

*New Topics in Sociology*  
**Sociology 494H1-S:**  
**Policy and Inequality in Post-Secondary Education**

Class Time: Thursdays 2-4pm  
Location: FE41  
Instructor: Mitchell McIvor  
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Office Hours: Office hours will be held virtually on Zoom and are by appointment

**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: 2:10-2:40 = Lecture on weekly class topic (see “8. Course Schedule” for topics);

B: 2:40-3:00 = Group discussion on lecture and issue being considered;

C: 3:00-3:30= Skills workshop (see “8. Course Schedule” for topics);

D: 3:30-4 = 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 work period.

D: Each week groups will be given a minimum of 30 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
i. Reflection Assignments	3 x 2% each = 6%
ii. Group Meetings with Instructor	2 x 2% each = 4%
iii. Op-Ed Assignment	10%
iv. Individual Policy Solution	10%
v. Group Policy Report Draft	10%
vi. Final Group Policy Report	25%
vii. Final Group Presentation	10%
viii. Personal Reflection on Group Project	10%
ix. Final Test	15%
<b>Total: 100%</b>	

##### ***5-i: Reflection Assignments (RA):***

You have three reflection assignments worth 2% each. These reflections are designed to provide you a chance to think about and express your thoughts and opinions on topics important to the course. Specific instructions will be provided for each as we go.

##### ***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 4 (Jan.31-Feb.4) and the second will be in Week 7 (Feb.27-March 4). These meetings will be scheduled by appointment and are an opportunity to talk through your project with the instructor. The meetings are marked credit no credit.

##### ***5-iii: Op-Ed Assignment:***

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: Individual Policy Solution:***

Each student will individually submit a policy solution that is to be 3-4 pages. This assignment asks you to determine one solution to the problem your group has identified. Specifically, you will be asked to outline the solution and to discuss its advantages and limitations.

##### ***5-v & vi: Final Group Policy Report and Draft:***

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 by both academic and non-academic sources. You will first submit a full draft that the instructor will mark and discuss with you to help refine the report. The following week you will submit the final draft.

**5-vii: Final Group Presentation:**

Each group will give a 30-minute presentation on the findings of their policy report to the class in Week 10 or 11. Each group member must present a part of their group material.

**5-viii: Personal Reflection on Group Project:**

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.

**5-ix: Final Test:**

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 multiple essay questions in which you review and critically evaluate a policy report provided by the instructor.

**6. Course Expectations:**

This seminar is likely structured differently than others you have encountered. It requires weekly writing assignments instead of readings and independent group work, which will undoubtedly involve meeting 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 fifteen-double spaced page report and a 30-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: Quercus:**

Quercus will be an important resource during this class. The syllabus can be downloaded as an electronic copy from the course site on Quercus and I will post the lecture slides on Quercus 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.

**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 Quercus. 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 “SOC494” and a brief description in the subject line, so your email can be easily prioritized. Emails will typically be answered within 48 business hours. It is strongly preferred that you use your university associated email and please follow appropriate contextual 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 or attend office hours.

### ***7-v: Late Policy***

Late assignments will be subject to a 10% per day late penalty unless arrangements have been made with the instructor at least 48 hours prior to the due date. Unexpected last minute extenuating circumstances and illness are exempt from the 48-hour rule.

### ***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](http://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](http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca)). All documentation must be received via email or in a

sealed envelope addressed to the course instructor. PLEASE NOTE: These procedures are temporarily altered due to COVID, please see the link for current procedures.

**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.

**8. Course Schedule**

<b>Week:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Content:</b>
1	January 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	Topic 1: Introduction to the Course & Course Overview Topic 2: Student Debt Skills Workshop: Owning Your Voice
2	January 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	Topic: Group Project Parameters Skills Workshop: Good Writing Workshop <b>DUE: RA #1- Personal Statement</b> *RA= Reflection Assignment
3	January 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	Topic: Policy Report Workshop #1 Skills Workshop: Writing an Op-Ed <b>DUE: RA #2- Op-Ed Review</b>
4	February 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2022	Policy Report Workshop #2 Skills Workshop: Writing a Policy Solution <b>DUE: OP-ED Assignment</b>
5	February 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	Topic: Experiences at University- Gender Skills Workshop: Reading Academic Articles for Policy Reports <b>DUE: Individual Policy Solution, Group Meeting with Professor #1.</b>
6	February 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	Topic: Experiences at University- SES Skills Workshop: Feasibility <b>DUE: Policy Report Draft</b>
<i>February Break- No Classes</i>		
7	March 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2022	Topic: Experiences at University- Indigenous Inequality Skills Workshop: Editing <b>DUE: RA#3: Policy Report Draft Reflection</b>
8	March 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	Topic: Experiences at University- Race & Immigration Skills Workshop: Professionalism <b>DUE: Group Meeting with Professor #2.</b>
9	March 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	Topic: Student Debt Skills Workshop: Making Effective Presentations <b>DUE: Final Policy Report</b>
10	March 24 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	<b>Final Group Presentations</b>
11	March 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2022	<b>Final Group Presentations</b>
12	April 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2022	<b>Final Test</b>