**Week 12: Social stratification, social class**

**STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS**

This lecture studies social stratification from three main theoretical approaches: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionsim. It shows how these different theories explain the prevalence of hierarchies in societies. It also introduces the concept of social class.

1. How does the functionalist approach developed by Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore explain stratification?
2. Explain four criticisms of the functionalist approach to stratification.
3. How does the conflict theory critique the idea that every person has the job they deserve?
4. Which of the three explanations suggests that poor people deserve being poor? Explain.
5. What is ideology? Can you think of examples of ideology from your own experience and/or media?
6. How does Marx explain false consciousness? What is the difference between class consciousness and false consciousness?
7. According to the reading, can we consider belief in the American Dream as false consciousness?
8. How do symbolic interactionists study stratification?
9. What does Thorstein Veblen mean by the idea of conspicuous consumption? Provide examples from your experience.
10. How do sociologists decide who belongs to which class? Describe two measurement approaches.
11. What criteria does the author of the reading use to define one’s social class? Does it consider old money as different from new money? How many social classes does it identify? List and explain each.
12. What is the difference between the lower-middle and the working class?
13. What is vertical mobility? What two types of vertical mobility does the reading cover? In what ways do differ from each other?
14. How does the parents’ educational background impact one’s social mobility?

**General discussion questions:**

* + - 1. Can you think of examples when you yourself practiced conspicuous consumption? What is a problem with it from a sociological perspective?
      2. According to the approach used in the reading, which social class would Jeff Bezos (the founder of Amazon and richest person in the US) belong to? Do you consider this as an accurate representation of his social position?
      3. Which class do you consider yourself as belonging to? Does it match the income levels described in the reading? Why do you think so many people consider themselves as middle-class?