
New Topics in Sociology:
Sociology 497H1S: Policy and Inequality in Post-Secondary Education
WINTER 2018

Class Time: Mondays 4-6pm
Location: SS2101
Instructor: Mitchell McIvor
Email: mitchell.mcivor@mail.utoronto.ca
Office Hours: Tuesday 12-2pm
Office: Room 335, Department of Sociology, 725 Spadina Avenue

1. Prerequisites:

The prerequisite for taking this course is 1.0 FCE at the SOC 300+ level. Students without this prerequisite will be removed from the course without notice by the department.

2. Course Overview:

This course explores post-secondary inequality and policy using a structure designed to develop self-autonomy and critical thinking skills. The course builds off and integrates knowledge you have acquired throughout your degree by asking you to engage in a self-directed original group research project. Students will join into groups of three and together will choose a research topic related to post-secondary education. The course will take a semi problem-based learning approach with the group research project being central to the course. Most classes will be structured as follows:

A: 4:10-4:30 = Lecture on weekly class topic (see “8. Course Schedule” for topics);

B: 4:30-4:45 = Group discussion on lecture and issue being considered;

C: 4:45-5:15 = Skills workshop (see “8. Course Schedule” for topics);

D: 5:15-6 = Self-directed group work

A: Each week we will take-up a different topic related to post-secondary inequality and policy which will be presented in the form of a lecture by the instructor. These brief lectures to begin each class will give students a succinct overview of the topic at hand while also serving as a template for group presentations that will occur later in the semester.

B: This portion of class is dedicated to hearing each others’ voice on the issue at hand and discussing the lecture content.

C: Each week we will engage in an instructor led workshop on a skill that is directly relevant to your group project. These workshops are designed: (i) to be directly relevant to the stage of the research project groups are currently engaged with, (ii) to provide guidance on how to move forward and progress on the research project, and (iii) to serve as a segue into the group discussion period.

D: Each week groups will be given a minimum of 45 minutes to discuss within their groups progress made over the prior week, issues arising or problems encountered, as well as to develop a plan for the following week. The instructor will be available to help with questions or issues that arise during this time.

3. Course Objectives:

- (1) To hone critical thinking and independence in analyzing an issue of priority to you;
- (2) To improve skills related to writing and presenting to a non-academic audience;
- (3) To gain experience working within a group on an original self-directed research project;
- (4) To participate in public sociology or sociology that engages with the broader public;
- (5) To learn about current issue in post-secondary education.

4. Course Readings:

The course material presented by the instructor will be available on blackboard or electronically through the University of Toronto library website. Students are also encouraged to use the library and library website while engaging in their independent group research projects. No textbook or paid materials are required for this course.

5. Course Evaluation & Requirements:

| Assignment | Weight |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Weekly Writing Assignments | 6 x 3% each = 18% |
| Group Meetings with Instructor | 2 x 2% each = 4% |
| OpEd Assignment | 10% |
| Final Group Presentation | 15% |
| Final Group Policy Report | 25% |
| Personal Reflection on Group Project | 8% |
| Final Test | 20% |
| <hr/> | |
| Total: 100% | |

5-i: Weekly Writing Assignment (WWA):

Each week you will be assigned a writing assignment at the end of class to be completed individually and turned in at the beginning of the following class. Each of these will be between 2-3 pages double spaced and each will comprise 3% of your final grade. Specific instructions for each writing assignment will be provided at the end of each class.

5-ii: Group Meetings with Instructor:

Each group will be asked to meet with the instructor at two different points in the semester. The first will be in Week 3 (January 23-26) and the second will be in Week 6 (February 12-16). These meetings will be scheduled by appointment and are an opportunity to talk through your project with the instructor. The meetings are marked on a credit no credit basis.

5-iii: OpEd Assignment (February 12th, 2018):

Each student will individually submit an Op-ed (opinion editorial) that is to be between 750 and 1000 words. This Op-ed assignment will require you to take a stance on the issue your group has chosen and will challenge you to write a short, succinct, convincing piece.

5-iv: Final Group Presentation (March 19th or 26th, 2018):

Each group will make a 20minute presentation on the findings of their policy report to the class in either week 10 or 11. Each group member is expected to present some of their group material.

5-v: Final Group Policy Report (Due March 12th, 2018):

Each group will jointly author a policy report on a topic of their choice. The policy report will be 12-15 pages double spaced and must be well informed with both academic sources and non-academic sources.

5-vi: Personal Reflection on Group Project (Due April 10th, 2018):

Each individual will submit a personal reflection on how their group project went. This offers a chance to reflect on the group dynamics, what worked and did not work, as well as individual contributions of the group members. Specific questions to answer will be provided by the instructor.

5-vii: Final Test (April 2nd, 2018):

On the last day of class we will have a written exam. The exam will be open book and is based on skills developed through the course. It will consist of one essay question in which you review and critically evaluate a policy report provided by the instructor.

6. Course Expectations:

This seminar is likely structured differently than other seminars you may have encountered. It requires weekly writing assignments and independent group work which will undoubtedly involve some meetings with your group outside of class time. I require group work because: (1) we know from employers that being able to work as part of a team is a valuable skill, (2) because as individuals we stand to gain from incorporating others' voices and perspectives; and (3) because it provides you a chance to learn from your peers. I have designed the course to make the group work go as smoothly as possible which includes providing class time to conduct group meetings. Keep in mind that the group assignments are a ten-double spaced page report and a 20 minute presentation. The short length of these assignments places emphasis on the quality of the ideas and writing which will be aided by working as a group with diverse voices, experiences, and opinions. With that being said it is my expectation you approach the group work with an open mind and if this is something you are unsure of please talk to me as soon as possible.

7. Course Policies & Important Information for Students:

7-i: Blackboard:

Blackboard will be an important resource during this class. If you misplace this syllabus you can download an electronic copy from the course site on blackboard and I will post the lecture slides on blackboard the night before each lecture. Course readings not available through the university of Toronto Library website will also be provided via blackboard in the course materials section. I will occasionally also post supplementary readings and links to online media material (videos, online PowerPoint presentations, etc.) for each topic. You are not required to review the supplementary resources, but they can provide additional help or alternative ways of understanding. Finally, the discussion board can (and should!) be used to ask questions and discuss class materials with your classmates. I will monitor the discussion board and respond to questions posted in the threads.

7-ii: Lecture & Attendance:

Full and complete attendance (on time) is required to do well in this course. Students are responsible for being aware of what is said in class (including administrative announcements) as well as for the content presented in class. Additional content not found on the posted lecture slides will be presented during lecture and will be important to your evaluation. To do well in the course students will need to attend class and take notes to supplement the lecture slides posted on Blackboard. If you miss a lecture it is your responsibility to find a fellow student willing to share notes (the instructor will not provide notes on missed lecture).

7-iii: Academic Dishonesty

University policy on academic dishonesty must be strictly followed and cheating will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an test or assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: 'Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty'), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It

is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. You should familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

7-iv: Emails

Students are encouraged to email the instructor with questions or problems related to the course but please strive to be professional in your emails. When emailing your instructor include "SOC497" and a brief description in the subject line, so your email can be easily prioritized. Emails will typically be answered within 48 hours. It is strongly preferred that you use your university associated email and please follow general email etiquette—have an appropriate opening (ex: Hi, Good morning) and closing (ex: Thank-you, Sincerely), use proper spelling and grammar, and avoid using acronyms (ex: ttyl, fwiw, imo, asap, etc.). Keep in mind that for simple questions, email is the preferred method of communication. For longer questions, however, students should schedule an appointment with the instructor.

7-v: Late Policy

Late assignments will be subject to a 10% per day late penalty unless there is a need for accommodations that is verified by Accessibility Services, a Verification of Illness form, or by your college registrar. If you need accommodations for an assignment, please speak to the instructor as soon as possible. Information on each type of verification (AS, illness, or registrar) is provided below.

7-vi: Accessibility Accommodations

If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, Accessibility Services is your home base for support. It is important to contact the office as soon as possible so that accommodations for your needs are in place before classes start. All information about your disability is confidential and won't be shared with units outside of Accessibility Services without your consent. Accessibility services can be contacted by e-mail (www.accessibility.utoronto.ca) or alternatively you can reach them by phone at 416-978-8060. If you require an accommodation please forward the instructor your AS letter of Academic Accommodations as soon as possible.

7-vii: Illness Related Accommodations

If you require accommodation due to illness you will need to have an original Verification of Student Illness or Injury form completed by a doctor on or before the day of the course activity you require accommodation for (you may find the form at www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca). All documentation must be received via email or in a sealed envelope addressed to the course instructor.

7-viii: Other Accommodations

Your college registrar's office is there to support you in the event of an illness, personal, or family related emergency or issue that is hindering your success as a student. If there is an ongoing issue that hinders your studies, please contact your registrar as they will be able to connect you with appropriate resources and supports and can provide documentation to your instructors that will aid in receiving accommodations. The list of registrars and their contact information is below:

8. Course Schedule

| Week: | Date: | Content: |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | January 8 th , 2018 | Topic: Introduction to the Course & Course Overview Skills Workshop: Owning Your Voice |
| 2 | January 15 th , 2018 | Topic: Student Debt Skills Workshop: Setting the Scope of a Research Project <i>DUE: WWA- Introductions</i> <i>*WWW- Weekly Writing Assignment</i> |
| 3 | January 22 nd , 2018 | Topic: Is University Worth it? Skills Workshop: How do we know what we know? <i>DUE: WWA- Group Project Position Paper</i> |
| 4 | January 29 th , 2018 | Topic: Experiences at University- Gender Skills Workshop: How to Write for a Broad Audience <i>DUE: WWA- Reflection on What Makes Good Writing</i> |
| 5 | February 5 th , 2018 | Topic: Experiences at University- Race Skills Workshop: How to write an Op-Ed <i>DUE: WWA- Op-Ed Review & Reflection</i> |
| 6 | February 12 th , 2018 | Topic: Experiences at University- Socioeconomic Status Skills Workshop: Reviewing Academic Articles for Policy Reports <i>DUE: Op-Ed Assignment</i> |
| <i>February Break- No Classes</i> | | |
| 7 | February 26 th , 2018 | Topic: None, this week will be an extended skills workshop. Skills Workshop: How to Write a Policy Report <i>DUE: WWA- Policy Report Review</i> |
| 8 | March 5 th , 2018 | Topic: The Corporatization of Universities Skills Workshop: How to Edit Effectively <i>DUE: WWA- Editing Assignment</i> |
| 9 | March 12 th , 2018 | Topic: International Post-Secondary Education Comparisons Skills Workshop: Making Effective Presentations <i>*There is no group discussion period this week</i> <i>DUE: POLICY REPORT DUE</i> |
| 10 | March 19 th , 2018 | Final Group Presentations <i>Nothing due this week!</i> |
| 11 | March 26 th , 2018 | Final Group Presentations <i>Nothing due this week!</i> |
| 12 | April 2 nd , 2018 | Final Test <i>Nothing due this week!</i> |