

SOC478H The Social Context of Policy Making

Fall 2012

Tuesdays 2:00-4:00 pm in Sidney Smith Hall, Room 1078 (SS1078).

Instructor

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Office Hours: Mondays, 2:00-4:00 pm, and by appointment

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Course Objectives:

Today, many countries are faced with similar social and economic challenges, such as growing income inequality, population diversity, demographic shifts, and changes in family and gender relations. Yet, public policy responses to these issues differ from country to country. What are factors determining different policy responses and outcomes? This course explores how policy processes and frameworks need to be evaluated in light of the social and institutional contexts in which they are developed. We will explore the effects and implications of public values and expectations, cultures, politics, and socio-economic and demographic structures on public policies. A related goal of this course is to help students learn how to use empirical research to answer highly contested issues in policy circles and in public life. We will pursue these objectives by introducing students to major trends in inequality in Canada, assessing these trends within a comparative context, reflecting on their normative implications, and examining alternative policy responses to these developments.

Important Note: The prerequisite to take this course is SOC202H1 and at least .5 credit of a 300 or higher level sociology course. Students lacking this prerequisite can be removed at any time without notice.

Readings:

Most of the assigned readings can be downloaded directly from the web or from University of Toronto's e-resources. Many of the links for these readings are embedded in the course outline. Academic journal articles without embedded links can be accessed via the University of Toronto's *e-resources* at:

<http://main.library.utoronto.ca/eir/resources.cfm>

Course Organization

We will start the first meeting with the overview of the course. Students are expected to read the materials assigned for the first class before they come to the class, and prepared to discuss. In addition to our first meeting, we have eleven regular classes. The class meets on Tuesdays from

2:00 – 4:00 pm. Normally, I will lecture for about an hour, followed by a short break. The second half of the class will be led by discussion team leaders. More on this below.

Course Requirements:

Following are the assignments and their relative weights for the final mark.

Analytical Questions and Class Participation (15 points): In 6 of the eleven weeks following the introductory class (your choice), you will submit a focused analytical question of no more than two short paragraphs.

Analytical questions are due on the Friday before class and are to be e-mailed to the entire class.

Since the main purpose of the questions is to improve the quality of class discussion, late questions will not count. On the subject line, insert the course number and the date of the class (not the date on which you are writing).

I will not grade the questions since they are mainly a way to enhance class discussion. However, **15 points of your final grade will be based on timely submission of your questions as well as your contribution to class discussions.**

Analytical Memos: (30 points) In **one** of the eleven weeks you will submit an analytical memo of no more than 500 words on the readings for that week and take part in leading the class discussion. At the beginning of the course, I will assign a topic to each student.

Think of these memos as the sort of brief essay you might write for a take-home exam. In general, the format for the memos should follow the format described below for the research paper – statement of the research question and research problem, answer(s) to the question, conclusion and discussion – but in *very* abbreviated form.

Analytical memos are due on the Friday before your assigned class and are to be e-mailed to the entire class. Since the main purpose of the questions is to improve the quality of class discussion, late memos will not count. On the subject line, insert the course number and the date of the class (not the date on which you are writing).

Class discussion: Classes will start *promptly* at 2:10 pm. We will normally devote the first 30 minutes to the assigned readings. I will designate **two or three students** to start and lead the discussion each week. Discussion leaders should meet to plan this part of the class. You should prepare a one page outline identifying the issues you think the class should discuss and bring copies for everyone to class. You should keep your initial comments to 5 minutes.

Sequential Research Paper (55 points in total):

Your research paper will be completed in **two parts**. Each section will be graded on: 1) quality and thoroughness of analysis; 2) incorporation of research from academic and other sources; and 3) clarity and organization of presentation and timely completion of each part of the exercise.

Part One (Introduction): Statement of the **research question** and the **research problem**. (15 points)

Typically, students begin with a research *topic* that interests them. Some of the *topics* we will consider this semester include: the earnings of new immigrants to Canada, the gender gap in earnings, barriers to post-secondary education, family structure and income inequality, and demographic changes and their implications for public policy. The first step you will have to make is to move from your research topic to formulating a *research question*. You may choose a research question that corresponds to one of the course modules but this is not required. However, students who choose a topic not related to the course modules must choose a topic closely related to the general themes of the course. **Consult with me early on.**

Some research questions are purely descriptive: they are about matters of fact. For example: “I want to know **whether** the gender gap in earnings is rising or falling.” Descriptive research questions are **valuable** if the answer to the question is highly contested and/or the existing research gives contradictory answers. The task here is to sort out the reasons for the contradictory answers. Often such disputes are methodological in nature.

More typical research questions concern issues of **why or how**. For example: “I want to know whether rising female education levels has led to a decline in the gender earnings gap.” This sentence specifies both an *explanandum* (the thing to be explained) and an *explanans* (the thing that does the explaining).

Notice that simply saying: “I want to know why the gender earnings gap is or is not declining” or “I want to know why there is a gender earnings gap” is only a statement of the *topic* that interests you. Neither formulation has the character of a research question since no *explanans* has been identified yet.

The second part of an introduction to a research paper involves a statement of the *research problem*. Why should we be interested in the answer to the question? What motivates the question? One way to think about this is to ask: “What are the costs of not knowing the answer?” The costs can be of two sorts, theoretical and practical. Theoretical research problems usually involve some claim that is in dispute in the social science community. Practical research problems usually involve some claim that is in dispute in the “real world” (e.g. a policy-maker wants to know whether not some program or policy is having the intended effect).

Your statement of your research question and research problem is due by October 9. It should be no more than 3 pages in length (750 words) and contain a minimum of five references you have drawn on. More recent references are usually the best place to begin.

For more discussion of the differences between *topics*, *questions*, and *problems* see: Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph Williams (1995) *The Craft of Research*, University of Chicago Press.

Part two: Final Paper (Answer your question, discuss and draw conclusions) (40 points)

Your final paper should include three components: 1) statement of the research question and the research problem (see above); 2) answers to your question; and 3) conclusion and discussion.

The answers to your research question (i.e. evidence, results, and data) are the core of your paper. It should be no more than 8 pages (2,000 words) in length. Your task here is to review the most significant research that bears on your question and to assess it for theoretical coherence and empirical rigor. What are the alternative *possible* answers to your question? Which answers appear to be the most plausible based on your assessment of the research? What disputes and sources of uncertainty remain?

To get a sense of what this sort of paper might look like take a look at recent issues of the *Annual Review of Sociology* for exemplars.

This should be followed by your conclusion and discussion. This is where you tie things up. A conclusion and discussion usually restates the question and the main findings and then goes on to discuss the implications of the results by tying them back to the *research problem* (or *problems*) identified in part one. This section should be no more than 3 pages (750 words).

The final paper is due on the last class (**November 27**). The papers should be double-spaced, and written in 12-point font (pity your professor who has to use reading glasses to read papers).

Note on Grading: *I will grade the first section of the paper (due October 9) when submitted to give you a sense of how you are doing and to indicate how you might improve the paper. Based on my comments, you may revise this section for the final version of the paper. I will take improvements you have made into account in your final grade. Most researchers substantially revise the introduction (part one) of their papers after writing the conclusions.*

Writing Skills: The quality of your writing will have a *big* impact on your grade. Writing skills (clarity, logic, parsimony, organization) are probably the most important skills you develop in university. If you can't write a good two page memo in the public policy world, you're toast. If you need to improve your writing skills, each year the downtown college writing centres, with the help of the Academic Success Centre, the Career Centre, and UT Libraries, organize a series of academic skills workshops aimed primarily at undergraduate students. The workshops are free, and all U of T students are welcome. <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/news/writing-plus>

Missed deadlines: You must complete each assignment as scheduled. The only exception is when a student meets conditions that will be accepted by the University as meeting conditions for missed tests, assignments and exams, i.e, medical reasons.

If you miss deadlines without proper documentation, i.e, U of T Medical Certificate, you will receive a grade of zero for each missed deadline. These grades of zero will be included in your total grade.

Special needs: If you have documentation that you are a **special needs student**, please see me as soon as possible to discuss how best to assist you in the course.

Plagiarism

Be aware that the university administration and faculty, including me, take **plagiarism** very seriously. Plagiarism means presenting work done by another person or source as your own, or using the work of others without acknowledgment. Heavy reliance on one or two resources constitutes plagiarism, as does copying paragraphs or sentences from multiple sources,

purchasing an essay, or cutting and pasting from web-based documents without acknowledgments. It is also an academic offense to submit your own paper, which you have previously submitted for credit in another class. Any assignment or essay that is plagiarized will be assigned a grade of zero with no opportunity to resubmit or to carry out a make-up assignment. If you are in doubt as to whether you are engaging in plagiarism, the following covers some (but not all) types:

<http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/resource/wc/AvoidingPlagiarism.html>

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html>

The University of Toronto webpage on writing also contains a great deal of useful information on academic writing. One topic is plagiarism. Access the information by going to the web address www.utoronto.ca/writing Then in the search box, type the term plagiarism, and you will get a listing of files. Open the one called “How not to plagiarize.”

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

REQUIRED READING

September 11 -- Week 1: Introduction

Readings

These are all very short 2 to 3 page articles. Please read them all before coming to the class.

*Blank, Rebecca. 1992. “Social Scientists and the Problem of Poverty”, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 5, 1992.

*Halstead, T. 2003. “The American Paradox”, *Atlantic Monthly* (January/February):123–125. Available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/2003/01/halstead.htm>.

* Grant, Tavia. 2011. “Income Inequality Rising Quickly in Canada”, *The Globe and Mail* (Sept. 13, 2011), Available at <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/economy-lab/income-inequality-rising-quickly-in-canada/article618311/>

* Wolf, Charles. 2012. “The Inequality Debate: The United States versus China”, *The International Economy*, Spring 2012: 16-17.

September 18 -- Week 2: Normative Issues: Public Policy, the “Good Society,” and Inequality

Discussants: ALL

Readings

*Feldstein, Martin. 1998. "Income Inequality and Poverty." National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 6770. Available at <http://papers.nber.org/papers/w6770>

*Kenworthy, Lane. 2008. *Jobs With Equality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1 (*Why Should We Care About Inequality*)

*Kangas, Olli. 2000. "Distributive justice and social policy: some reflections on Rawls and income distribution." *Social Policy and Administration* 34:510-528.

Supplementary:

John Roemer, 2009. "Equality: Its justification, nature and domain." Pp. 23-39 in Wiemer Salverda, Brian Nolan and Timothy Smeeding (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Inequality* (for the philosophically inclined)

Frank, Robert. 2004. "How not to buy happiness." *Daedalus* 133:69-79.

Heath, Joseph. 2002. "Should productivity growth be a priority?" Pp. 225-241 in *Towards a Social Understanding of Productivity*, edited by K. Banting, A. Sharpe, and F. St-Hilaire.

Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy. <http://www.csls.ca/rep/2/josephheath.pdf>

Layard, Richard. 2003. "Income and happiness: rethinking economic policy." Lionel Robbins Memorial Lectures, London School of Economics, London. Available at

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSEPublicLecturesAndEvents/events/2003/20030106t1439z001.htm>

Layard, Richard. 2003. "What would make a happier society." Lionel Robbins Memorial Lectures, London School of Economics, London.

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSEPublicLecturesAndEvents/events/2003/20030106t1439z001.htm>

September 25 -- Week 3: Trends in Canadian Income Inequality

Discussants: Bennani, Savin, Lee

Readings:

*Myles, John. 2010. "The Inequality Surge", *Inroads: The Canadian Journal of Opinion*, 26: 66-73. Available at

http://www.inroadjournal.ca/archives/inroads_26/Inroads_26_Quebec_Economy.pdf

*Fontin, Nichole, David A. Green, Thomas Lemieux, Kevin Milligan and W. Craig Riddell. 2012. "Canadian Inequality: Recent Developments and Policy Options", *Canadian Public Policy*, 38(2): 121-145.

* Noel, Alain. (forthcoming) "Quebec's new politics of redistribution" in Keith Banting and John Myles, *The New Politics of Canadian Income Redistribution*. UBC Press (to be circulated)

Supplementary:

Frenette, Marc, David Green, and David Milligan. 2009. "Taxes, transfers, and Canadian income inequality. *Canadian Public Policy*, 35(4): 389-411

Morissette, Rene, Garnett Picot and John Myles. 2003 "Low income intensity during the 1990s: the role of economic growth, employment earnings, and social transfers." *Canadian Public Policy* XXIX: S15-S40. Available at

<http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/11F0019MIE/11F0019MIE2003172.pdf>

****October 2 -- Week 4: Canada in Comparative Perspective**

** there might be possible date change for this class. I will update the information and discuss with you about this in the class.

Discussants: Xuan, K. Chan, Annan

Readings:

*Kenworthy, Lane and Jonas Pontusson. 2005. "Rising inequality and the politics of redistribution in affluent countries." *Perspectives on Politics* 3:449-471.

*OECD. 2012. *Inequality in Labour Income: What are its Drivers and how can it be Reduced?* OECD Economics Department Policy Report #8. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/eco/publicfinanceandfiscalspolicy/49417273.pdf>

*Blank, Rebecca. 2009. "Economic Change and the Structure of Opportunity for Less-skilled Workers." *Focus*, 26(2): Fall. Available at <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc262d.pdf>

Supplementary:

Lane Kenworthy (2004). *Egalitarian Capitalism*. Russell Sage, N.Y.

OECD. 2012. *Less Income Inequality and More Growth – Are they Compatible? Part 4. Top Incomes*. Available at http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/less-income-inequality-and-more-growth-are-they-compatible-part-4-top-incomes_5k9h28wm6qmn-en

October 9 -- Week 5: Work and Earnings in the Knowledge Economy

Discussants: Mera, J. Chan, Judd

Readings:

*DiPrete, Thomas. 2007. "What has sociology to contribute to the study of inequality trends? An historical and comparative perspective." *American Behavioral Scientist* 50:1-16. (especially the section on skill biased technological change vs. labour market institutions). Available at <http://abs.sagepub.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/cgi/reprint/50/5/603>

*Sebastien LaRochelle-Cote and Claude Dionne. 2009. "International Differences in Low-Paid Work". PP. 5-13 in *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, June (Statistics Canada) Available at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2009106/pdf/10894-eng.pdf>

*Rene Morissette. 2008. "Earnings in the last decade." PP.12-24 in *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Feb. (Statistics Canada) Available at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2008102/pdf/10521-eng.pdf>

Supplementary:

Lane Kenworthy. 2008. *Jobs With Equality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

October 16 -- Week 6: Educational Outcomes and Their Origins

Discussants: Kaminska, Haque, Ginzburg

Readings:

*Drolet, Marie. 2005. "Participation in post-secondary education: Has the role of parental income and education changed over the 1990s?" Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, (Statistics Canada) Available at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2005243-eng.pdf>

*Frenette, Marc. 2005. "Is post-secondary access more equitable in Canada or the United States." Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, (Statistics Canada) Available at <http://dspace.cigilibrary.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/1125/1/Is%20Post%20secondary%20Access%20More%20Equitable%20in%20Canada%20or%20the%20United%20States.pdf?1>

**Forum: Has Higher Education Become and Engine of Inequality?*

"Yes"

Kahlenberg, Richard D. *Magnifying Social Inequality*, in The Chronicle Review. Available at <http://chronicle.com/article/Magnifying-Social-Inequality/132627/>

Hamilton, Laura and Elizabeth A. Armstrong. *Social Life and Social Inequality*, in The Chronicle Review. Available at <http://chronicle.com/article/Social-LifeSocial/132631/>

Carnevale, Anthony P. *The Great Sorting*, in The Chronicle Review. Available at <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Great-Sorting/132635/>

Wilson, William Julius. *The Role of Elite Institutions*. in The Chronicle Review. Available at <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Role-of-Elite-Institutions/132639/>

Espenshade, Thomas J. *Growing Elitism*. in The Chronicle Review. Available at <http://chronicle.com/article/Growing-Elitism/132641/>

"No"

Leef, George. *The Problem is Elsewhere*, in The Chronicle Review. Available at <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Problem-is-Elsewhere/132629/>

Supplementary:

Frenette, Marc. 2007. "Why are youth from lower-income families less likely to attend university? Evidence from academic abilities, parental influences, and financial constraints." Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, (Statistics Canada) Available at <http://freeducationmontreal.org/libraryfiles/StatsCan%20-%20Frenette%20-%20Why%20Are%20Youth%20from%20Lower-income%20Families%20Less%20Likely%20to%20Attend%20University.pdf>

October 23 -- Week 7: Gender and Family Transformation

Discussants: Noble, Yee, Thomas

Readings:

*Claudia Goldin. 2006. "The quiet revolution that transformed women's employment, education and family." *American Economic Review*, 96(2): 1-21.

*Sawhill, Isabelle V. 2002. "Is Lack of Marriage the Real Problem?" *American Prospect*. 13(7): April. Available at <http://prospect.org/article/lack-marriage-real-problem>

*Cancian, Maria and Deborah Reed. 2009. "Family structure, childbearing, and parental employment: Implications for the level and trend in poverty", *Focus*, 26(2): 21-26. Available at <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc262d.pdf>

*England, Paula. 2010. "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled", *Gender and Society*, 24: 149-166.

October 30 -- Week 8: Family Changes and New Inter-generational Contracts

Discussants: Tynski, Wong, Wilson

Readings:

*Myles, John. 2005. *Postponed Adulthood*. Canadian Council on Social Development, Ottawa. <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2005/pa/pa.pdf>

*Smeeding, Timothy M., et al. 2011. "Young Disadvantaged Men: Fathers, Families, Poverty, and Policy" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 635 (1): 6-21.

* Peck, Don. 2010. "How a Jobless Era will Transform America", *The Atlantic*, March. Available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/03/how-a-new-jobless-era-will-transform-america/307919/>

November 6 -- Week 9: The Demographic Changes – Low Fertility and Policy Innovations

Discussants: Flume, Sinnapan, Nitti

Readings:

*OECD. 2007. "Can Policies Boost Booth Rates?", *Policy Brief*, November, Available at <http://www.oecd.org/els/familiesandchildren/39970765.pdf>

*Peng, Ito. 2010. "The Good, the Bad, and the Confused: The Political Economy of Social Care Expansion in South Korea", *Development and Change*, 42(4): 905-23.

*Castles, Francis G. 2003. "World Turned Upside Down: Below replacement fertility, changing preferences, and family-friendly public policy in 21-OECD countries", *Journal of European Social Policy*, 13: 209-237.

November 13 -- Week 10: The Demographic Changes – Aging Population and Policy Imperatives

Discussants: Chen, Rasheed, Lefort

Readings:

*Anderson, G. and P. Hussey. 2000. "Population aging: a comparison among industrialized countries," *Health Affairs*, 19(3): 191-203.

*Shrestha, Laura. 2000. "Population aging in developing countries", *Health Affairs*, 19(3): 204-212.

*Boling, Patricia. 2008. "Demography, Culture and Policy: Understanding Japan's Low Fertility", *Population and Development Review*, 34(2): 307-26.

*Michel, Sonya and Ito Peng. forthcoming. "All in the Family? Migrants, Nationhood, and Care Regimes in Asia and North America", *European Journal of Social Policy*.

November 20 -- Week 11: The Immigrant Society I: Assimilation

Discussants: Jo, Sun, Lee, Youn

Readings

*Boyd, Monica and Michael Vickers. 2000. "100 years of immigration in Canada." *Canadian Social Trends* Autumn: 2-10. Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-008-XIE/0020011-008-XIE.pdf>

The Bad News: Declining Earnings of Recent Immigrants

*Picot, Garnett and Arthur Sweetman. 2005. "The deteriorating economic welfare of immigrants and possible causes." Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, Statistics Canada, Ottawa. Available at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/11F0019MIE/11F0019MIE2005262.pdf>

*Frenette, Marc and Rene Morissette. 2003. "Will they ever converge: Earnings of immigrant and Canadian-born workers over two decades." Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper

Series, Statistics Canada, Ottawa. Available at
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/11F0019MIE/11F0019MIE2003215.pdf>

The Good News: Educational Success of the “Second Generation”

*Boyd, Monica. 2002. "Educational attainments of immigrant offspring: success or segmented assimilation." *The International Migration Review* 36:1037-1060.

Supplementary: Residential Segregation

Myles, John and Feng Hou. 2004. "Changing colours: spatial assimilation and new racial minority immigrants." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 29:29-58.

Alba, Richard and Victor Nee. 1997. "Rethinking assimilation theory for a new era of immigration." *International Migration Review* 31:826-874.

November 27 -- Week 12: The Immigrant Society II: Multiculturalism, Diversity and Social Cohesion

Discussants: Brown, Ganikhanova, Scavo

Readings:

The Immigrant Experience of Diversity

*Soroka, Stuart, Richard Johnston, and Keith Banting. 2007. "Ties that bind? Social cohesion and diversity in Canada." pp. 489-546 in *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition, and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, edited by K. Banting, T. Courchene, and L. Seidle. Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy. Available at
<http://www.irpp.org/books/archive/AOTS3/soroka.pdf>

*Reitz, Jeffrey and Rupa Banarjee. 2007. "Racial inequality, social cohesion and policy issues in Canada." Pp. 489-546 in *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition, and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, edited by K. Banting, T. Courchene, and L. Seidle. Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy. Available at <http://www.irpp.org/books/archive/AOTS3/reitz.pdf>

The Consequences of Diversity:

*Banting, Keith. 2005. "The multicultural welfare state: North American narratives." *Social Policy and Administration* 39:98-115.

*Alesina, Alberto, Reza Baquir, and William Easterly. 1997. "Public Goods and Ethnic Divisions." National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA. Available at
<http://www.nber.org/papers/W6009>

