Sociology 2RR3
Case Studies of Inequality
Fall 2017

Fall 2017
Date and Time: Tuesdays 11:30 – 1:20
Location: LRW 1055

Instructor: Professor Chong
Office: KTH-609 Ext.: 23607
Email: chong@mcmaster.ca

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:30am – 11:30am
Book at tinyurl.com/profchong

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course offers a broad introduction to the sociological study of inequality. The course is divided into three parts. First, students will become familiar with classical approaches and conceptual debates pertaining to the study of inequality. In the second part of the course, students will be introduced to various mechanisms that perpetuate inequality. And in the third and final section, we build upon our understanding to focus on how the reproduction of inequality often depends on an interplay of individuals and social structure. Because this course has a ‘case studies’ element, in Parts 2 and 3 of the course, we will limit our empirical focus to understanding mechanisms and dynamics of inequality as they pertain to finding employment. Although this course uses the process of getting work as a substantive anchor, students will nonetheless be exposed to a wide range of sociological phenomena relevant to the study of inequality including meaning-making, organizational analysis, social networks, and identity.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES
• Students will gain a firm grounding in the basic tools and debates characterizing the study of social inequality
• Students will develop fluency reading secondary texts including meta-reviews in sociology as well as primary texts in the form of original research articles and chapters from sociological monographs.
• Students will be able to make connections between micro and meso-levels phenomena to macro-level outcomes

Texts
Available through McMaster libraries and Avenue to Learn

Expectations and Evaluation:
3 x In-Class Quizzes (Multiple choice and short essay) 65%
In-Class Participation 10%
Tutorial Participation 10%
Final Reflection 15%
[Consultation (5%) + Paper (10%)]

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Course Schedule

Every attempt will be made to follow this schedule, but it is subject to change at Professor’s discretion.

PART 1: HOW CAN WE THINK ABOUT INEQUALITY SOCIOLOGICALLY?

Session 1 (09/05): What is inequality? Concepts and Definitions
Chapter 1 from *Inequality Matters: Diversity and Exclusion in Canada*. By Augie Fleras. Pgs. 3-23.

Session 2 (09/12): Why is there inequality? Theories of Inequality
Selection from Chapter 2 of *Social Inequality in a Global Age*. By Scott Sernau: pgs 41-55.


Session 4 (09/26): In-Class QUIZ #1

PART 2: HOW DOES INEQUALITY OPERATE?
Case Study: Getting Work.

Session 5 (10/03): New economy, New challenges

Session 6 (10/10): Mid Term Recess
No class or assigned readings

Session 7 (10/17): What counts as skill?

Session 8 (10/24): “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know”: Networks as strategies for reproducing and coping with inequality.

Review: Work by Nicholas Christakis @ TED

Session 9 (10/31): In-Class QUIZ #2
PART 3: WHAT ROLE DO INDIVIDUALS & STRUCTURES PLAY IN REPRODUCING INEQUALITY?

Session 10 (11/07): The problem of quality uncertainty in a meritocracy

Session 11 (11/14): How organizations contribute to inequality

Session 12 (11/21): The Aspiration Gap

Session 13 (11/28): In-Class QUIZ #3

Session 14 (12/5): Final Reflection Consultations
No assigned readings

POLICIES ABOUT ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

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 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. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:
1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

In this course we will be using turnitin.com to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.
DEPARTMENTAL/UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

Do NOT fax assignments. Please see your instructor for the most appropriate way to submit assignments.

The Sociology staff do NOT date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of papers.

The McMaster Student Absence Form (http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/) is a self reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report absences that last up to 3 days and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work. Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period.

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Fall 2015. If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean’s office.

You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation.

If you are absent more than 3 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you MUST visit your Associate Dean’s Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation.

This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.

Students should check the web, the white board and the Undergraduate Bulletin board outside the Sociology office (KTH-627) for notices pertaining to Sociology classes or departmental business (eg. class scheduling information, location of mailboxes and offices, tutorial information, class cancellations, TA job postings, etc.).

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites Sessionly during the term and to note any changes.

It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility
to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

FAQs

When are your office hours?

Dr. Chong’s office hours are Tuesdays from 10:30am – 11:30am.

The TA’s office hours are...

How do I book office hours?

Dr. Chong’s office hours can be booked online directly here: tinyurl.com/profchong

The TA’s office hours can be booked via email at...

What is your email policy?

Dr. Chong will reply to emails within 24 hours (not including weekends). If you ask a question that is answered on the syllabus, you may not receive a reply at all.

Please ensure to put the course code 2RR3 into the subject line otherwise your email may end up in spam.

I’m unhappy with my mark, is there a make up assignment?

No. While it is your right as a student to have access to make up tests when illness or other extenuating circumstances, there is no such provision for assignments.

I believe there has been an error in my mark, what can I do?

The TA handles the marking for the course. If you feel there has been an error in the marks you have received, you should prepare a 1-2 page written document that explains (1) the mark you received, (2) any perceived error, (3) what you think is the correct mark and (4) a clear justification for why this is the case. If Dr. Chong judges your claim to have merit, then the piece in question will be re-evaluated by the Professor as a second reader. However, this second evaluation will be recognized as the final mark including if the second reader deems that the original mark should be decreased based on the appropriate academic standards.