

Western University  
**SOC9611a: CLASS AND POLITICS**

Fall 2021  
Fridays 1:30 - 4:30

Bob Andersen  
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Office hours: by appointment

**This course is currently scheduled to be held in person.** If issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic prevent you from attending in person, please discuss attending via Zoom with Professor Andersen. Given the uncertainty of the pandemic, the course may need to be shifted to online at any point during the term.

## **1. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines some of the causes and political consequences of social and economic inequality in modern democracies. Emphasis is placed on social class, but other related sources of inequality, such as cultural capital and social capital, will also be examined. On occasion, the interaction of class inequality with gender, race, and ethnicity will also be explored. Possible topics to be explored are classical theories of stratification, social and cultural capital, political culture, enduring values, relative deprivation, rational choice and voting, social mobility, income inequality, and the rise of populism.

## **2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

- Synthesize and critically evaluate theoretical arguments and research relating to the connection between social stratification, especially social class, and politics.
- Demonstrate an ability to present and discuss ideas clearly and articulately through effective oral and written communication.
- Demonstrate an ability to engage in scholarly discussion and debate

## **3. COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

A course schedule and list of required readings will be discussed during the first class on Friday, September 17. All materials will be uploaded to the course website (TBD).

## **4. METHODS OF EVALUATION**

Grades in this course will be based on five elements:

1. Oral participation (10%) - Weekly
2. Position papers (20%) - Due at noon on the Thursday before class (London, ON time)
3. Seminar Moderator (20%) - Dates to TBD
4. Paper Proposal (10%) - Due BEFORE class on Friday, October 22, 2021
5. Final Term Paper (40%) - Due Friday, December 10, 2021 at 4pm (London, ON time)

All written components for the course must typed, double-spaced and in 12-point font, and submitted in PDF format. They must be sent uploaded to the course website (TBD) before their deadline (see above). For all written assignments, please include a cover page that clearly states your name and student number, the date it was submitted, and the title of the assignment (the cover page does not count as part of the required length for the assignments).

#### **4.1 Oral Participation (10%)**

This course will only be successful if everyone participates in class, and thus I will not go easy on oral participation grades. If you don't participate regularly, you will get a poor grade. Opinion alone is not good enough, however. I expect you to draw on evidence from the required readings to support your arguments. I will also be looking for students to "think outside of the box" and give good logical arguments based on personal experience, previous education, and knowledge of current affairs. In short, you will be evaluated on your ability to critique the readings (including theory, methods and conclusions), put their findings in a wider context and apply them to the 'real' world.

#### **4.2. Position Papers (20% - 10 papers x 2 grade each)**

You are required to write 10 position papers on the required readings. These weekly papers are due before noon (London, ON time) on the Thursday before the class that deals with the corresponding reading. **Late papers will not be accepted**. Each position paper must be at least one page in length and no more than two pages in length (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font; not including the title page). Papers outside of these limits will not be accepted.

The position papers are worth a total of 20 grade points (i.e., two grades each). You will receive the full two grades for each satisfactorily completed paper that is submitted on time. If I don't think enough effort has gone into a paper, you will receive a grade of 0 for that week. In short, if you satisfactorily complete all 10 position papers, you will receive 20/20 for this element of the course. There are 11 weeks with required readings, meaning that you have one week free from writing a position paper. The decision as to which week you don't submit a position paper is yours.

Position papers should not simply summarize the week's readings. Instead, they should point out the essential findings of the required readings, draw connections with other

research, and critique the papers' methods and theoretical approaches, and raise problems or questions that are meant to stimulate seminar discussion. You should be critical! The position papers must end with three questions based on the readings that you plan to consider for seminar discussion.

### **4.3 Seminar Moderator (20%)**

Aside from the regular oral participation in weekly seminars, each student will play the role of moderator on one occasion. The specific date (and associated readings) that each person will moderate will be determined during the first seminar in September.

The goal of the seminar moderator is to encourage discussion around the major ideas and evidence of the week's readings. You should start with a brief summary of the papers—largely with the goal of tying them together under a theme(s)—but this should be no longer than 10 minutes in length. You should not lecture. While it is a good idea to have personal notes to guide your discussion, and you are welcome to share a slide or two to clarify points, you should not give a complete PowerPoint presentation or provide extensive handouts. Your primary role is to encourage informed discussion and debate. A good moderator will ensure the discussion includes:

- A critique of key terms and arguments;
- An evaluation of the data and methods used to support claims;
- Situation of the readings in the larger context of research in the area, related research and current affairs.

### **4.4 Paper Proposal (10%)**

The paper proposal must be no more than five pages in length (excluding the title page and reference list, 12-point font, double-spaced). The proposal is due BEFORE class on Friday, October 22, 2021. Only under exceptional circumstances will late papers be accepted.

The paper proposal provides a means for me to assess your progress and provide guidance on the development of the final paper. The proposal should include a description of the purpose of the paper, a justification for studying the topic, a brief discussion of some of the relevant research you will consult, and a tentative reference list of research that you plan to discuss (this should provide the foundation of the final reference list for the final paper). Include only references that you will cite in the paper and be sure to cite them properly. Your proposal should provide a brief discussion of the argument that the paper will make. See the section below on the final paper for details on choosing your paper topic.

### **4.5 Final Term Paper (40%)**

The final paper must be between 18 and 20 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, not including the title page and reference list). It is just as important to keep the paper less than 20 pages as it is to ensure that you have more than 18 pages. The final paper is due Friday, December 10, 2021 at 4pm (London, ON time). **Late papers will not be accepted.**

## **Criteria for final paper**

The final paper, and its related proposal, must be related to at least one of the weekly topics covered in this course. I strongly urge you to consult with me about your topic before beginning to write the proposal. You can choose between two types of final paper:

- 1) **Critical review piece** on the major theoretical and/or methodological developments related to the topic that you choose. While you should be sure to include the most important and influential sources in the field, this should not be simply an annotated bibliography. That is, you will be expected to describe how the field has developed, what we know, where there continues to be debate, and areas for future research. In his context, you should also critique the data, methods and theory of the influential works you discuss. While there is no set number of articles that should be discussed, I expect that you will discuss and properly cite at least 25 influential articles published since 2000. I suggest looking to articles in the *Annual Review of Sociology* as examples of this type of paper. As a general rule, I also suggest that you largely focus on articles published in top-tier academic journals. You should not ignore influential work published in less prestigious venues, however.
  
- 2) **Empirical research paper** with original analysis and findings on a topic related to a topic(s) covered in this course. You should write this paper with the goal of eventually submitting it to a specific academic journal. In other words, the paper should have an informative literature review, a data and methods section (where the data and statistical methods are clearly described), a results section and a discussion/conclusion section. It is acceptable—and perhaps even preferable—to study a topic that fits well with your planned doctoral dissertation. You will, of course, need to find and secure appropriate data for this type of paper to be successful. I thus strongly urge you to consult with me about the topic before proceeding with the proposal. I will also be happy to help you along the way. While there is no ‘rule’ on how many articles that should be cited in your literature review—you should properly cite whatever is directly relevant—like above, I suggest that you largely focus on articles published in top academic journals. Again, however, be sure not to ignore important and influential work that was published elsewhere.

Both the final paper and the proposal should be written in a format acceptable for publication in a top academic journal (such as APA style). I expect both assignments to be very polished, so you should start as soon as possible.

## **IMPORTANT POLICIES**

### **A Note on Plagiarism**

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. See Scholastic Offences (below) for the link to Scholastic Discipline regulations.

### **Plagiarism Checking**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com: <http://www.turnitin.com>

### **Scholastic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/appeals\\_discipline/index.html](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/appeals_discipline/index.html)

### **Accommodation**

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction. For more information, see <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>.

### **Completion of Course Requirements**

Course requirements must be completed by the end of the term in which the course is offered (Fall-December 31; Winter-April 30, Summer-August 31). Only in exceptional circumstances may a student take additional time to complete the course requirements. In

such a case, the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to request permission to carry the incomplete. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the Sociology graduate program office. More details regarding incompletes are outlined in the Graduate Handbook:

[http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate\\_handbook/course\\_information.html](http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate_handbook/course_information.html)

## **Mental Health**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness Western for a complete list of options to obtain help:

[http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/)

## **Health and Wellness**

We encourage you to check out the [Digital Student Experience](#) website to manage your academics and well-being, as well as additional Western resources to support students on and off campus, found at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. The [Wellness Education Centre](#) (lower level UCC) assists students in finding mental health and other related resources best suited to their needs: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/wec/index.html> Western's School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies' Living Well website provides tips for thriving at grad school and other helpful information: [http://grad.uwo.ca/current\\_students/living\\_well/index.html](http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/living_well/index.html)