Department of Political Science
McGill University
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Political Science 474
Inequality and Development

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Office Hours: Monday 2:30-4:00pm

Course Description:

The central focus of this course is on understanding the political determinants of economic inequality in the developing world. Economic inequality concerns issues of class and income, but extends beyond these parameters. It intersects with social issues such as gender, and transnational issues such as globalization and the environment. While economic inequality provides the pivot for the course, the scope of the issues studied will be broad – reflecting the way in which inequality pervades a vast array of political problems in the developing world.

The course is divided into four parts. The first part provides a “big picture” perspective on inequality and development. Here we will look at the relationship between economic growth, poverty, and inequality. We will also address theoretical statements on inequality by the likes of Karl Marx, R.H. Tawney, and Amartya Sen. The second part of the course focuses on macro issues in the politics of inequality: democracy, political parties, and states. The third part of the course addresses key socio-economic themes in inequality: gender, ethnicity, and health. In the last section of the course, we will shift our emphasis from domestic issues to transnational problems of inequality: globalization and environmental justice.

At the end of this course, students should have an analytical understanding of the political determinants of inequality; have increased knowledge of empirical problems related to inequality in the developing world; and have the foundations to pursue further research on the politics of inequality and development.

Course Requirements:

1. Readings: Students are expected to come to the lectures having done the readings beforehand. You will gain more from the lectures with the readings completed.
2. Conferences: Conferences are very important because they provide a venue for discussion and debate of course materials, as well as of contemporary affairs in the region. There are 10 conferences for which attendance is mandatory. However, you are allowed to miss 1 conference for any reason – illness, extracurricular activity, etc. – without having to give an explanation. If you miss a conference besides the 1 free pass, you will only be excused if you provide a medical note. However, you will still have to do the précis assignment (see below).

~Your conference grade will be based on three variables: attendance, a weekly précis, and quality of participation. To get full points for attendance you must have attended at least 9 conferences and handed in a précis each week. (If you attend all 10 conferences and hand in a précis for all 10 conferences, you will be given extra points). The grade for attendance will be based on presence in class and the précis. You will only be marked for attendance if you are present and hand in a précis. If you do only one or the other, you will not get a point for attendance. To get full points for participation, you must participate consistently and thoughtfully.

~The précis is a 1-paragraph typed response to a question that I will ask at the beginning of every Tuesday lecture. The question will be directly related to the readings for the week. You must hand in the précis to your TA at the beginning of conferences. There will be no official grade for the précis other than a notation that it has been handed in. However, the TA will also note down if a précis is particularly strong or particularly weak. Consistently strong or weak précis will have an effect on the overall grade for the conference.

~Note that attendance is extremely important because it is one means of assessing how seriously a student engages with the course. There will be a significant penalty for missing conferences on a regular basis: missing half of the conferences (5, not including the 1 free pass) will result in a “O” for the conference grade.

3. Midterm exam: This exam will consist of identification questions and one essay. The midterm is in class on Tuesday, February 14.

4. Final exam: This exam will be a take-home. The exam will ask you to answer one broad, analytical question in 8-10 double-spaced pages. To answer the question, you will need to use your lecture notes, your readings from the course, notes from the films screened during the course, as well as materials not discussed in the course. Some research besides what is listed in the syllabus will thus be necessary. The exam will be handed out on the last day of lecture class and will be due at 2pm outside my office on Monday April 24. Exams handed in late without prior justification will be marked down 10 points per day. Although you are allowed to discuss the exam with your classmates, you should not share nor show your answers to anyone else. Violations of McGill’s policy on plagiarism and cheating will be duly charged.
Grade Distribution:

1. Midterm exam 40%
2. Final take-home exam 40%
3. Attendance, precis, and quality participation at conferences 20%

Please note:

The content and evaluation of this course is subject to change in the case of unforeseeable events.

Policy on Missed In-Class Exam:

If you are unable to take the midterm in-class exam due to illness, you must notify me in person or via email before the exam. You must then provide me with a formal note from a doctor. I will reschedule one make-up exam for all students who missed the exam several days after the formal date. There will be only one makeup exam date.

Anyone who misses the exam without notifying me before the exam will not be allowed to write the make-up. Consequently, their grade on the midterm will be a 0. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Policy on Laptops in Class:

Research has shown that the use of laptops and other mobile devices in university lecture halls leads to lower focus and retention of materials. This is because multitasking – such as surfing the internet – undermines concentration. I have therefore decided to ban laptops. Only students with a documented disability for whom typing on a laptop is essential will be given exception to this rule. Some articles to read about this:


Contact during the Semester:

The best way to get in touch with me is right after class or during office hours. If you have quick queries, you may email me. However, if your query is lengthy or of a more substantive nature that cannot be addressed briefly via email, then my strong
preference is for you to discuss this with me in person during office hours. I furthermore encourage you to meet with me to discuss issues related to the course that are of particular interest to you, or to address any questions you may have. I am very happy to meet all students in this course.

Disabilities:

If you have any learning disabilities that will affect your progress in this course, please contact me as soon as possible so that proper arrangements can be made.

Other Resources:

The course will have a MyCourses component. Students are encouraged to use MyCourses to discuss issues in the course as well as contemporary events that are related to the course topics. I will attach websites and current news articles that may be of interest.

To keep up with issues in development, students are encouraged to read the following: The Financial Times, The New York Times, and The Economist.

Academic journals that are relevant for the study of politics and development include: World Politics, Comparative Politics, Journal of Democracy, Studies in Comparative International Development, World Development, Journal of Development Studies, and Development and Change. All of these journals are available online or in print at the McGill library. Students considering graduate school should particularly take notice of these journals.

Statement on Academic Integrity:

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Film Screenings:

Two documentaries will be shown during this course.

These films will provide a broader perspective on the reading materials and also stimulate discussion during the lectures and conferences.
Books to Purchase:

Four books have been ordered at Paragraphe Bookstore on 2220 McGill College Avenue. They will all be put on reserve. All other materials (journal articles and book chapters) will be made available on MyCourses.

WEEK 1 (1/5): Introduction

No readings.

WEEK 2 (1/10, 1/12): Inequality and Development in The Big Picture


Recommended:

WEEK 3 (1/17, 1/19): Theoretical Perspectives on Inequality

→ Conferences begin this week; this means that the lectures are now 50 minutes instead of 1 hour and 20 minutes.

Karl Marx, “The Communist Manifesto,” in Marx, Capital, the Communist Manifesto, and Other Writings (1932), 315-343.

Recommended:
Amartya Sen, On Economic Inequality (1997).
Charles Tilly, Durable Inequality (1998).
Douglas Rae, Equalities (1981).

**WEEK 4 (1/24, 1/26): Democracy and Inequality**


**Recommended:**

**WEEK 5 (1/31, 2/2): States, Political Parties, and Inequality**


**Recommended:**

**WEEK 6 (2/7, 2/9): States and Urban Bias**

Recommended:
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations, *Reducing Disparities: Balanced Development of Urban and Rural Areas and Regions within the Countries of Asia and the Pacific* (2001), 4-42

WEEK 7 (2/14): IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

Film Screening on 2/16: “Against My Will” – a documentary about honor killings; this is relevant to Week 7. Be prepared to discuss this documentary the following week.

→ No conferences this week.

WEEK 8 (2/21, 2/23): Gender and Inequality


Recommended:
WEEK 9 (3/7, 3/9): Gender and Microfinance


Recommended:

WEEK 10 (3/14, 3/16): Ethnicity and Inequality


Recommended:

WEEK 11 (3/21, 3/23): Health and Inequality

Readings TBD.

WEEK 12 (3/28, 3/30): Environmental Justice

*Film Screening on 3/30:* “A Narmada Diary”

**Recommended:**

**WEEK 13 (4/4, 4/6): Globalization and Inequality**


**Recommended:**

**WEEK 14 (4/11): Summation of Course**

→ No conferences this week.

→ Final take-home exam handed out on last day of class: 4/11.

No readings.
Selected Suggested Further Readings by Region

Northeast Asia
Jean C. Oi, State and Peasant in Contemporary China (1989).

Southeast Asia
Jonathan Rigg, Southeast Asia: The Human Landscape of Modernization and Development (1997).

Latin America
Cathy Lisa Schneider, Shantytown Protest in Pinochet's Chile (1995).
Africa