

Social, economic, and political elites: Past and present

SOSC 2000G
Fall 2021

Tuesday and Thursday, 9AM-10:30PM, LSK 1027

Instructor: Cameron Campbell (3345 Lifts 13-15/Lift 3)

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This is still in progress and will change. Please check back for final version.

Elites have re-emerged as a topic of central interest in contemporary social science because the general increase in inequality within countries and regions in recent decades has been accompanied by the extraordinary re-concentration of wealth, income, political power, and social influence in very small subgroups of the population. As Thomas Piketty and others have pointed out, this reflects a profound shift from the decades that followed World War II, when in many societies, inequality fell, and the power and influence of elites who dominated society, the economy and politics before the war declined.

Central topics in the study of elites include the social and economic origins of individuals who make up the elite, the extent of continuity or turnover in elite families, the practices by which elites legitimate their position,

This course will examine elites in historical and contemporary societies from a variety of perspectives. We will begin with military/political and clerical/educational elites in the past in what Thomas Piketty has referred to as ternary societies. We will then consider the propertied elites who emerged as a distinct category in recent centuries in many societies.

General topics include how elites are defined and legitimated, how they maintain their power and position, and the survival, evolution, or replacement of elites during times of disruption.

Particular attention will be given to interactions between propertied elites and social, political, and economic institutions in the contemporary era, and the actual or potential role of institutions in empowering or constraining elites.

Some of the specific topics to be considered include the recent use of the concept of 'meritocracy' to justify the emergence of social, economic, and political elites, the role of educational institutions in

The class will emphasize a comparative perspective, with particular emphasis on East and West from the 19th century to the present.

Grading

Component	Percent
Class Attendance	5

Proposed Questions for Class Discussion	10
Reflections	20
Class Participation	10
Proposed Questions for Final Exam	10
Book Review (Presentation)	10
Final Exam	20
Book Review (Written)	15

Class attendance

Procedures for recording attendance will depend on whether we are in person or online and will be described in the first week of class.

Proposed questions for class discussion

Starting from the 2nd week, students are responsible for proposing a question for discussion on Canvas in advance of class. This response should be no more than 100 words. It should raise a question clearly related to the reading to be discussed in class and should refer to points made in one or more of the readings for that week. I will grade the responses 0-5 as follows:

If you come across recent news reports, opinion pieces or other materials related to a week's reading, you may include links to them in your proposed question, and you may introduce them if you are called on by discussion leaders or the instructor.

- 0 – No submission or completely off-topic. *Your question must be clearly relevant to the topics of the assigned reading. Seriously off-topic questions will not receive credit.*
- 1 – Inadequate. Little or no engagement with the assigned reading or effort to develop a question.
- 2 – Below average. Barely enough engagement with assigned reading and/or effort to develop a question.
- 3 - Acceptable. Shows engagement with the reading or viewing, and a serious effort to come up with a question. This will be the most common grade.
- 4- Above average. Superior engagement with the reading and/or effort to come up with a question. Must connect to at least one of the readings or viewings for that week.
- 5 – Superior. Excellent engagement with the reading and/or highly creative or thoughtful independent thinking about a question for discussion that is related to the assigned reading.

Because the questions are to be the basis for class discussion, and other students need to review them to choose some to upvote, there will be no credit for late postings.

Proposed questions will normally be due 24 hours before class, so that students have time to review each other's proposed questions and 'like'/upvote the ones they would like the discussion to focus on. You may also comment on questions proposed by others to express support or add details.

Reflections

Once a month, that is roughly once every three or four weeks, you will be required to write a reflection on what you have learned from the readings and discussions for that month. There will be a total of three reflections due. These are expected to be 500-1000 words, that is one or two single-spaced pages. Your reflection should demonstrate that you have done assigned reading and reflect engagement with topics covered in class.

Class participation

Students are expected to participate in class discussion. The TA will track contributions to discussion.

When called upon by the instructor or discussion leader to share the question or response they posted to Canvas with the class, students should be prepared to introduce their question or response. Please review your post before coming to class so that you are ready to share it if called on. You should not need to review your response or question when you are called on.

Other contributions to discussion should reflect familiarity with the assigned readings.

Your activity upvoting/commenting on questions proposed for class discussion will be reviewed and will also count under class participation.

Proposed Questions for Final Exam

Every week you are required to propose a multiple-choice question for inclusion on the final exam. You may also review classmates' proposed questions and upvote them. I will select from among the proposed questions to make up the exam.

Final Exam

The final exam will be multiple-choice and in-class. If we shift back to online teaching, this may be revisited.

Book Review

You will make a brief presentation of a book about elites selected from the list at the end of this syllabus and then submit a written review of the book at the end of the term. The presentation should be 5-7 minutes. There will be a sign-up for presentations on Canvas. Ideally you will make your presentation in a class when a relevant topic is being discussed, but that may not always be possible.

The written review should summarize the book, including its methods, data, and key findings, and discuss it in the context of the material covered in class. The review should make links to required reading and class discussion. It should be 1500-2000 words, that is about 3-4 double spaced pages.

Sign-up to review a book will be done via a discussion thread that will be posted at the beginning of the semester. The number of students who can choose the same book will be capped, and on a first-come, first-served basis. Once the discussion thread is available, students choosing a book that has already hit its cap will be asked to choose another one.

Students are welcome to organize group presentations (up to 4 students in a group) on sets of books on a specific theme, but the written book reviews they need to submit will need to be on separate books and written independently. Students planning to do a group presentation should indicate that when they sign up at the discussion thread, and their post should list all group members and their books of choice. Group members should respond to the post to confirm that they agree with the plan.

If you would like to review a book that is not on the list in the syllabus, you will need to make an appointment to see me for approval. I am open to reviews on books not on the list, but I will need to confirm that the book is related to the theme of the class, and of an acceptable level of quality.

Academic Integrity

All the work you submit must be new, and not previously submitted in any other class. If you are working on a related topic for another class, you will need to inform me and the other instructor so that we can coordinate. It is not acceptable to submit the same work for credit to two classes, unless both instructors consent beforehand, and an arrangement is in place to ensure that the total amount of work is equivalent to two projects done separately.

Required Reading and Viewing

Piketty, Thomas. 2020. *Capital and Ideology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

This book is available electronically at the library website, though there may be a limit on the number of simultaneous readers. E-copy is available at a modest price at Amazon Kindle and other vendors.

This is a large book and we will only read selected chapters. Please see the schedule below for the chapters to be read for each week.

Additional materials may be announced during the semester.

Optional Reading

The following are recent reviews of the field of elite studies. They survey a wide variety of relevant studies.

Cousin, Bruno, Shamus Khan and Ashley Mears. 2018. Theoretical and methodological pathways for research on elites. *Socio-Economic Review*. 16(2):225-249.
<https://shamuskhan.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/socio-economic-review.pdf>

Khan, Shamus. 2012. The Sociology of Elites. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 38:361-377.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071811-145542>

Schedule

In the following, items identified as *Background* should be read before class, but do not need to be included in student presentations. Items identified as *Further Reading* are optional and included because they may be of interest to students seeking more information about the topic.

Class	Topic and Assigned Reading/Viewing
2/9	Introduction Why Should We Study Elites? Class Policies
7/9 9/9	Elites Before the 19 th Century Piketty, Chapters 1 and 2
14/9 16/9	Elites in the 19 th Century Piketty, Chapters 3 and 4
21/9 23/9	Elites in Historical China
28/9 30/9	The 20 th Century Piketty, Chapters 10 and 11
5/10 7/10	The Recent Reemergence of the 1% Piketty, Chapter 13
12/10	The Weird World of the Wealthy Harrington, Brooke. 2018. 2018. The bad behavior of the richest: What I learned from wealth managers. <i>The Guardian</i> . October 19, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/19/billionaires-wealth-richest-income-inequality Mears, Ashley. 2020. The Secret Economics of a VIP Party. <i>The Economist/1843 Magazine</i> . https://www.economist.com/1843/2020/07/03/the-secret-economics-of-a-vip-party Book Reviews
14/10	NO CLASS
19/10 21/10	Elite Education in the West Lammy, David. Oxbridge Access Data Lammy, David. 2017. Seven Years Have Changed Nothing at Oxbridge. In Fact, Diversity Is Even Worse. <i>The Guardian</i> . October 20, 2017. Sutton Trust and the Social Mobility Commission. 2019. Elitist Britain 2019 . Pages 1-36.

	<p>Weale, Sally, Richard Adams and Helena Bengtsson. 2017. Oxbridge becoming less diverse as richest gain 80% of offers. The Guardian. October 19, 2018.</p> <p>Book Reviews</p>
26/10 28/10	<p>Elite Education in China</p> <p><i>Optional</i></p> <p>Ren, Bamboo Y., Chen Liang, James Z. Lee. 2020. Meritocracy and the Making of the Chinese Academy, 1912-1952. <i>China Quarterly</i>. 244(December):942-968.</p> <p>梁晨 (Chen LIANG), 李中清 (James Z. Lee), 张浩 (Hao ZHANG), 李兰 (Lan LI), 阮丹青 (Danqing RAN), 康文林 (Cameron Campbell), 杨善华 (Shanhua YANG). 2012. 无声的革命: 北京大学与苏州大学学生社会来源研究, 1952-2002. (Silent Revolution: the Social Origins of Peking University and Soochow University Undergraduates, 1952-2002). 《中国社会科学》 (<i>Social Science in China</i>) Vol 1 (January): 99-119.</p>
2/11 4/11	<p>Explaining Elites: ‘Meritocracy’</p> <p>Cooper, Marianne. 2015. The False Promise of Meritocracy. The Atlantic.</p> <p>Kwame, Kwame Anthony. 2018. The Myth of Meritocracy: Who Really Gets What They Deserve? <i>The Guardian</i>. October 19, 2018.</p> <p>Young, Michael Young. 2001. Down With Meritocracy. Comment in the <i>Guardian</i>, June 29, 2001.</p> <p>Book Reviews</p>
9/11 11/11	<p>Explaining Elites: ‘Matthew Effects’ and Luck</p> <p>Kaufman, Scott Barry. 2018. The Role of Luck in Success is Far Greater Than We Realized. <i>Scientific American</i> Beautiful Minds blog, March 1, 2018.</p> <p>Merton, Robert K. 1968. The Matthew Effect in Science. <i>Science</i>. 159(3810):56-63.</p> <p>2018. “Winner Takes It All: How Markets Favor The Few At The Expense of the Many.” FS Media, August 2018.</p> <p>Book Reviews</p> <p><i>Optional</i></p> <p>DiPrete, Thomas A. and Gregory M. Eirich. 2006. Cumulative Advantage as a Mechanism for Inequality: A Review of Theoretical and Empirical Developments. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>. 32(2006):271-297.</p>

	Rosen, Sherwin. 1981. The Economics of Superstars. <i>The American Economic Review</i> . 71(5):845-858.
16/11 18/11	Elites and Power Book Reviews
23/11	Elite Families and Dynasties Glucksberg, Luna and Roger Burrows. 2016. Family Offices and the Contemporary Infrastructures of Dynastic Wealth. <i>Sociologica</i> . 2. https://www.rivisteweb.it/download/article/10.2383/85289 Book Reviews
25/11	Corporate and Business Elites Book Reviews
30/11	Wrap-up discussion

Books for Review

Elites in Historical China

Chang Chong-li (Zhang Zhongli). 1955. *The Chinese Gentry: Studies on Their Role in Nineteenth-Century Chinese Society*. University of Washington Press.

Crossley, Pamela Kyle. 1990. *Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World*. Princeton University Press.

Elliott, Mark C. 2001. *The Manchu Way. The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*. Stanford University Press.

Esherick, Joseph W. and Mary Backus Rankin, eds. 1990. *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
<http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft0q2n99mz/>

Fei Hsiao-tung (Fei Xiaotong) and Yong-teh Chow (Zhou Yongde). 1953. *China's Gentry: Essays on Urban-Rural Relations*. University of Chicago Press.

Hymes, Robert. 1987. *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-chou, Chiang-hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung*. Cambridge University Press.

Johnson, David C. 2019. *The Medieval Chinese Oligarchy*. Routledge.

Szonyi, Michael. 2002. *Practicing kinship: Lineage and descent in late imperial China*. Stanford University Press.

Tackett, Nicolas. 2014. *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*. Harvard University Press.

The Weird World of the Wealthy

Baltzell, E. Digby. 1958. *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class*. Free Press.

Beckert, Sven. 2001. *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896*. Cambridge University Press.

Farrell, Justin. 2020. *Billionaire Wilderness. The Ultra-Wealthy and the Remaking of the American West*. Princeton University Press.

Gatewood, Willard B. 1990. *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920*. Indiana University Press

Graham, Lawrence O. 2009. *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class*. Harper Collins.

Harrington, Brooke. 2016. *Capital Without Borders: Wealth Managers and the One Percent*. Harvard University Press.

Mears, Ashley. 2020. *Very Important People: Status and Beauty in the Global Party Circuit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sherman, Rachel. 2017. *Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence*. Princeton University Press.

Elite Education in the West

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1996. *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Stanford University Press.

Bowen, William G., and Derek Bok. 1998/2016. *The Shape of the River*. Princeton University Press.

Charles, Camille Z., Mary J. Fischer, Margarita A. Mooney, and Douglas S. Massey. 2009. *Taming the River*. Princeton University Press.

Cookson Jr., Peter W. and Caroline Hodges Persell. 2008. *Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools*. Basic Books.

Golden, Daniel. 2007. *The Price of Admission: How America's Ruling Class Buys Its Way Into Elite Colleges – and Who Gets Left Outside the Gates*. Crown.

Jack, Anthony Abraham. 2019. *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges Are Failing Disadvantaged Students*. Harvard University Press.

Karabel, Daniel. 2006. *The Chosen. The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton*. Mariner Books.

Khan, Shamus. 2010. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite At St. Paul's School*. Princeton University Press.

Lemann, Nicholas. 2000. *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Massey, Douglas S., Camille Z. Charles, Mary J. Fischer, and Garvey Lundy. 2003. *The Source of the River: The Social Origins of Freshmen at America's Selective Colleges and Universities*. Princeton University Press.

Perkin, Harold. 1996. *The Third Revolution: Professional Elites in the Modern World*. London: Routledge Press.

Rivera, Lauren A. *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*. Princeton University Press.

Soares, Joseph A. 2007. *The Power of Privilege: Yale and America's Elite Colleges*. Stanford University Press.

Stevens, Mitchell L. 2009. *Creating A Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites*. Harvard University Press.

Elite Education in China

Elman, Benjamin A. 2000. *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*. University of California Press.

Elman, Benjamin A. 2013. *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*. Harvard University Press

Ho, Ping-ti. 1964. *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911*. John Wiley and Sons.

梁晨 (LIANG Chen), 张浩 (ZHANG Hao), 李兰 (LI Lan), 阮丹青 (RUAN Danching), 康文林 (Cameron CAMPBELL), 李中清 (James Z. Lee). 2013. *无声的革命: 北京大学, 苏州大学学生社会来源研究, 1949-2002 (Silent Revolution: Social Origins of Peking University and Suzhou University Students, 1949-2002)*. 三联书店(Beijing: Sanlian Books).

Explaining Elites: 'Matthew Effects', 'Winner-Take-All' and Luck

Frank, Robert H. 1996. *The Winner-Take-All Society. Why the Few At The Top Get So Much More Than The Rest Of Us*. Penguin Press.

Frank, Robert H. 2017. *Success And Luck. Good Fortune and the Myth of Meritocracy*. Princeton University Press.

Maybossin, Michael J. 2012. *The Success Equation: Untangling Skill and Luck in Business, Sports, and Investing*. Harvard Business Review.

Rigney, Daniel. 2010. *The Matthew Effect: How Advantage Begets Further Advantage*. Columbia University Press.

Explaining Elites: 'Meritocracy'

Markovits, Daniel. 2019. *The Meritocracy Trap: How America's Foundational Myth Feeds Inequality, Dismantles the Middle Class, and Devours the Elite*. New York: Penguin Press.

Sandel, Michael J. 2020. *The Tyranny of Merit. Can We Find the Common Good?* Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Young, Michael. 1994. *The Rise of the Meritocracy. 2nd Edition*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Elites and Power

Baltzell, E. Digby. 1964. *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America*. Random House.

Boltanski, Luc. 1987. *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Society*. Cambridge University Press.

Domhoff, G. William. 1967. *Who Rules America?* Prentice Hall.

Formisano, Ronald P. 2015. *Plutocracy in America: How Increasing Inequality Destroys the Middle Class and Exploits the Poor*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*. Oxford University Press.

Starr, Paul. 2019. *Entrenchment. Wealth, Power, and the Constitution of Democratic Societies*. Yale University Press.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. 2012. *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. Norton.

Winters, Jeffrey A. 2011. *Oligarchy*. Cambridge University Press.

Zweigenhaft, Richard L. and G. William Domhoff. 2018. *Diversity in the Power Elite. 3rd Edition. Ironies and Unfulfilled Promises*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Elite Families

Adams, Julia. 2005. *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe*. Cornell University Press.

Business and Corporate Elites

Carroll, William K. 2010. *The Making of a Transnational Capitalist Class: Corporate Power in the 21st Century*. Zed Books.

Freeland, Chrystia. 2012. *Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else*. Penguin Press.

Ho, Karen. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Duke University Press.

Mizruchi, Mark S. 2013. *The Fracturing of the American Corporate Elite*. Harvard University Press.

Phillips, Peter. 2018. *Giants: The Global Power Elite*. Seven Stories Press.

Rothkopf, David J. 2008. *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Sklair, Leslie. 2000. *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. Wiley-Blackwell.