

# **SOCIAL INEQUALITY (INEQUALITIES)**

## **SOCI 361**

**Tuesday and Thursday 10am-1pm**

**BUCHANNAN B 215**

Instructor: Dr. Shayna Plaut  
University of British Columbia  
Department of Sociology  
604-817-0311

[Shayna.plaut@ubc.ca](mailto:Shayna.plaut@ubc.ca)

Office hours: Thursday 4-530pm ANSO Room 125

Teaching Assistant: Tanvi Sirari

[tanvi.dreamer@gmail.com](mailto:tanvi.dreamer@gmail.com)

Office hours: Wednesday 4-5pm ANSO Room 3112

### **Course Description**

This is an upper level undergraduate sociology course meeting twice a week for three (3) hours. The goal of the course is for students to acquire a more robust understanding of power, power imbalances and reshaping power within different institutional and social settings on local, national and global scales. Particular focus is placed on recognizing how there are *overlapping* modes of oppression and power and how this is framed and/or ignored. The course problematizes what “inequality” can mean and takes a critical look at the historical, economic and structural entrenchment of inequalities (note plural). A large focus of the class is on potential agency -- how people can, and do, create alternatives within and across different social groups. Considerable attention is paid to understanding notions of norms, norm creation and the institutionalization of norms; the course also problematizes the notion of “helping” other countries/societies to “progress” which can often entrench inequality even further. This is a multi-medium course which not only engages in critical sociological texts but also novels, memoirs, films, journalism and guest presentations. Through engaging in more personal case studies it will become evident that categories such as, ethnicity, class, race, sexual identity, ability, gender, immigration status, language and criminality are often interwoven and malleable – and can be changed and challenged.

### **Required Texts (texts are available at the bookstore or you can find other means of acquiring them)**

- Armstrong, Jeanette (1990) *Slash*. Penticton, BC: Theytus Publishers
- Yunus, Mohammad (2003) *Banker to the poor: Micro-lending and the battle against world poverty*. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.

Articles/excerpts available under “Course Content” and filed based on the day assigned:

- An-na'im, Abdullah Ahmed (1990). Human rights in the Muslim world. In Henry Steiner, Philip Alston & Ryan Goodman (Eds.) *International human rights in context: Law politics morals* (pp. 531-539). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baer, Madeline & Brysk, Alison (2009). New rights for private wrongs: Female genital mutilation and global framing dialogues. In Clifford Bob (Ed.), *The international struggle for new human rights* (pp. 14-29). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bogert, Caroll (2011) Whose News: The changing media landscape and NGOs <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2011/whose-news>
- Califia, Pat (2000/1994) *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex*, San Francisco: Cleis Press, “Antidote to Shame” (pp. 139-150) and “Gender Bending: Playing with Roles and Reversals,” (pp.181-190)
- Hill Collins, P. (1986/2008). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought. In A. Jaggar (Ed.), *Just methods: An interdisciplinary feminist reader* (pp. 308–320). Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Hall, Stuart (1989/1996), “Ethnicity, Identity and Difference,” in *Becoming National: A Reader* edited by Eley and Suny, pp. 339-351
- Mackey, Eva (2005) “Universal Rights in Conflict,”: ‘Backlash’ and ‘benevolent resistance’ to indigenous land claims.” *Anthropology Today* Vol 21 No 2, April 2005
- Mamdani, Mahmood (2004). *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*. New York, NY: Three Leaves Press. (Introduction and Chapter 1, (pp. 3-62)
- MOSAIC and Pivot Legal Society (2008) A Cultural Divide: A Neighbourhood Study of Immigrant Rental Housing in Vancouver <http://www.mosaicbc.com/sites/all/files/publications-public/CULTURAL%20DIVIDE.pdf>
- Quinney, Richard, (2001/1970) *The Social Reality of Crime*. New Brunswick, NJ. Transaction Publications (pp. ix-xxiv and 3-25)
- Razack, Sherene H. (1999/2008) *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press (Introduction, Chapter 1)
- Sylvester, Christine (2000) “Development Poetics,” *Alternatives: Global Local, Political*, Vol 25, No 3, pp. 335-351

**We will be watching the following films:**

*A Red Girl's Reasoning*

*Schooling the World: White Man's Last Burden*

*Pigeon Park Savings*

*Frantz Fanon*

*Cedar and Bamboo* – NOTE: you are responsible for locating via library or online

**Attendance Policy:**

This is a discussion/seminar class; there is an expectation of participation and there are no power point slides. Attendance at all classes, including all films and guest lectures, is *mandatory*. Students are expected to attend all classes and read the assignments so as to be prepared for class and online discussion. Experience shows that there is a direct relation between attendance and performance in the course. I will deduct two (2) points from participation for any unexcused absence. **An excused absence means you contact the instructor, me, prior to your absence (barring an emergency and then you contact me as soon as possible). You can reach me via email or phone. I do not have internet on my phone so if you need to reach me quickly, call. You are responsible for any class work or homework we go over or due during your absence.**

**Policies for Written Assignments:**

**All written work (response papers, proposal and final “white paper”) will be turned in hard copy at the beginning of the class it is due.**

Before submitting your written assignments, please make sure they are:

- written 12 point, Times New Roman or Arial Font. Please use 1.5 spacing or double spacing;
- contains the title of your paper; your name; and the date of submission
- stapled with page numbers marked at the bottom right hand of your paper.

Please follow the citation guidelines for the **American Psychology Association (APA)** for all written assignments. A guideline for how to cite different types of texts using the APA format can be found online.

**Late assignments will be deducted 5% for each working day it is submitted after the deadline.** Exceptions will be made for medical or family crises. If you experience a medical, emotional or personal problems that detracts from your academic performance, please contact the Faculty of Arts Academic Advising Office, located in Buchanan A201, phone 604-822-4028. **I only make exceptions for missed deadlines with a letter from the Arts Advising Office.** For more information:

<http://www.arts.ubc.ca/students/degree-planning-advising/advising.html>

**Participation:**

Active involvement in this course is imperative. We will be discussing many volatile issues, and it is vital that students do the assigned readings before the class, as well as be prepared to talk intelligently about them with others. **You are required to post a reflection and question every Sunday by 6pm and a response to your classmates by Wednesday by 6pm.** We will also be watching films; films are considered texts as well and should be used as part of your analysis. Each group will be responsible for providing snacks for the day they present.

**Groups:** This is a large class so you will be assigned to smaller groups in order to better facilitate discussions/in class work and for your presentation of a text. Group assignments will take place at the beginning of the second week.

**Syllabus is subject to change on based on the needs of the class and the assessment of the instructor.**

**Grading:**

- You are required to post a reflection and question based on the reading **every Sunday** (starting May 14<sup>th</sup>) by 6pm and a response to your classmates by Wednesday (starting May 13<sup>th</sup>) by 6pm. (ten reflections/responses at 10 points each = 100 points)
- Each student will work with a small group (6-7 people) to lead a 40 minute class discussion on one of the texts; we will be signing up the second week of class. Emphasis should be on the framing of issues based on socio-cultural and political ideologies, structures that maintain such ideologies and the challenges to those ideologies. Attention should be paid on the institutions but also the thinking/logic *behind* such institutions and how the authority of those institutions and logics are created and maintained (for example – like Quinney explains, in order to have “law breaking” you need to have “law making” and this perpetuates the power of the courts, the police, policy makers etc.) All discussion leaders are required to have completed the entire text prior to leading the discussion – even if the class has not yet finished the book. In leading the discussion you will also need to create hand outs and/or “attention getting” materials to engage us in your analysis. Each group is responsible for providing snacks for the class on the day they present= **25 points**
- Two short (3-4 pages) written papers are required. The first is a media analysis; the second is applying theoretical analysis of social inequalities in relation to *Slash*. Each paper must have at least three references from material read for class. **25 points each x 2 = 50 points**
- The final project is a strategy/research paper with particular, targeted suggestions for how to address a current example (“case study”) of social inequalities. The case study can be local, national and/or global. The final paper will be modeled after a “white paper” <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-White-Papers>. **You must meet with me individually by May 19th** to discuss possible topics and possible working groups. Working with your group, **you will create one written proposal with your group which will be due on June 2nd. When you submit your proposal each group member is also responsible for identifying three potential interviewees - 50 points.**

You will receive thorough feedback on your proposal and will be mandated to meet with either Shayna or Tanvi to go over such feedback. For the “white paper” (final project), you will be graded on identifying a current issue of social inequality and then analyzing the phenomenon in terms of: identity/identities, power, framing, institutions, agency and means of resistance. You will need to bring in some of the theories/discussions (texts/films/speakers) we have discussed in class. *Each person* will be responsible for conducting an interview so that you can incorporate the perspective of at least one person directly affected and/or affecting such inequalities. You will also be required to create an executive

summary which you will post a day before you are presenting for all of your classmates to read. **100 points.**

- *Each* person is required to do an interview with a person affected and/or affecting social inequality. You will each submit the names of *three* potential interviewees when you turn in your proposal on March 28<sup>th</sup>. The information provided by the interviews will help inform your white paper. You will *each* need to submit field notes of the interview, including how you located that person, and any quotes/impressions that you felt were particularly relevant. If the interview was interpreted please include the name of the interpreter and their relationship to you and the interviewee. Please be sure to ask the person how they want to be referenced. You **must** provide the person with a copy of your final paper. **Total of 25 points.**
- On June 18<sup>th</sup> there will be an oral presentation of the final project/"white paper". This will be modeled after a seminar "working paper." **Total 50 points**

**Total: 400 points**

***Up to 20 points extra credit is available up to the discretion of the instructor. Extra credit can include going to events/talks/art shows etc. that address social inequalities. Exciting events are happening on campus and throughout the city while this class is taking place such as talks, film festivals, as well as forums about social inequality affecting students/staff/faculty ON campus...***

***All extra credit is due June 11th***

**How to read the homework:** All readings and assignments are due the class period *after* they are posted. For example, the homework posted under the May 14th class is due May 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Early Alert:** During the term, I will do my best to reach out and offer support if I am concerned about your academic performance or wellbeing. I also encourage you to come and speak with me if you need assistance.

In addition, I may identify my concerns using Early Alert. The program allows academic, financial, or mental health concerns to be identified sooner and responded to in a more coordinated way. This provides you with the earliest possible connection to resources like academic advising, financial advising, counselling, or other resources and support to help you get back on track.

The information is treated confidentially and is sent because I care about your academic success and wellbeing. For more information, please visit [www.earlyalert.ubc.ca](http://www.earlyalert.ubc.ca).

## **SYLLABUS**

### **WEEK 1 - OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE AND EXPECTATIONS/POSITIONALITY**

#### **May 12**

- Go over syllabus, course expectations
- Drawing identity exercise – ideas of representation and self representation  
Marked/Unmarked

*Homework: Hall, Stuart, "Ethnicity, Identity and Difference," in *Becoming National: A Reader* edited by Eley and Suny, pp. 339-351*

*Watch "Cedar and Bamboo" (available online or at library)*

*Draft posting on the identity/identities and how this relates to inequality/inequalities.*

#### **May 14**

- Explaining themes and assigning group-led discussions
- Screening "To Kill a Sparrow"
- Discussion on the power of labels/norms – and its effects on framing "problems" and "solutions" in the world
- Discuss systemic aspects of how power works:  
norms/codification/institutionalization/bureaucratization/enforcement/  
internalization/resistance (and back again)

*Homework: Quinney; Califia 'Antidote to Shame'*

*Must meet with me by May 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss ideas for white paper – groups WILL be assigned by May 21<sup>st</sup>.*

### **WEEK 2 – UNPACKING POWER – "THE VICTIM," "THE CRIMINAL" AND "THE JUSTICE SYSTEM"**

#### **May 19th**

- Discussing how labels/norms can build and create laws and entrench uneven power
- Deviance/threat/co-optation
- Screening "A Red Girl's Reasoning" (other media sources)
- Introduction to "objectivity" and lecture on strong objectivity (Group discussion)

*Homework: Hill Collins*

#### **May 21**

- Group 1 – presentation on Patricia Hill Collins
- Outsider within/strong objectivity/contextual objectivity
- Assigning topics/explaining proposal
- Group work on proposal

*Homework: Read Herman and Chomsky's "Worthy vs. Unworthy Victims"; Bogert Whose News?; Baer & Brysk in Bob*

### **WEEK 3 – THE ROLE OF POWER IN FRAMING "PROBLEMS" AND "SOLUTIONS"**

#### **May 26**

- Group 2 -- Herman and Chomsky's "Worthy vs. unworthy victims"

- Clarify what is the state, what is civil society, what is an NGO etc.
- Framing/Framing back
- The political economy of news – and the (assumed) importance of audiences
- Screening of Ted Talk by Alisa Miller  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/alisa\\_miller\\_shares\\_the\\_news\\_about\\_the\\_news.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/alisa_miller_shares_the_news_about_the_news.html)
- <http://youtu.be/9U4Ha9HQvMo>

*Homework: First reflection paper -- Select an ongoing, current events – and locate (at least) three different media coverages of each event (include links and/or scans to the coverage). The issue can be in Vancouver or occurring outside of the lower mainland. Using Hill Collin’s discussion of different kinds of objectivity (including the lecture on “strong objectivity” and contextual objectivity), Baer & Brysk’s discussion of “framing and framing back” as well as Hermann and Chomsky’s exploration of the creation (or marginalization) of “victims” – conduct a media analysis: What is the problem? Who are the actors (individuals and institutions)? What are the solutions (laws, inquiries, institutions, funding)? Who is presumed to be the audiences of these different articles? How do you know that? What assumptions of knowledge/norms are evident in the pieces?*

*Mandatory posting: one paragraph summary (abstract) posted about your paper. What was the story and what three media sources did you go to? You are required to read the summary postings from your group for discussion in the subsequent class.*

*Reading: Mamdani Introduction and Chapter 1*

## **May 28**

Group debrief on writing assignment – bring in your media analysis piece to discuss in groups

- Where did you get your information?
- What were the assumptions of audience?
- What were the topics that were covered?
- What topics were NOT covered?
- What institutions were discussed in the stories?
- How was their legitimacy upheld, questioned or diminished?
- What were the differences in different media outlets and/or languages of the media?

Group 3 – Debrief Mamdani – culture talk

*Homework: Read Razack. Proposal due next class!*

## **WEEK 4 – INTERSECTIONING OPRESSIONS AND THE DESIRE “TO HELP.”**

### **June 2**

- Group 4 debrief – Razack
- policy, institutions and and power.
- Equal does not mean same
- Desire for clear categories (Califia and Cedar and Bamboo)
- Screening “Schooling the World”
  - What are the institutions at play here?

- How are cultural stereotypes used to explain socio-economic and political problems and solutions?
- How are equality/inequality envisioned?
- What is the role of colonialism/neo-colonialism/capitalism
- What role does power play here?
- How can we apply Fanon and Yunus here? What role does self determination play or not play?

- Intro to *Slash*

*Homework: Read Mackey; Prologue and Chapters 1-2 of Slash; post question for speaker;*

#### **June 4**

- Guest lecture from Lynda Grey (TBC)
- Screen *We are the Saami* –self-determination and how that is similar but distinct from anti-racism literature
- In class reading and discussion of An-naim
- Desire for clear cut categories/identities

*Homework: Finish Slash; Califia “Gender Bending”*

### **WEEK 5 – RECOGNIZING THE POWER, AND POWER IMBALANCE, OF INSTITUTIONS**

#### **June 9th**

- Group 5 Debrief of *Slash*
- Fanon film – internalized racism the personal/political
- Structures creating hierarchy and co-dependence
- Desire for the stable self and the fear of change

*Homework: Second reflection paper: Using the theories put forward by Razack, Mamdani, Fanon and An-Naim as well as incorporating the guest speaker’s truths, discuss how to engage with a personal, and political, memoir within a sociological lens – recognize the power and inequalities of power in histories, economics, colonialism, race, immigration status, class, gender, sexuality and ability and how these are confronted;*

*Read Developmental Poetics*

*Questions for speaker*

**EXTRA CREDIT DUE NEXT CLASS**

#### **June 11<sup>th</sup>**

- Group 6 – Apply Razack and Fanon to Developmental Poetics
- Guest lecture by Iglia Ivanova (TBC) bringing discussions of the interconnectedness of socio-economic inequality (and local alternatives) including how she goes about conducting research to make policy reports

*Homework: Intro – Chapter 7 of Banker to the Poor*

*MOSAIC report; look at CCPA website*

### **WEEK 6 – REFRAMING THE PROBLEM(S) AND THE SOLUTION(S)**

**June 16<sup>th</sup>**

- Group 7 – Debrief of Banker to the Poor
- *Pigeon Park Savings*
- Group work for final presentations

**Homework: Presentation next class!**

**June 18th**

Final presentations!

**TRANSCRIPTS DUE JUNE 18<sup>TH</sup>**

**WHITE PAPERS DUE, HARD COPY IN MY MAILBOX BY 11:59PM JUNE 25TH**