



- **Soc 102 Contemporary Sociology**

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1 -- Sociological Imagination -- January 8

Required Reading:

- Crossley, Nick. "[Fat is a Sociological Issue: Obesity Rates in Late Modern, 'Body-Conscious' Societies.](#)" *Social Theory & Health* 2.3 (2004): 222
[available through StFX library Electronic Resources]

Concepts: explaining "social facts" (i.e. facts about populations expressed in rates); sociological imagination, structural explanations, cultural explanations, biological explanations, psychological explanations; the built environment /automobility; time famine; commodification (of food preparation)

Questions: How can we explain increasing rates of obesity? Why are prevailing explanations of obesity individualistic?

- [Understanding Crossley Forum](#)
- [Check in: Crossley Quiz](#)
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2 -- Class Structure -- January 15

Required Reading:

- Wright, Erik Olin and Luca Perrone. 1977. "[Marxist Class Categories and Income Inequality](#)." *American Sociological Review* 42(1):32-55. doi: 10.2307/2117730.
- Alvaredo, Facundo, Lucas Chancel, Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman. 2017. "Inequality Is Not Inevitable – but the Us 'Experiment' Is a Recipe for Divergence." *The Guardian* 14 December, 2017. Retrieved: 24 December, 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/dec/14/inequality-is-not-inevitable-but-the-us-experiment-is-a-recipe-for-divergence>).

Concepts: inequalities of condition: power (and autonomy), prestige and property; income inequality (income quintiles, gini coefficient); capital, class structure vs stratification; classes: capitalist, petty bourgeois, small owner, manager, semi-autonomous, working class; inequality of opportunity

Concepts (Methodology): variable, operationalization, proxy measure, dependent variable, independent variable, correlation, controlling for a variable,

Questions:

- What aspects of human experience in the 21st century can class structure help us understand?
- Why is inequality of condition increasing in the 21st century?
- What are the social consequences of [increasing inequality](#) of condition?

Recommended Reading:

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- [Class Categories Questionnaire](#)
- [Class Structure Forum](#)

- [Quiz: Class Structure](#)
- [Class Structure 2018 Questionnaire](#)

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3 -- Social Class and Politics -- January 22

Required Reading:

- Sran, Garry, Michael Lynk, James Clancy and Derek Fudge. 2013. [Unions Matter](#). Ottawa: Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights. [Read sections 1-4 and 9]

Concepts: welfare state; progressive taxation; union density; collective bargaining; ideology; class interests; neoliberalism; social democracy; legitimization

Questions:

- What social structures determine the degree of inequality within a society?
- How does class position shape people's class interests and political action?
- How can an organized working class promote the interests of working-class people?
- Can the working class fight to overcome inequality in the 21st century like it did in the 20th century?
- How are extremes of inequality legitimized under capitalism?

Recommended Reading:

- Finkel, Alvin. 1977. "[Origins of the Welfare State in Canada](#)." in *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power*, edited by L. Panitch. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Mosimann, Nadja and Jonas Pontusson. 2017. "[Solidaristic Unionism and Support for Redistribution in Contemporary Europe](#)." *World Politics* 69(3):448-92. doi: 10.1017/S0043887117000107.
- Hyde, Mark and Bob Deacon. 1987. "Working-Class Opinion and Welfare Strategies: Beyond the State and the Market." *Critical Social Policy* 6(18):15-31. doi: 10.1177/026101838700601803.

- [Increasing Inequality Forum](#)

- [Unions Matter Quiz](#)

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4 -- Class Inequality: Social Consequences -- January 29

Required Reading:


- Peacock, Marian, Paul Bissell and Jenny Owen. 2014. "[Shaming Encounters: Reflections on Contemporary Understandings of Social Inequality and Health](#)." *Sociology* 48(2):387-402. doi: 10.1177/0038038513490353.

Concepts: Othering; prestige and disrespect, invidious (shaming) comparisons, structural humiliation, collective imaginaries, agency and resistance, social determinants of health

Questions:

- What is the connection between class structure and individual psychology?
- Is extreme inequality bad for human health and well-being?
- What are the connections between inequality, [crime and punishment](#)?
- Do social media promote "invidious or shame-inducing comparisons?"

Recommended Reading:

- Wilkinson, Richard G. and Kate E. Pickett. 2007. "[The Problems of Relative Deprivation: Why Some Societies Do Better Than Others](#)." *Social Science & Medicine* 65(9):1965-78. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2007.05.041>.
- [Inequality and Invidious Comparisons Forum](#)
- [Shaming Comparisons Quiz](#)
-  [Sample Thesis Statement File](#)
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5 -- Deviance: Defining Deviance -- February 5

Required Reading:

- Grekul, J. 2008. "[Sterilization in Alberta, 1928 to 1972: Gender Matters*](#)." *The Canadian Review of Sociology* 45(3):247.
- Landsberg, Michelle. 2001. "Plight of 'Incorrigible' Women Demands Justice." *Sunday Star* May 6 2001. Retrieved: 29 December, 2017 (<http://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/learn/resources/plight-incorrigible-women-demands-justice>).

Concepts: deviance; eugenics; racism; sexism; classism; authoritarian state, authoritarian populism, human rights

Questions:

- How is deviance defined, that is: who in society has the power to define deviance and punish deviants?
- Can states or whole societies be deviant?

Recommended Reading:

- [Forum on Eugenics](#)
- [Grekul Quiz](#)
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6 -- Deviance: Crime and Punishment -- February 12

Required Reading:

- Pratt, John. 2008. "[Scandinavian Exceptionalism in an Era of Penal Excess.](#)" *The British Journal of Criminology* 48(2):119-37. doi: 10.1093/bjc/azm072.
- James, Erwin. 2013. "The Norwegian Prison Where Inmates Are Treated Like People " *The Guardian* 25 February, 2013. Retrieved: 25 February, 2013 (<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/feb/25/norwegian-prison-inmates-treated-like-people>).

Concepts: punishment: retribution, rehabilitation, warehousing; recidivism, punishing the poor; neoliberalism and the penal state; latent functions

Questions:

- Why are states increasing retributive punishment when evidence shows that it does not reduce crime rates?
- Is the penal state a means of controlling workers, people of colour and indigenous people?

Recommended Reading:

- Comack, Elizabeth, Cara Fabre and Shanise Burgher. 2015. [The Impact of the Harper Government's "Tough on Crime" Strategy: Hearing from Frontline Workers.](#) Winnipeg: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.
- Wacquant, Loïc. 2012. "[The Punitive Regulation of Poverty in the Neoliberal Age.](#)" *Criminal Justice Matters* 89(1):38-40. doi: 10.1080/09627251.2012.721980.

- [Crime and Punishment Forum](#)

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Reading Week -- February 19

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7 -- Colonialism and Policing -- February 26

Required Reading:

- Crosby, Andrew and Jeffrey Monaghan. 2016. "[Settler Colonialism and the Policing of Idle No More](#)." *Social Justice* 43(2):37-57,108.
- Ali, Wajahat. 2016. "If the Oregon Militiamen Were Muslim or Black, They'd Probably Be Dead by Now." *The Guardian* 4 January, 2016. Retrieved: 22 January, 2016 (<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/04/if-the-oregon-militiamen-were-muslim-or-black-they-would-probably-be-dead-by-now-ammon-bundy>).

Concepts: Colonialism; social dissent; [social movements](#); civil society and democracy; surveillance; police and state repression

Questions:

- How does social change occur in a democracy?
- Does the Canadian state (and Canadian police) act in favour of particular class, racial or gendered interests?

Recommended Reading:

- Wotherspoon, Terry and John Hansen. 2013. "[The "Idle No More" Movement: Paradoxes of First Nations Inclusion in the Canadian Context](#)." *Social Inclusion* 1(1):21-36.
- Powless, Ben. 2012. "[An Indigenous Movement to Confront Climate Change](#)." *Globalizations* 9(3):411-24.

- [Research Proposal Assignment](#)

- [Idle No More Quiz](#)

- [Social Movements Forum](#)

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8 -- Free Speech and Corporate Ideology -- March 5

Required Reading:

- Glasbeek, H. J. 2002. "When Big Corporations Speak, Governments Listen." in [*Wealth by Stealth Corporate Crime, Corporate Law, and the Perversion of Democracy*](#). Toronto: Between the Lines.
- Lewis, Paul. 2017. "'Our Minds Can Be Hijacked': The Tech Insiders Who Fear a Smartphone Dystopia." *The Guardian* 6 October, 2017. Retrieved: 29 December, 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/oct/05/smartphone-addiction-silicon-valley-dystopia>).

Concepts: corporate "persons"; free speech and democracy; ideal speech situation (Habermas); labour strike /capitalist strike; labour rights /corporate rights; corporate collective action /workers' collective action; neoliberalism; corporate ideology; consumer sovereignty; overconsumption

Questions:

- In what ways does the law reflect corporate interests?
- What ideology best serves the interests of the corporate elite?
- Is advertising free speech? How does advertising shape public discourse?
- Do the media shape people's social consciousness and if so, how?
- Can social media genuinely increase the voices of the powerless in democratic debate?

Recommended Reading:

- Allahar, Anton L. and James E. Côté. 1998. "Canada's Dominant Ideology." in [*Richer and Poorer : The Structure of Inequality in Canada*](#). Toronto: J. Lorimer.

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9 -- Environment: Overconsumption and Overpopulation -- March 12

Required Reading:

- Ehrlich, Paul R. and Anne H. Ehrlich. 2012. "[Solving the Human Predicament](#)." *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 69(4):557-65. doi: 10.1080/00207233.2012.693281.
- Commoner, Barry. 1975. "[How Poverty Breeds Overpopulation \(and Not the Other Way around\)](#)." *Ramparts* Aug/Sept:21-25,58-59.

Concepts: overpopulation; overconsumption; demographic transition; climate change; biodiversity loss

Questions:

- Is there a limit to the [population](#) the planet can support? What are the social, structural causes that lead to a voluntary leveling-off of [population](#)?
- Is there a limit to the amount of material consumption that the planet can support? What social, structural causes could lead to a (voluntary) leveling-off of material consumption?

Supplementary:

- McKibben, Bill. 2010 "[A New World](#)." Eearth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet. Toronto: Knopf Canada. [Concepts: anthropogenic climate change, climate change denial, [social movements](#), greenhouse gasses, CO2 concentrations, feedback loops, carbon budget, Holocene, Anthropocene]
- Video: Do The Math. 350.org

- [Population and Environment Forum](#)

- [Population Quiz](#)

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10 -- Deviance and Biopower -- March 19

Required Reading:

- Abraham, John. 2010. "[Pharmaceuticalization of Society in Context: Theoretical, Empirical and Health Dimensions](#)." *Sociology* 44(4):603–622.

Concepts: medicalization, [pharmaceuticalization](#), biomedicalization

Questions:

- What role should the market, the medical profession, the public and the state play in drug policy?
- What are the social causes of anxiety and depression? Do medicalization and [pharmaceuticalization](#) encourage us to overlook the social causes?

- [Pharmaceuticalization Forum](#)

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11 -- Commodification of Identity -- March 26

Required Reading:

- Takeyama, Akiko. "[Intimacy for Sale: Masculinity, Entrepreneurship, and Commodity Self in Japan's Neoliberal Situation](#)." *Japanese Studies* 30, no. 2 (2010): 231-46.

Concepts: commodification; [commodification of intimacy](#); affective labour; gender and masculinity; entrepreneurial identity; time famine; precariat

Questions:

- Does the commodification of social relations distort or diminish social relations?
- Is "entrepreneurial identity" a legitimization of a precarious, working-class position?

- [Commodification of Intimacy Forum](#)

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12 -- Celebrity and Social Identity -- April 2

Required Reading:

- Allen, Kim and Heather Mendick. 2013. "[Young People's Uses of Celebrity: Class, Gender and 'Improper' Celebrity](#)." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 34(1):77-93. doi: 10.1080/01596306.2012.698865.

Concepts: celebrity, social class, social mobility; agency

Questions:

- What social values does celebrity culture inculcate in young people?
- How is class identity shaped by celebrity culture?
- To what degree are young people shaped by celebrity culture? To what degree do they assert agency in resisting celebrity culture?

Recommended Reading:

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Review