Objectives of the course

In all known societies we find a hierarchy of power, prestige, and property even though nature, forms, and intensity of the hierarchy differ from society to society. Human society can be thus viewed as divided into various strata with distinct institutions and practices underpinning them. The study of social stratification examines these strata and underlying processes, causes, and consequences. This course offers theoretical and empirical works that discuss different forms of social stratification in historical and contemporary societies. It examines how people are allocated into different strata and how a person's location in the strata, in turn, shapes their life chances and probability of enjoying socially-valued good things and services. In addition, we will also examine how social theorists, critics, and thinkers have imagined alternative to contemporary forms of social stratification. Finally, it offers case studies from South Asia and beyond that focus on how different forms of stratification interact with each other.

Unit I. Introduction and Universality of Stratification

In this unit, we discuss basic concepts and vocabularies used in the field of social stratification studies. We will also critically examine the claims that social stratification is inevitable and that it is the "efficient" way of organizing society.

Readings


Unit II: Class Stratification
Unit II deals with forms of contemporary stratification, in particular (economic) class stratification. We will discuss similarities and differences between Karl Marx and Max Weber's approach to class analysis. We will also examine those theories under the rubric neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian theories of social stratification. This unit also deals with elite theories of stratification, which considerably expands the scope of class theories by incorporating entities such as corporate houses, military, political class, and elites.

Readings:


**Unit III: Ascriptive Processes**
Despite modernity’s promise that "traditional" loyalties and strata will wither away in the face of rationalization and modernization, “ascribed status” groups remain powerful forces in social life. Unit III examines social stratification and processes based on ascriptive statuses: sex and gender; race and ethnicity; and caste.

*Readings:*


**Unit V: Case Studies**
This unit focuses on case studies from South Asia and beyond. The goal is to examine intersection of state, economy, caste, class, gender, and ethnicity.

Readings:


