

University of British Columbia
Sociology Department
Social Inequality (SOC1 361A), Fall 2017

Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-2:00
Chemistry Building, C126

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Course Description: We often think of inequality such as poverty or homelessness as fixed states of society; as normal and expected facets stemming from the behaviors or lack thereof of individuals. The fact that poverty levels ebb and flow by time and place tell us that poverty is a *socially derived pattern*. **Social inequality** refers to the relatively long lasting unequal conditions between groups of people that have implications for the opportunities they have and burdens they experience. Sociologists disagree with common-sense/lay theories that locate the causes of inequality to innate or personality flaws (i.e.: ‘laziness’). Instead, they look at how power, resources, burdens and opportunities are unequally distributed in society on the basis of characteristics such as class, race, gender, sexuality, location, age, and more. As the name implies, *social* inequality is not about *any* differences between individuals (i.e., running speed) but differences between *groups* that are of *social significance* (i.e., race). Sociologists are interested in identifying inequalities and explaining *why* they exist, *how* they are maintained, and *what* changes are needed to create a more equal society. The latter emphasis on alleviation is because inequality is a **social problem** with terrible personal and social costs. In using the concept ‘social problems’, we are highlighting that (some) people view (some) social conditions as undesirable while others view it as fair. As such, there is an element of human agency, specifically, claims-making, in what is considered an inequality and what is done about it. In this course, you will learn how classical theorists including Marx, Weber and Durkheim have shaped the discipline’s key traditions to social inequality research. Attention is placed on substantive themes including social problems, group conflict, power, social structure, privilege, interlocking systems of oppression, agency, and social change. Through readings, class discussions, videos, and guest lectures, you will learn about a number of social inequalities in the Canadian-context.

Reading Materials:

- At the bookstore: Diana Kendall, Edward G. Thompson, and Vicki L. Nygaard. (2015). *Social Problems in a Diverse Society*, Fourth Canadian Edition, 4/E. Pearson Education: Toronto.
- Some readings will be made available on Canvas. Make sure you have registered for your account by going to canvas.ubc.ca. This course will be on your Canvas dashboard, and so too will the syllabus, some course readings, announcements, and other course-related matters.
- Some reading materials available online through library database or internet search.

Course Outline

Note: Syllabus and speakers schedule are subject to change based on the Instructor's assessment.

Week 1 – September 5

- No Classes

Week 1 – September 7

- Read Chapter 1: *Social Problems in the 21st Century*
- Lecture: Social Problems

Week 2 – September 12

- Read Chapter 2: *Wealth and Poverty*
- Lecture: Social Inequality
- **Group Discussion 1: Bases of Poverty**

Week 2 – September 14

- Read: Gerhard Göhler. (2009). *Power to and Power over*. In The Sage Handbook of Power. (Available online through library)
- Read: Edward Grabb and Monica Hwang. (2009) *Corporate Concentration, Foreign Ownership, and State Involvement in the Canadian Economy* (Canvas)
- Lecture: Karl Marx on Class, Class Struggle, and Change (Pt. 1)

Week 3 – September 19

- Read: Grabb and Hwang. (2009). *Socio-Economic Bases of Social Inequality* (Canvas)
- Read: Peter Urmetzer and Neil Guppy. (2009). *Changing Income Inequality in Canada* (Canvas)
- Read: James Davies. (2009). *The Distribution of Wealth and Economic Inequality* (Canvas)
- Read: Guppy & Robin Hawkshaw. (2009). *Defining, Measuring, and Reducing Poverty* (Canvas)
- Lecture: Karl Marx on Class, Class Struggle, and Change (Pt. 2)
- **Group Discussion 2: Consequences of Poverty**

Week 3 – September 21

- Read: Seth Klein et al. (2008). *A Poverty Reduction Plan for BC. Pages 5-29* (www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/poverty-reduction-plan-bc – Click “Download” Icon)
- Lecture: Max Weber on the Multiple Roots of Inequality (Pt. 1)

Week 4 – September 26

- Read: Klein et al. (2008). *A Poverty Reduction Plan for BC. Pages 30-55*
- **Guest Lecture (TBC): BC Poverty Reduction Coalition**

Week 4 – September 28

- Read: Melisa Brittain and Cindy Blackstock. (2015). *First Nations Child Poverty*. Pages 6-43 (www.fncairingsociety.com/publications/first-nations-child-poverty-literature-review-and-analysis-2015)
- Lecture: Max Weber on the Multiple Roots of Inequality (Pt. 2)

Week 5 – October 3

- Read: Brittain and Blackstock. (2015). *First Nations Child Poverty*. Pages 60-101
- Lecture: Durkheim, Social Solidarity and Social Inequality
- **Group Discussion 3: How Colonialism Generates Poverty**

Week 5 – October 5

- Read Chapter 3: *Racism and Ethnic Inequality*
- Lecture: Critical Race Theory or Racism and Ethnic Inequality
- **Group Discussion 4: White Privilege**

Week 6 – October 10

- Read Chapter 4: *Gender Inequality*
- Lecture: Gender Inequality
- **Group Discussion 5: Can Men Be Allies?**

Week 6 – October 12

- Read: Andrea Smith. (2006). *Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing* (Canvas)
- **Guest Lecture: Sam Stiegler**

Week 7 – October 17

- Read Chapter 5: *Inequality Based on Age*
- Lecture: Age Inequality (Pt. 1)
- **Guest Lecture: Kay Ho**

Week 7 – October 19

- Read: Donovan Ceaser. (2013). *Unlearning Adulthood at Green Shoots: Age Inequality Within an Environmental Education Programme*. *Ethnography and Education*, 9: 167-181.
- Lecture: Age Inequality (Pt. 2)
- **Group Discussion 6: Adulthood**

Week 8 – October 24

- Read Chapter 6: *Inequality Based on Sexual Orientation*
- Read: Jamie Bradburn. (2015). *Historicist: Raiding the Bathhouses* (www.torontoist.com/2015/05/historicist-raiding-the-bathhouses)
- Lecture: Sexual Orientation Inequality

- **Group Discussion 7: Heteronormativity**

Week 8 – October 26

- Read: Sulaimon Giwa and Cameron Greensmith. (2012). *Race Relations and Racism in the LGBTQ Community of Toronto: Perceptions of Gay and Queer Social Service Providers of Color*. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59: 149-185.
- **Guest Lecture (TBC): Black Lives Matter Vancouver**

Week 9 – October 31

- Read Chapter 9: *Crime and Criminal Justice*
- Read: Desmond Cole. (2015). *The Skin I'm In: I've Been Interrogated by Police More than 50 Times—All Because I'm Black* (Online: Toronto Life)
- Lecture: Crime and Criminal Justice (Pt. 1)

Week 9 – November 2

- Read: Lisa Monchalin. (2016). *The Real Criminals: Government and Corporate Priorities and Their Failure to Follow Agreements* (Canvas)
- Read: Nancy Macdonald. (2016). *Canada's Prisons are the 'New Residential Schools'* (Online: Macleans)
- Lecture: Crime and Criminal Justice (Pt. 2)
- **Group Discussion 8: Crime and Inequality**

Week 10 – November 7

- Read Chapter 10: *Health, Illness, and Health Care as Social Problems*
- Read: Naomi Anderson. (2005). *Health Disparities in Aboriginal Canada*. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 96: S45-S61.
- Lecture: HIHC as Social Problems or Reducing BC's Surgery Wait Times
- **Group Discussion 9: Abelism**

Week 10 – November 9

- Read: Angela Hilmers et al. (2012). *Neighborhood Disparities in Access to Healthy Foods and Their Effects on Environmental Justice*. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102: 1644–1654.
- **Guest Lecture: BC Health Coalition**

Week 11 – November 14

- Read Chapter 16: *Global Social Problems – War and Terrorism*
- Lecture: War and Terrorism
- **Group Discussion 10: Military-Industrial Complex**

Week 11 – November 16

- Read Chapter 16: *Global Social Problems – War and Terrorism*
- Lecture Video: War Made Easy (2007)

Week 12 – November 21

- *Read:* Brittain and Blackstock. (2015). *First Nations Child Poverty*. Pages 118-133
- Lecture: Colonialism and Neocolonialism
- **Group Discussion 11: Self-Determination**

Week 12 – November 23 (**Essay due electronically by 12pm**)

- *Read:* Arthur Manuel. (2017). *Until Canada Gives Indigenous People Their Land Back, There Can Never Be Reconciliation* (Online: www.rabble.ca)
- *Read:* Indigenous Action Media. *Accomplices, Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex* (www.indigenousaction.org/wp-content/uploads/accomplices-not-allies-print-friendly.pdf)
- **Guest Lecture: Kanahus Manuel, Daughter of Arthur Manuel**

Week 13 – November 28 (**Meme due electronically by 12pm**)

- *Read:* Carol Agocs. (2002). *Canada's Employment Equity Legislation and Policy: The Gap Between Policy and Practice*. *International Journal of Manpower*, 23: 256-276.
- *Read:* Vanmala Hiranandani. (2012). *Diversity Management in the Canadian Workplace: Towards an Antiracism Approach*. *Urban Studies Research*, 1-13.
- **Workshop (TBC): Equity and Inclusion Office (UBC)**
- **Group Discussion 12: Equity and Justice**

Week 13 – November 30

- Lecture: Class Review

Assignments and Grading

Mandatory Attendance

A sign up sheet will be passed around the class. Make sure to sign it before class ends. Class attendance is mandatory. Signing will not be permitted once the class is over. Grades will be deducted for any class absence that has not been discussed with me beforehand or within 24hrs after class. Official documentation is required for the reason you are/were unable to attend class. We will then discuss how you can make up for it. In order to expand your understanding of the course topic, in lectures I will introduce you to new concepts, ideas and theories that may not be covered in your reading material. Hence the importance of attending class. **Total: 10%**

Group Discussion Facilitator

This is a large class, in order to accommodate meaningful class discussions you will be assigned to smaller groups of 6. There are 12 assigned group discussions in total. Each person will choose two assigned topics they would like to facilitate. The facilitator will give a 10-minute presentation to the group on how their assigned topic plays out in Vancouver (or the Greater Vancouver area). They will also identify and speak about one group or organization in the GVA that is doing work around the social inequality/ies their topic falls under. The facilitator will then facilitate a 15-minute group discussion. Facilitators must create and provide a handout(s) to their group. They must also electronically submit (on Canvas) a one-page summary of their

presentation and the organization they have identified by 12pm on the day of their presentation. **Total: 30% (15% each)**

Final Paper

For your final essay you will choose one theoretical perspective (Conflict, Interactionism, Functionalism, or Feminism) and use it to examine one *specific* social problem of your choice. This is a 12-page, double-spaced essay. The core of your paper should have the following three portions:

1. A summary of your theoretical perspective (1 page)
2. A literature review on how it has been applied to study your chosen social problem (2 pages)
3. Your personal application of the theoretical perspective on your chosen social problem (7 pages)

Your conclusion (1 page) should consist of a reflection on the advantages and limits of your theoretical perspective for your chosen social problem. Your introduction should also be 1 page. The paper is due November 23rd by 12pm on Canvas. **Total: 30%**

Exam

The exam will take place during the regular exam session. It will consist of multiple choice questions, concepts you will be asked to explain, and a short essay question. The exam will solely be based on the textbook and lectures. Make-up exams are only possible if you have consulted with me beforehand or within 24hrs after the exam. Official documentation for why you will miss/missed the exam is required. **Total: 30%**

Bonus: Meme

For bonus points, create and submit a meme inspired by your readings or the lecture. Look at some memes online that you like. What about them do you like? For some, a good meme highlights a discrepancy in society, offers a counter-narrative or clever comeback, evokes emotion, and can be read under 15 seconds. Your meme should be socially conscious and not perpetuate –isms. It should also be accompanied with one paragraph explaining the meme and the reading or lecture content it is speaking to. Due November 28th by 12pm on Canvas. **Extra: 5%**

Class Policies

Laptops and phones:

- Cell phones should be on mute (no buzzing allowed) or turned off at the beginning of class.
- Laptops are permitted in class for the strict purpose of taking notes. If it is observed that you are using it for something unrelated you will be told to close the laptop for the remainder of the class.

Preparation and Participation:

- All readings must be done prior class so that class discussions are meaningful, informed, and relevant to the topic.
- Come to class prepared to participate in activities and discussions.

Written Assignments:

- Late assignments will be deducted 5% if handed in late and each 24 hours after the deadline.
- Must be written in 12 point, Times New Roman, double-spaced, with a 2.54cm margins on all sides
- Must have page numbers at the bottom right of the page
- Must contain a title page and a reference page (these do not have page numbers)
- Must follow the American Sociological Association (ASA) citation and reference guideline
- Must be submitted electronically on Canvas by November 23rd at 12pm
- Extension only possible in urgent situations. Get in touch with me as soon as possible before or within 24 hours after the due date.

Academic Dishonesty: Review UBC's "Academic Calendar 2017/18" for university policies pertaining to academic honesty, misconduct, and disciplinary measures:
www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/?tree=3,54,111,959