

# W. E. B. Du Bois Career of Distinguished Scholarship Award

Arne L. Kalleberg, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



The selection committee for the 2026 American Sociological Association's W.E.B. Du Bois Career of Distinguished Scholarship Award honors Arne L. Kalleberg for his extraordinary dedication to the discipline and his field defining contributions to the study of work, labor markets, and inequality. Over a career spanning five decades, Kalleberg has produced more than one hundred influential publications, including landmark articles and widely cited books that have set enduring empirical standards, and guided generations of scholars. His work has had far reaching impact across multiple sociological subfields and has been deeply influential in domestic and global policy debates.

Kalleberg redefined how scholars understand the relationship between work, inequality, and social stability. As one nomination letter observed, "He has been pulling a more individualistic sociology inherited from the mid-twentieth century into a more relational and organizational understanding of inequality, while creating guardrails against the incursion of naïve market models imported into sociology from economics." Rejecting narrow accounts that reduced job satisfaction to job characteristics alone, he demonstrated that satisfaction is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the alignment between workers' values and the rewards they receive. This insight led to *Organizations in America*, a landmark analysis of how firms manage labor through hiring, promotion, training, and compensation systems, revealing how organizations systematically structure advantage and disadvantage within the workplace. Kalleberg was among the first to document the erosion of standard employment relationships and

to show how the growth of temporary, part-time, and contingent work undermined wages, benefits, security and worker autonomy; dismantling the assumption that nonstandard jobs were voluntary or temporary conditions. This perspective crystallized in *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs* (2011), where Kalleberg compellingly demonstrated the polarization of labor markets into secure, well-paid jobs and low-wage, unstable employment, alongside a hollowed-out middle—an outcome of globalization, technological change, declining unions, and weakened labor protections.

In his 2008 ASA presidential address, Kalleberg elevated this analysis by conceptualizing precarious employment as a defining and normalized condition of contemporary labor markets, increasingly affecting workers across occupational levels. Turning his attention to broader societal consequences of these transformations, *Precarious Lives: Job Insecurity and Well-Being in Rich Democracies* (2018) drew on rich cross-national data to show how precarious work restructures family formation, well-being, and political participation, while demonstrating that these outcomes are not inevitable and are the result of institutional and policy choices. Kalleberg is a methodological innovator. He was an early and influential advocate of multilevel modeling, advanced rigorous quantitative approaches to operationalizing institutions, pioneered harmonized cross national indicators of job quality, and innovated the use of hyper network designs to generate representative samples of U.S. workplaces—advances that have been widely adopted and strengthened research on inequality. Collectively, Kalleberg’s scholarship exerted wide-ranging influence across sociology, labor economics, public health, industrial relations, and management studies.

Kalleberg’s research has been supported by prestigious institutions—including the Simon Guggenheim Foundation, Russell Sage Foundation, National Science Foundation, Spencer Foundation, Japan Foundation, and Norwegian Research Council—testifying to its exceptional merit. His many honors include election as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1997), the ASA Inequality, Poverty and Mobility Section’s Robert M. Hauser Distinguished Scholar Award (2015), and the ASA Organizations, Occupations and Work’s Rosabeth Moss Kanter Distinguished Career Award (2020), and election to the National Academy of Sciences in 2024. He has brought outstanding leadership to the discipline. He held the positions of Secretary and President of ASA, chaired the ASA Organizations, Work, and Occupation section, and served on several ASA committees. Kalleberg has edited *Social Forces* since 2010, served on major editorial boards, and held elected leadership roles with GSS and PSID.

Congratulations to Arne Kalleberg, recipient of the 2026 ASA W.E.B. Du Bois Career of Distinguished Scholarship Award.