PSC 73903 / Cross listed: SOC 85902, ECON 89400, WSCP 81000

FALL 2021
Tuesdays 4:15pm–6:15pm
Professor Janet Gornick

Faculty: Janet Gornick
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Office Hours: By appointment. Email with questions at any time.

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 is organized around two databases available through LIS, a data archive located in Luxembourg, with a satellite office here at the Graduate Center.

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 child well-being, health status, political attitudes and voting behavior. (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 has two main components:
1) Students will read and assess a selection of published studies based on the data.
2) Students will carry out an original piece of empirical research using the LIS or LWS microdata. That work will culminate in a term paper.

While there are no formal prerequisites, students must have a working knowledge of basic statistics, and beginner-to-intermediate capacity in one of these programming languages: SAS, SPSS, Stata, or R.

Neither statistics nor programming will be part of the course’s curriculum. Extensive documentation about the data, self-teaching materials, and instructional videos are available on the LIS website.
Comments on Course Structure and Plan:

Virtual Teaching Platform

The course will be taught using Zoom. The professor will serve as host and has provided a link that enables joining. Students do not have to have their own Zoom accounts.

Zoom (as most students know by now!) allows participants to activate both audio and video capacity. In general, students should utilize their video option so that they can be seen; if turning on the video creates any hardship or discomfort, please feel free to discuss that with the professor. When not speaking, students should activate the mute function.

Assignments and Grading

• attendance and participation in discussions 20% of grade

• (eight) weekly reaction papers, classes 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 20% of grade
  a handout describing this assignment will be distributed

• presentation of reading in one class session 10% of grade
  a handout describing this assignment will be distributed

• two presentations related to semester-long research project 10% of grade

• research project, culminating in final paper due on December 7 40% of grade
  a handout describing this assignment will be distributed

Attendance

Weekly attendance is required but — of course — exceptions will be made to meet students’ needs. If you need to miss a class (or to arrive late or leave early), please inform the professor before the session.

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>August 31</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course – 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course – 2</td>
<td>see required reading</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>September 21</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>see required reading</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>September 28</td>
<td>Inequality – 1</td>
<td>see required reading</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>October 5</td>
<td>Inequality – 2</td>
<td>see required reading</td>
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<td>Paper proposal due</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>October 12</td>
<td>The “Middle Class”</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>October 19</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
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<td>First round of results due</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>October 26</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>see required reading</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>November 2</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Gender, Work, Family – 1</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>November 16</td>
<td>Gender, Work, Family – 2</td>
<td>see required reading</td>
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<td>Draft literature review due</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>November 23</td>
<td>Student Presentations – 1</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>November 30</td>
<td>Student Presentations – 2</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>Student Presentations – 3</td>
<td>see required reading</td>
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<td>Final paper due</td>
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1 Note: There will be no class on September 7.
REQUIRED READING

Note: All readings will be distributed via Dropbox or email.

Optional: You may wish to buy this book:
It is available from Amazon or from Stanford for approximately $20 (paperback).

August 31
*Introduction to the Course – 1*
No Required Reading.

CLASS #2
September 14
*Introduction to the Course – 2 – LIS and its Origins*

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.
https://www.lisdatacenter.org/resources/self-teaching/
https://www.lisdatacenter.org/resources/online-tutorial-series/

For fun! View this video ("LIS: The Early Years") https://www.lisdatacenter.org/about-lis/
CLASS #3  September 21  
Poverty  

Required Reading:


CLASS #4  September 28  
Inequality - 1  

Required Reading:


"How Has Income Inequality Grown? The Reshaping of the Income Distribution in LIS Countries."

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

Vanneman, Reeve, and Amaresh Dubey. 2013. Chapter 16.  
"Horizontal and Vertical Inequalities in India."

CLASS #5  October 5  
Inequality - 2  

Required Reading:


CLASS #6
October 12
The “Middle Class”

Required Reading:


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

Also:

Also:
Gornick, Janet, and Nathaniel Johnson. 2020
"*Income Inequality in Rich Countries: Examining Changes in Economic Disparities*" (Items, online)

CLASS #7
October 19
Wealth

Required Reading:


Also:
CLASS #8
October 26
Politics

Required Reading:


Also:

CLASS #9
November 2
Student Presentations: research project designs – to be scheduled.

CLASS #10
November 9
Gender, Women, Work, and Family - 1

Required Reading:


CLASS #11
November 16
Gender, Women, Work, and Family - 2

Required Reading:


**CLASS #12**
November 23
Student Presentations – to be scheduled.

**CLASS #13**
November 30
Student Presentations – to be scheduled.

**CLASS #14**
December 7
Student Presentations – to be scheduled.