

Institutions & Inequalities



Department of Sociology
Rhodes University
Sociology I
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Focus and Purpose of Course

Welcome to the course on 'Institutions & Inequalities'. The content of this course flows from your first course, in which you were introduced to key themes within Sociology. The overall purpose of the Institutions & Inequalities course is to assist you in understanding, from a sociological perspective, the basic building blocks of modern human (and specifically, capitalist) society.

Modern society is structured in two main ways. These entail 'vertical' patterns or structures and 'horizontal' structures or, respectively, patterns involving institutions and inequalities.

Social inequalities (or social stratification more broadly) represent 'horizontal' structures. Contemporary inequalities exist in various forms, including social class, 'racial' group, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, sexual orientation, age, etc. The position you occupy in structures of inequality (e.g. your social class, your gender) impact fundamentally (either positively or negatively) on your life-long access to wealth, power and status. Capitalism is a class-based society and therefore the focus in this course will be on social class inequalities. In looking at class, we will consider three different theoretical approaches found within sociology (namely, Functionalism, Weberianism and Marxism). Functionalism tends to justify the existence of class inequalities in capitalism, whereas Marxism and Weberianism provide more critical perspectives.

There is a range of institutions that form the 'vertical' building blocks of modern capitalist society, including the economy, religion, politics, education, health and family. In sociological language, institutions are not the same as organizations. As sets of regular behaviour patterns associated with a particular sphere of our lives (and that are structured by rules of behaviour), institutions become embodied in specific organizational forms and groups (for example, within the health institution, there are hospitals, clinics, etc).

This course will consider two institutions in capitalist society (politics and education). In the case of politics, we will look at governments in capitalist society and how governments relate to class inequalities. Three theories (Pluralism, Radical Elitism and Marxism) will be considered. Pluralism argues that governments serve the interests of all citizens in capitalism. The other two theories argue that the government serves the interests of dominant groups or classes in society. In the case of education, we will examine the schooling system in capitalist society and again how it relates to class inequalities. Three theories are discussed, namely, Functionalism, Interactionism and Marxism. In discussing education, we will also unpack the notion of 'ideology'. Education is often seen as a means of transmitting ideologies through the process of socialisation.

In examining class, government and education, we highlight three theories in each case. In large part, these theories relate to the three classical sociologists you covered in your first course: Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Karl Marx. But we also cover more recent theorists from the 20th Century whose work remains highly influential. These theorists include Stephen Lukes, Edward Said and Paulo Freire; as well as Harry Braverman and Michael Piore whose works are particularly relevant to Industrial and Economic Sociology (one of the two programmes offered in the Department of Sociology from second year onwards).

Course Structure

The course is divided into three main sections:

- Understanding stability and change
- Social inequalities – social class
- Social institutions – politics, ideology and education

Maximizing your Benefit from the Course

Sociology is an exciting discipline to study and it is rich in crucial insights into human society. It provides you the opportunity to explore areas of life and forms of behaviour in a critical and thoughtful manner. But like anything else, studying Sociology requires effort and preparation. Indeed, sociology entails a form of thinking about society that as a student you must nurture and develop. It is thus imperative that you take full advantage of all the opportunities that arise during this particular course on social institutions and social inequalities to enhance your capacity to think and reason sociologically.

The lectures are a good starting point. But in order to benefit fully from lectures it is necessary that you first read the assigned reading or readings cited for the lecture. If you do so, then you will be able to listen attentively to the lecture being given, to take notes only where necessary, and to participate when given the chance. On the other hand, taking lengthy and cumbersome notes without first looking over the assigned reading distracts from your ability to concentrate and reflect thoughtfully on the material being presented during the lecture.

Besides the assigned reading for each lecture, there are also supplementary readings for the course listed later in the handout. Try to read as widely as possible on each topic covered during the course, as each reading tackles the particular topic from a unique angle that will further enrich your understanding. You will also find that your writing skills improve dramatically as you read and study more and more.

Tutorials, videos and other forms of instruction and interaction are also integrated into the course. Again, take full advantage of these. Tutorials are mandatory. Participate as fully as possible in the tutorials, because expressing yourself sociologically will deepen your grasp of the tutorial topic. There will be up to four lectures a week. Other forms of instruction and interaction (notably videos) will be used during certain lecture slots (these lectures are marked as 'alternative teaching' in the 'course outline and assigned readings' section of this handout).

Course Outline and Assigned Readings

The list below details the subject matter to be covered in each lecture and the assigned readings. All the assigned readings are on short loan in the main library.

Lecture 1 – General Introduction to Course (Tuesday April 9th)

Lectures 2 & 3 (Wednesday April 10th and Thursday April 11th)

Introduction – Social Stability and Social Change//Conceptual Distinctions – Social Structure, Institutions, Organizations, Inequalities, Stratification

- Crompton, R. 1993. **Class and Stratification**. (pp.1-8). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Eitzen, D. and Zinn, M. 1991. **In Conflict and Order**. (5th ed.) (pp. 38-44; 64-72, 89-93). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Gelderblom, D. 2003. **Social Institutions**. (pp. 1-10). Cape Town: Oxford.
- Giddens, A. 2006. **Sociology**. (5th ed.) (pp. 8, 106-110, 295, 637-638, 1035). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp. xiv-xxi). London: Collins.
- Quinney, R. (ed.). 1979. **Capitalist Society: Readings for a Critical Sociology**. (pp.211-213). Illinois: Dorsey Press.
- Tonkiss, F. 'Continuity/change'. Jenks, C (ed.). 1998. **Core Sociological Dichotomies**. (pp. 34-48). London: Sage Publications.

Lecture 4 (Monday April 15th)

Understanding Social Inequalities and Social Stratification

- Bilton, T. et al. 1987. **Introductory Sociology**. (2nd ed.). (pp. 43-46). London: MacMillan.
- Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp. 1-2). London: Collins.

Lecture 5 (Tuesday April 16th)

Class Inequalities – Functionalism

- Bilton, T. et al. 1987. **Introductory Sociology**. (2nd ed.). (pp.52-65). London: MacMillan.
- Crompton, R. 1993. **Class and Stratification**. (pp.21-36). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. 2006. **Sociology**. (5th ed.) (pp.295-296, 300-304, 310-315, 324-332). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp.3-16). London: Collins.

Lecture 6 (Wednesday April 17th)

Class Inequalities – Weberianism

- Bilton, T. et al. 1987. **Introductory Sociology**. (2nd ed.). (pp.52-65). London: MacMillan.
- Crompton, R. 1993. **Class and Stratification**. (pp.21-36). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. 2006. **Sociology**. (5th ed.) (pp.295-296, 300-304, 310-315, 324-332). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp.3-16). London: Collins.

Lecture 7 – Alternative Teaching (Thursday April 18th)

Lecture 8 (Monday April 22nd)

Class Inequalities – Marxism

Bilton, T. et al. 1987. **Introductory Sociology**. (2nd ed.). (pp.52-65). London: MacMillan.

Crompton, R. 1993. **Class and Stratification**. (pp.21-36). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. 2006. **Sociology**. (5th ed.) (pp.295-296, 300-304, 310-315, 324-332). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp.3-16). London: Collins.

Lecture 9 (Tuesday April 23rd)

Globalization and Inequalities between Nations

Giddens, A. 2006. **Sociology**. (pp. 39-43, 50-69, 388-418)

Haralambos, M and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.)(pp.571-579, 594-598). London: Collins.

Klein, N. 2001. **No Logo**. (chapters 9,10,11,13,14).London: Flamingo.

Lecture 10 & 11 (Wednesday April 24th and Thursday April 25th)

Social Class, the Labour Process and the Labour Market (with a focus on Harry Braverman and Michael Piore)

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp.39-43, 62-63, 131-133, 229, 278-279, 635-640). London: Collins.

Jenkins, S. 2004. **Gender, Place and the Labour Market**. (pp. 6-10). Aldershot: Ashgate.

Marsh, I. and M. Keating. 2006. **Sociology: Making Sense of Society**. (3rd ed.) (pp. 139-142, 152-153). Essex: Prentice Hall.

Lecture 12 (Monday April 29th)

Politics/Government

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp.538-539, 541-542). London: Collins.

Popenoe, D. 1993. **Sociology**. (9th ed.) (pp. 416-423). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Lecture 13 (Tuesday April 30th)

Politics/Government - Pluralism

Bilton, T. et al. 1987. **Introductory Sociology**. (2nd ed.) (pp.185-206). London: MacMillan.

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp. 542-549). London: Collins.

Lecture 14 (Thursday May 2nd)

Politics/Government – Radical Elitism

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp. 549-554). London: Collins.

Wright Mills, C. 1959. **The Power Elite**. (pp. 269-297). London: Oxford University Press.

Lecture 15 (Monday May 6th)

Politics/Government – Marxism

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp. 555-559). London: Collins.

Miliband, R. 1983. **The State in Capitalist Society**. (pp. 63-76). London: Quartet Books.

Lectures 16, 17 & 18 (Tuesday May 7th to Thursday May 9th)

Government, Power and Ideology (with a focus on Stephen Lukes, Antonio Gramsci and Edward Said)

Beilharz, P. (ed). 1981. **Social Theory – A Guide to Central Thinkers**. (chapter on Gramsci). North Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Bilton, T. et al. 1987. **Introductory Sociology**. (2nd ed.) (pp.28-32). London: MacMillan.

Giddens, A. 2006. **Sociology**. (5th ed.) (pp. 844-850). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp. 540-541, 559-561). London: Collins.

Lukes, S. 2005. **Power: A Radical View**. (2nd ed.)(pp.14-29). New York: Palgrave.

Lecture 19 (Monday May 13th)

Education – Functionalism

Bilton, T. et al. 1987. **Introductory Sociology**. (2nd ed.) (pp.383-402). London: MacMillan.

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp. 692-694). London: Collins.

Lecture 20 (Tuesday May 14th)

Education – Interactionism

Bilton, T. et al. 1987. **Introductory Sociology**. (2nd ed.) (pp.402-433). London: MacMillan.

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp. 751-756). London: Collins.

Henslin, J.(ed.).1993. **Down to Earth Sociology**. (7th ed.)(chap. 33). New York: The Free Press.

Lecture 21 – Alternative Teaching (Wednesday May 15th)

Lecture 22 (Thursday May 16th)

Education – Marxism

Bowles, S and Gintis, H. 1976. **Schooling in Capitalist America**. (pp. 102-124). New York: Basic Books.

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pp. 698-702). London: Collins.

Lecture 23 (Tuesday May 21st)

Education as Oppression (with a focus on Paulo Freire)

Freire, P. 1972. **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**. (chap. 2). London: Penguin Books.

McLaren, P. 2000. **Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution**. (pp. 148-169). New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Lecture 24 (Wednesday May 22nd) – Course Review

Suggested Readings

There are scores of Sociology textbooks in the main library that can be consulted and read. Below are just a few examples.

1. Textbooks

Bilton, T. et al. 1987. **Introductory Sociology**. (2nd ed.). London: MacMillan.

Eitzen, D. and Zinn, M. 1991. **In Conflict and Order**. (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.). London: Collins.

Henslin, J. (ed.). 1993. **Down to Earth Sociology**. (7th ed.). New York: The Free Press.

Jenks, C (ed.). 1998. **Core Sociological Dichotomies**. London: Sage Publications.

2. Additional Readings

Social Inequalities

Charon, J (ed.). 1996. **The Meaning of Sociology**. (5th ed.) (section V-VII). New Jersey: Simon & Schuster.

Marsh, I. and M. Keating. 2006. **Sociology: Making Sense of Society**. (3rd ed.) (chap. 6). Essex: Prentice Hall.

The Political System

Domhoff, G. 1967. **Who Rules America?** New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Pierson, C. 1996. **The Modern State**. (pp. 70-93). London: Routledge.

The Educational System

Cosin, B. et al. 1977. **School and Society: A Sociological Reader**. (2nd ed.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Keddie, N. (ed.). 1973. **Tinker, Tailor... The Myth of Cultural Deprivation**. Middlesex: Penguin.

Course Evaluation

During the course you will be expected to complete one assignment that will contribute towards your overall year mark. You **MUST** complete this assignment as part of your DP requirements for Sociology I. It constitutes 7.5% of your overall Sociology I mark (25% of your year mark), so must be taken seriously.

To undertake this assignment, each tutorial group will be divided into two sub-groups. This dividing-up will take place during the tutorial sessions in the second week of the course. Each sub-group needs to produce an advertisement that illustrates the notion of legitimization (as defined by Ralph Miliband), as well as to write a short report (not more than 1,000 words) that discusses the relationship between legitimization and advertising with specific reference to your advertisement.

Your tutor will provide further details. Please note that although you will be working in groups, you may be subject to individual marks based on your contribution to the group's effort.

Due date: Thursday May 23rd by 12 pm.

What must be advertised? You can advertise anything (product or service) that fits into the following two categories:

- 1) Advertise something normally considered 'bad' as actually being 'good'. You may **not** however choose to do cigarettes, alcohol or drugs as these are rather obvious.
- 2) Advertise something normally considered 'good' as actually being 'bad'.

You do either 1) OR 2), NOT BOTH.

How can you advertise? You may choose to do your advertisement as a pamphlet, poster, CD, DVD or any other format. You may be as creative as you like, as long as you draw on the notion of legitimization in so doing. If you feel that the advertisement to be produced may be very offensive and in bad taste, please speak to me about this prior to undertaking the assignment.

Readings:

Haralambos, M. and Holborn, M. 2004. **Sociology: Themes and Perspectives**. (6th ed.) (pg.556-557). London: Collins.

Miliband, R. 1969. **The State in Capitalist Society**. (pp. 211-218). London: Quartet Books.

Miliband, R. 1991. **Divided Societies**. (pp.145-150). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Course Outcomes

Aim to achieve the following by the end of the course:

- Be conceptually clear on the distinction between social institutions and social inequalities.

- Be able to offer a sociological explanation for why human societies are subject to both continuity and change.
- Be able to make sense of the theories and concepts pertaining to education, ideology and politics as social institutions.
- Be in a position to apply the sociological insights gained from this course to an understanding of other social institutions such as the family and religion.
- Have a clear understanding of social class inequalities which exist in modern capitalist societies and be able to apply this understanding to other forms of inequalities
- Be able to apply your sociological insights into understanding the social problems currently besetting South Africa.

Tutorials

There will be three tutorials for this course. ***These are all compulsory.***

TUTORIAL ONE (WEEK STARTING APRIL 8th)

This tutorial introduces the course assignment, as detailed under 'Course Evaluation' above.

TUTORIAL TWO (WEEK STARTING APRIL 22nd)

You must prepare a summary (about 400 words) outlining your understanding of the notion of 'legitimacy'/'legitimation', and indicating how a racist ideology legitimised racial domination under Apartheid. You may use any academic literature or web sources in writing your summary.

TUTORIAL THREE (WEEK STARTING MAY 6th)

You must prepare a summary (about 400 words) addressing the following question: Does a meritocracy (in relation to social class) exist in contemporary post-Apartheid society? You may use any academic literature or web sources in writing your summary.