

SOC495H1: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF INEQUALITY

University of Toronto

Term: Winter 2018 – Lecture Date/Time: Monday 2-4pm – Location: Department of Sociology,
725 Spadina Avenue, Room: FE41 (basement)

INSTRUCTOR

Geoff Wodtke

Office: Room 394, 725 Spadina Avenue

Office Hours: Monday 4-6pm

Email: geoffrey.wodtke@utoronto.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social inequalities hinge to a significant degree on perceptions and beliefs, fears and desires, and antipathies and affections. This course explores questions related to social inequality that lie at the intersection of sociology and psychology. How and why do individuals identify themselves with different social groups? How do beliefs, values, and norms shape social interactions? What institutions, events, and structures in turn influence beliefs, values, and norms? How do intergroup stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination develop and evolve? What engenders social conflict and aggression? In this course, we will explore how social psychological theory and research can help explain a wide range of social inequalities.

PREREQUISITES

The prerequisite to take this course is completion of 1.0 SOC FCE at the 300 level or higher. Students without this prerequisites will be removed at any time if discovered.

COURSE EVALUATION

This is a reading and writing intensive course. There are no conventional tests, and your overall grade will be based solely on the following four writing assignments:

Reaction Essays: Due in class each week (starting January 15)

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, double-spaced, and in 12-point font. These essays are due each week at the beginning of class, and altogether they count for 15 percent of your final grade. Late reaction essays will not be accepted and marked zero. When drafting these essays, it may help to consider some of 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? What was unclear about the reading? These essays will be graded on a 10 point scale with full credit given to essays that (1) are well-written with few grammatical errors, (2) demonstrate good comprehension of the reading, and (3) critically engage the reading with pointed questions or comments.

Norm Breaching Project: Due in class on February 12

Students will conduct a “norm breaching experiment.” This experiment will require students to violate a social norm, record what happens in response to the norm violation, and reflect on their own experience, feelings, and emotions while violating the norm. Students are to select a norm that interests them but NOT a norm whose violation would require them to commit a criminal act, harm another person, harm themselves, or otherwise put anyone in danger. The written report for this experiment is due in class on February 12 and should be 4 to 6 pages in length, double-spaced, and in 12-point font. Electronic copies of the written report will not be accepted—students must hand in a hard copy. The written report will count for 25 percent of your final grade, and it should consist of three elements: a section describing the norm, social setting, violation, and others’ reactions to the normative violation; a section analyzing reactions to the normative violation using concepts from the course (i.e., why did people respond to your normative violation the way that they did?); and a section reflecting on the degree to which this norm functions to regulate behavior (i.e., did you experience any personal difficulty in violating the norm? do you think a person of a different race, class, or gender would have a different experience or get a different reaction when violating this norm? In the event you receive no reaction from others to your normative violation, discuss why you think this might be the case.) Grades for the written report will be deducted 1 mark (i.e., 1/25 of the total assignment grade) per day that it is late. Prior to beginning work on this project, students should submit to the instructor for approval a short one page proposal describing the norm and the methods they will use to breach the norm in class on January 29. In addition to submitting a written report, students will also deliver a short 5 minute oral presentation to the class in which they should briefly describe their norm-breaching experiment and findings. The oral presentation will count for 5 percent of your final grade and will be marked on a pass/fail basis.

Economic Inequality Paper: Due in class on March 12

Students will write a short essay that critically evaluates an in-class activity related to the behavioral and attitudinal effects of inequality and social status. The paper is due in class on March 12 and will count for 25 percent of your final grade. Paper grades will be deducted 1 mark (i.e., 1/25 of the total paper grade) per day that they are late. Electronic copies of the paper will not be accepted—students must hand in a hard copy. The paper should be no shorter than 3 pages but no longer than 5 pages in length, double-spaced, and in 12-point font. In order to protect the integrity of the in-class activity, I cannot give specific information about the assignment at this time, but more details will be provided when this paper is officially assigned.

Status Group Inequality Paper: Due in class on April 2

Students will write a final term paper on racial, ethnic, and/or gender inequality for this course. The paper is due in class on April 2 and will count for 25 percent of your final grade. Paper grades will be deducted 1 mark (i.e., 1/25 of the total paper grade) per day that they are late. Electronic copies of the paper will not be accepted—students must hand in a hard copy. The paper should be no shorter than 6 pages but no longer than 8 pages in length, double-spaced, and in 12-point font. This writing assignment will invite you to be creative in applying theories and research from the course to a social event in

the news related to status group inequality or conflict. These papers should attempt to explain the event of interest in terms of the social psychological theories and concepts covered in the course. Papers will be evaluated for the structure of their arguments, quality of supporting evidence, and grammar. Before writing your first draft, it will help to take some time to select a topic that interests you and 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 to material covered in the course or to outside sources. 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 material. In addition to submitting a paper, students will also deliver a short 5 minute oral presentation to the class in which they should briefly outline the event, argument, and evidence presented in their paper. The oral presentation will count for 5 percent of your final grade and will be marked on a pass/fail basis.

Grades

Grades for this course will be assigned as follows: weekly reaction essays (15 percent), norm breaching project (30 percent), economic inequality paper (25 percent), and status group inequality paper (30 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 the instructor's office hours. The following are guidelines for email communication with your 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.

Late Assignments

If you miss a paper deadline for an excusable reason, do not contact the instructor unless you have first followed the steps described here. In case of illness, you must supply a duly completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca) within one week of the missed assignment deadline. A doctor's note by itself is not acceptable. The form must be scanned and emailed to the instructor. If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must supply a letter from your college registrar within one week of the missed deadline. The letter must also be scanned and emailed to the instructor.

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 advanced-level undergraduate course. Students are expected to enter the class with some background in sociology and are expected to carefully prepare for class by completing the assigned readings, by devoting some time to reflecting on the material, and by coming to class ready to discuss them. Class sessions are designed to build upon students’ own efforts.

This course uses the textbook, Elliot, Timothy D. Wilson, and Robin M. Akert (Eds.). 2010. *Social Psychology (7th Edition)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall (henceforth “Aronson et al.”). It can be purchased online from Amazon.ca, Coursesmart.com, or you can borrow and scan my desk copy. Additional readings not included in the textbook are hyperlinked below or posted on the course blackboard site.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 8: Introduction

Assignments:

NO REACTION ESSAY DUE THIS WEEK

Aronson et al. Read Pp. 1-21.

January 15: Theories and Methods in Social Psychology

Assignments:

Aronson et al. Read Pp. 22-42.

Rohall, D. E., M. A. Milkie, and J. W. Lucas. 2011. *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives (2nd Edition)*. New York: Allyn and Bacon. Read Pp. 25-42. PDF posted on blackboard.

January 22: Conformity, Obedience, and Group Processes

Assignments:

Aronson et al. Read Pp. 210-285.

Zimbardo, P. 2008. *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding how Good People Turn Evil*. New York: Random House. Read Pp. 3-22, 258-296. PDF posted on blackboard.

January 29: Social Cognition and Identity

Assignments:

PROPOSAL FOR NORM BREACHING EXPERIMENT DUE IN CLASS

Aronson et al. Read Pp. 50-75 and 116-144.

Correll, J., B. Park, C. M. Judd, and B. Wittenbrink. 2002. "The Police Officer's Dilemma: Using Ethnicity to Disambiguate Potentially Threatening Individuals." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83:1314-1329. [Link to PDF](#).

Rosenthal, R. and L. F. Jacobson. 1968. "Pygmalion in the Classroom." *The Urban Review* September:16-20. PDF posted on blackboard.

February 5: Socialization and Human Development

Assignments:

Rohall, D. E., M. A. Milkie, and J. W. Lucas. 2011. *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives (2nd Edition)*. New York: Allyn and Bacon. Read Pp. 150-185. PDF posted on blackboard.

Correll, S. 2004. "Constraints into Preferences: Gender, Status, and Emerging Career Aspirations." *American Sociological Review* 69:93-113. [Link to PDF](#).

February 12 Norm-Breaching Project Presentations

NORM-BREACHING PAPER/PRESENTATION DUE IN CLASS

NO REACTION ESSAY DUE THIS WEEK

February 19: NO CLASS (READING WEEK)

February 26: Psychological, Emotional, and Behavioral Effects of Economic Inequality

Assignments:

NO REACTION ESSAY DUE THIS WEEK

Read instructions for the Monopoly board game. PDF posted on blackboard.

March 5: Health Effects of Economic Inequality

Assignments:

Pickett, K. and R. Wilkinson. 2011. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. New York: Bloomsbury Press. Read Pp. 49-103. PDF posted on blackboard.

March 12: Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Assignments:

ECONOMIC INEQUALITY PAPER DUE IN CLASS

NO REACTION ESSAY DUE THIS WEEK

Aronson et al. Read Pp. 386-421.

Sherif, M. 1988. *The Robbers Cave Experiment: Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. Read Pp. 1-50, 199-214. PDF posted on blackboard.

March 19: Continuity and Change in Racial and Gender Attitudes

Assignments:

Sears, D. O., C. P. Hensler, and L. K. Speer. 1979. "White's Opposition to Busing: Self-interest or Symbolic Politics?" *The American Political Science Review* 73:369-84. [Link to PDF](#).

Bobo, L., J. R. Kluegel, and R. A. Smith. 1997. "Laissez-faire Racism: The Crystallization of a Kinder, Gentler, Anti-black Ideology." Pp. 15-42 in S. A. Tuch and J. K. Martin (Eds.), *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and Change*, Westport, CT: Praeger. PDF posted on blackboard.

Sigall, H. and R. Page. 1971. "Current Stereotypes: A Little Fading, A Little Faking."

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 18:247–55. [Link to PDF](#).

Macdonald, Nancy. 2015. “Welcome to Winnipeg: Where Canada’s Racism Problem is at its Worst.” <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/welcome-to-winnipeg-where-canadas-racism-problem-is-at-its-worst/>

March 26: Deviance and Inequality

Assignments:

Rohall, David E., Melissa A. Milkie, and Jeffrey W. Lucas. 2011. *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives (2nd Edition)*. New York: Allyn and Bacon. Read Pp. 190-220. PDF posted on blackboard.

Becker, H. S. 1973. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press. Read Pp. 1-53. PDF posted on blackboard.

April 2: Status Group Inequality Project Presentations

Assignments:

STATUS GROUP INEQUALITY PAPER/PRESENTATION DUE IN CLASS

NO REACTION ESSAY DUE THIS WEEK