

SOC220H1: SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN CANADA

University of Toronto

Term: Fall 2014 – Lecture Date/Time: Monday, 2-4pm – Location:

INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the social processes that generate and maintain material inequalities in human societies. We will examine a number of important questions throughout the semester. For example, how unevenly are income and wealth distributed in different industrial societies? Why are some individuals paid a great deal, while others scrape by on very little? What are the social and political forces that influence how individuals are allocated to positions with starkly different compensation? What are the consequences of these material inequalities for a person's happiness, health, and the well-being of their children? Can government policy do anything to change patterns of inequality? This course will cover basic concepts and facts as well as both classical and contemporary sociological theories of inequality. In addition, it engages and evaluates empirical studies dealing with social stratification, including continuity and change in income and wealth inequality; the contours of class structure in industrial societies; intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status; the effects of family, school, and neighborhood on socioeconomic achievement; gender and racial inequality; and the social consequences of inequality. Although much of the material will be comparative and pertain to modern industrial societies generally, the emphasis will be on Canada.

PREREQUISITES

The prerequisite to take this course is SOC101Y1 or SOC102H1 or SOC103H1. Students without any of these courses will be removed from SOC220H1. Removal may take place at any time.

COURSE EVALUATION

In-class Midterm Test: October 20th

The midterm test will be held in class on October 20th. It will cover all readings and lectures from September 8th to October 6th and will count for 30 percent of your final grade. You will have 110 minutes to complete the test, which will consist of multiple choice and a few short-answer questions.

In-class Final Test: December 1st

The final test will be held in class on December 1st. It will also count for 30 percent of your final grade. This test will be cumulative but will focus predominantly on material from the second half of the course. You will have 110 minutes to complete the test, which will consist of multiple-choice and a few short-answer questions.

Short Reaction Essays: Due in class each week (starting September 15th)

Each week, students will write a short reaction essay summarizing their thoughts about the assigned readings for that week. The essay should be no more than 1 page in length (1-2 short paragraphs), double-spaced, and in 12-point font. When drafting these essays, consider the following questions. What is the key argument or finding? What do you think of the author's argument or finding? What are the reasons that you agree or disagree with the author's viewpoint? How do the readings relate to other articles you read for the course? How do they relate to events in your own life or to current events in the news? These short reaction essays are due each week at the beginning of class, and altogether they count for 10 percent of your final grade. Late reaction essays will not be accepted and marked zero.

Term Paper: Due in class on November 10th

Students will write a final paper for this course. The paper is due in class on November 10th and counts for 30 percent of your final grade. Paper grades will be deducted 5 marks (i.e., 5/30 of the total paper grade) per week that they are late. Electronic copies of the paper will not be accepted—students must hand in a hard copy. The paper should be at least 4 pages but no longer than 6 pages in length, double-spaced, and in 12-point font. This assignment will invite you to be creative in applying ideas from the course to analyze contemporary growth in income inequality in Canada, the US, or the UK since the early 1980s. Students will be asked to draw on assigned readings, lecture notes, and outside sources to make an argument about the nature of recent changes in income inequality and the likely cause(s) of these changes. Papers will be evaluated for the structure of their arguments, the extent to which they demonstrate knowledge of theory and empirical evidence covered in class, and grammar. Before writing your first draft, it will help to take some time to develop and organize your thoughts on this issue. After writing your first draft, be sure to revise, edit, and proofread your text. Your paper should make a clear argument, and it should support this argument with appropriate citations and evidence. Your paper needs to provide a thesis statement, explain why the reader should be persuaded by your thesis, and do so by engaging and citing relevant course material or outside sources.

Grades

Grades for this course will be assigned as follows: weekly reaction essays (10 percent), midterm exam (30 percent), final exam (25 percent), and final paper (35 percent).

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

Attendance and punctuality are basic requirements for effective learning. You are expected to attend every class.

Communication

The best way to ask questions about course material or assignments is in person during your TA's or instructor's office hours. The following are guidelines for email communication with your TA and the course instructor: please make sure that you have a legitimate need before you write and that you cannot resolve your question during office hours; email messages should state the course number and the purpose of the email clearly in the subject line.

Make-up Tests

Students who miss a test will receive a mark of zero, unless within one week of the missed test, students who wish to write the make-up test provide a written request for special consideration which explains why the test was missed, accompanied by proper documentation from a physician or college registrar. The request should be accompanied by contact information (the student's telephone number and email address) so the date, time and place of the make-up test can be communicated to the student. A student who misses a test and the subsequent make-up test for a valid reason will not have a third chance to take the test. Instead, the grade assigned for the missed test will be the same as the grade the student earns for the other test in this course.

If you miss a test or a paper deadline, do not contact the instructor or a TA unless you have followed the steps described here. Telling the professor or TA why you missed a deadline or a test will not be considered. In case of illness, you must supply a duly completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca). A doctor's note is not acceptable. The form must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work at class or to your TA during their office hours. If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar. The letter must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted to the instructor or your TA during class or office hours.

Accessibility

If students require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Cheating, misrepresentation, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices acceptable in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the “Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters” in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

COURSE READINGS

This is an intermediate-level undergraduate course. Students are not expected to enter the class with any substantial background in sociology or social stratification. Students are expected to carefully prepare for class by completing the assigned readings and by devoting some time to reflecting on the material. Class sessions are designed to build upon students’ own efforts.

This course uses the textbook, Grabb, Edward and Neil Guppy (Eds.). 2009. *Social Inequality in Canada: Patterns, Problems, and Policies (5th Edition)*. Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall (henceforth “Grabb and Guppy”). It can be purchased at the University of Toronto Bookstore. Additional readings not included in the textbook are hyperlinked below or will be posted on blackboard several weeks before class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

September 8: Introduction/History of Inequality in Human Societies

Assignments:

NO SHORT REACTION ESSAY DUE THIS WEEK

Grabb and Guppy. Read Pp. 1-16 (introduction).

Kerbo, H. R. 2009. *Social Stratification and Inequality: Class Conflict in Historical, Comparative, and Global Perspective*. New York: McGraw-Hill. Read Pp. 50-80 (a brief history of inequality in human societies).

September 15: Classical and Contemporary Theory in Inequality Research

Assignments:

Kerbo, H. R. 2009. *Social Stratification and Inequality: Class Conflict in Historical, Comparative, and Global Perspective*. New York: McGraw-Hill. Read Pp. 83-115 (on classical theories of social stratification), 119-122 (on functional theories), and 131-135 (on conflict theories).

Champernowne, D. G. and F. A. Cowell. 1998. *Economic Inequality and Income Distribution*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press. Read Pp. 123-126 (on the theory of factor rewards).

Piketty, T. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Read Pp. 1-27 (introduction), 52-55 (on the first fundamental law of capitalism), 166-170 (on the second fundamental law of capitalism), 212-222 (on marginal productivity), and 227-230 (on Marx and capitalism's internal contradictions).

September 22: Income, Wealth, and Poverty

Assignments:

Grabb and Guppy. Read Pp. 82-91 (on income inequality in Canada), 93-105 (on wealth inequality in Canada), and 106-115 (on poverty in Canada).

Piketty, T. and E. Saez. 2006. "The Evolution of Top Incomes: A Historical and International Perspective." *American Economic Review* 96:200-205. Read Pp. 200-205 (on the rise of top incomes internationally). [Link to PDF](#).

September 29: Class, Status, and Occupation

Assignments:

Wright, E. O. 1984. "A General Framework for the Analysis of Class Structure." *Politics and Society* 13:383-422. Read Pp. 383-397, 399-402, and 417-422 (on neo-Marxist conceptions of class). [Link to PDF](#).

Breen, R. 2005. "Foundations of a Neo-Weberian Class Analysis" in *Approaches to Class Analysis* edited by E. O. Wright. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Pp. 31-43 (on neo-Weberian conceptions of class).

Grusky, D. B. and J. B. Sorensen. 2008. "Are There Big Social Classes?" in *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* edited by D.B. Grusky. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Read Pp. 165-175 (on occupations as micro-classes).

Grabb and Guppy. Read Pp. 44-57 (on the class structure of Canada).

October 6: Human, Social, and Cultural Capital

Assignments:

Becker, G. 1962. "Investment in Human Capital: A Theoretical Analysis." *Journal of Political Economy* 70:9-49. Read Pp. 9-10 (introduction), 25-30 (on schooling), and 43-49 (examples, summary, and conclusions). [Link to PDF](#).

Coleman, J. S. 1988. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology* 94: S95-S120. Read Pp. S95-S105 and S109-S115 (on social capital and its link to human capital). [Link to PDF](#).

Bourdieu, P. 2008. "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste." in *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* edited by D. B. Grusky. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Read Pp. 870-890 (on cultural capital and its link to human capital and physical capital).

October 13: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)

October 20: *IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM*

October 27: Social Mobility and Status Attainment

Assignments:

Grabb and Guppy. Read Pp. 116-130 (on social mobility in Canada).

Kerbo, H. R. 2009. *Social Stratification and Inequality: Class Conflict in Historical, Comparative, and Global Perspective*. New York: McGraw-Hill. Read Pp. 414-428 (on status attainment).

Grabb and Guppy. Read Pp. 171-186 (on educational and occupational attainment in Canada).

November 3: Gender Inequality

Assignments:

Grabb and Guppy. Read Pp. 225-234 (on gender inequalities in the labor market) and 213-221 (on gender inequalities in household labor).

Wright, E. O., J. Baxter and G. E. Birkelund. 1995. "The Gender Gap in Workplace Authority: A Cross-National Study," *American Sociological Review*, 60: 407-435. Read Pp. 407-415 (introduction and background sections) and 419-434 (results on conclusion sections). [Link to PDF](#).

November 10: Racial and Ethnic Inequality

Assignments:

TERM PAPER DUE IN CLASS

NO SHORT REACTION ESSAY DUE THIS WEEK

Grabb and Guppy. Read Pp. 253-271 (on racial and ethnic inequality in education, occupational attainment, and income) and 273-294 (on discrimination and social integration of racial and ethnic minorities).

November 17: NO CLASS (FALL BREAK)

November 24: The Social Consequences of Material Inequalities

Assignments:

Pickett, K. and R. Wilkinson. 2011. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. New York: Bloomsbury Press. Read Pp. 49-103 (on the social costs of inequality).

Grabb and Guppy. Read Pp. 390-404 (on inequality and intolerance).

December 1: *IN-CLASS FINAL TEST*