

Divided kingdom: social class and inequality in modern Britain

Start date 14 July 2023 **End date** 16 July 2023

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor Dr Nigel Kettley **Course code** 2223NRX040

Director of ISP and LL Sarah Ormrod

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Tutor biography

Dr Nigel Kettley is Associate Professor and Academic Director for Education and Social Science at the Institute of Continuing Education. Nigel has had a wide-ranging teaching and research career in the fields of sociology, education studies, research methods and teacher education. Before joining the Institute of Continuing Education in 2007, he was a Research Associate in the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and earlier still an MPhil and PhD student in Sociology and Politics at Wolfson College. Before returning to study in 1997, he was a lecturer in a Further Education college in Economics and Sociology. He is an active researcher in the areas of widening participation, educational attainment, and lifelong learning more generally with a particular focus on issues of gender, social stratification, and theory formation. Nigel teaches on a variety of courses for the Institute, supervises postgraduate students, and is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. His major publications include *Educational Attainment and Society* (2007, Continuum) and *Theory Building in Educational Research* (2012, Continuum). He is also Director of Studies in Education, Tutor and Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00 Dinner

20:30 – 22:00 Chavs, Rahs and Toffs? Defining and measuring social class and social mobility in modern Britain

22:00 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30 Breakfast (for residents only)

09:00 – 10:30 Class Maps: the upper, middle, working and ‘under-’ classes

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 Life chances: inequalities by social class in modern Britain

13:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Free time

16:00 Tea

16:30 – 18:00 Understanding educational inequality: social class, educational outcomes and explanations of inequality

18:00 – 18:30 Free time

18:30 Dinner

20:00 – 21:30 Consensus or class war? Theories of social class and historical change

21:30 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30 Breakfast (for residents only)

09:00 – 10:30 Competing critiques of social class: the feminist critique of class analysis and the ‘death of class’ debate

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 Divided kingdom? Summary, discussion and evaluation

12:45 Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

The course will allow you to:

1. understand competing definitions and measures of social class, which underpin a range of empirical research and explanations of inequality in modern Britain;
2. identify, interpret and assess research evidence related to the changing nature of inequality by social class in Britain since the mid-20th century;
3. critically assess and evaluate competing explanations and theories of change in the class structure, including the role of class actors as agents of change, drawing on sociological theories and research related to life chances and patterns of social mobility.

Content:

All complex societies are characterised by the unequal distribution of socio-economic resources like income and wealth. In 2022, many people in the United Kingdom celebrated the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the staging of the Commonwealth Games. These events may have promoted a sense of national unity despite the fallout of the Brexit referendum (2016) and the emerging cost of living crisis.

This course takes a fresh look at the extent to which Britain is united or divided in the early 21st century by exploring forms of social inequality and social class. In particular, the meaning and measurement of social class will be examined including both common sense typologies of class (Chavs, Rags and Toffs) and social scientific models. We will also consider evidence related to unequal life chances in the family, education and healthcare system by social class. Having defined and mapped the nature of social class inequalities in modern Britain, we will explore prevailing social scientific explanations for the existence of social class inequalities, including the ideas that inequality is necessary to reward differential talent and that class is simply a result of economic exploitation in capitalism. In addition, we will consider how the class structure in Britain has changed since the mid-20th century. The course will also reflect on the future of class inequalities, whether diminishing or expanding, in a global age where Britain faces intensified economic competition from abroad. Two competing critiques of social class analysis will be explored: the feminist critique and the 'death of class' debate. The course concludes with a discussion and evaluation of the material covered in the sessions to address the question, 'To what extent is modern Britain a divided kingdom?'

Presentation of the course:

The course will be taught using highly interactive seminar-style sessions, which draw on students' knowledge and experience to illustrate key ideas in relation to inequality and social class. PowerPoint presentations will be used to guide sessions. Class discussion will be encouraged.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1. identify and explain competing definitions of social class and consider their respective relationships to the ideas of equality and social justice;
2. explain the strengths and weaknesses present in a range of empirical evidence related to social inequality and social class in modern Britain;
3. critically assess competing social scientific explanations (theories) of the origins, purpose and effects of social class inequalities in modern Britain.

Reading and resources list

Bottero, W. (2005) *Stratification: Social Divisions and Inequality*. Abingdon: Routledge.

***Crompton, R. (2008) *Class and Stratification*. Third Edition. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Demie, F. (2019) *Educational Inequality: Closing the gap*. London: UCL Institute of Education Press.

Levine, R. F. (ed) (2006) *Social Class and Stratification: Class Statements and Theoretical Debates*. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield.

Milner, A. (1999) *Class (Core Cultural Concepts Series)*. London: Sage. (Kindle Edition 2012)

Savage, M. (2015) *Social Class in the 21st Century*. London: Pelican Books.

***Recommended

Online resources:

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (2013) *Huge survey reveals seven social classes in UK*.

Online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22007058>

Independent SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) (2020) *Covid-19 and Health Inequality*. Report 21. Online:

https://www.independentsage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Inequalities-i_SAGE_FINAL-draft_corrected.pdf

Marmot, M. et al. (2020) *Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On*.

Online: <https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/marmot-review-10-years-on>

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2010) *The National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC)*. Online:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationnssecbasedonsoc2010>