SOCILOGY I

2021: Term 2

A Critical Introduction to Social Inequality and Institutions

LECTURERS
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the course on social institutions and inequality! Having made it through the first term, you should have a good understanding of what sociology is, and some of the issues which are important to sociologists.

This course builds on the material covered in the previous course, so you will be expected to apply your general understanding of sociology to the areas under scrutiny. The course covers two important and inter-related areas of sociology: social inequality and social institutions. Social inequality involves large-scale inequality within society. In this course, we will focus on class inequality, global inequality, gender inequality and racism. All these forms of inequality are manifest in and to varying degrees reproduced through social institutions that affect our daily lives. For this reason, social inequality and institutions will be studied in an integral manner, whereby we look at each form of social inequality in conjunction with the institutions associated with it. We also consider the interrelationship between different forms of social inequality. The institutions that will be included in this focus are the family/household, the workplace, education, family and media.

One aspect of the course that must be stressed is that no form of inequality or institution can be effectively studied in isolation. Society is a hugely complex and fluid entity, which is in a constant state of change, at times we need to hold one or more variables constant in order to inspect a particular relationship (for example, between education and racism or between advertising, racism and sexism). We do this, however, with the knowledge that reality cannot be holistically summed-up by such practices. You will notice, during the course, that no issue is left on the shelf once we have dealt with it. Issues will keep reappearing as we move along – not only in this course, but throughout your sociology career.

The issues covered in this course are both important and relevant to our understanding of our society, and will be presented through a multi-media approach, incorporating lectures, videos, the Internet and printed material. It is hoped that you will respond by actively engaging with the course material, asking questions and opening up conversations on issues covered.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THIS COURSE

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this course is to be conducted largely online. If for some reason the pandemic is brought under control and we can resume face-to-face lectures, then we will do so. The recorded video and/or audio lectures will be uploaded, together with the lecture slides, on RUconnected. Mrs Juanita Fuller, our departmental administrator, will send you the key. The necessary reading materials will also be uploaded on RUconnected. Assessments and tutorial submissions will be done via RUconnected/email.
It is in your interests to read the relevant reading prior to each lecture being uploaded so that you have some idea as to what the lecture will cover. If you read prior to the lecture you will realise that a lot of the things covered in the lectures are not new to you. You can then do further reading around these sections of the work. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions or seek further clarification regarding the course material.

For the tutorial assignments, term essay and examination you are expected to know what has been covered in lectures, but you also need to provide evidence of having read relevant sociological material. You will be rewarded for evidence of reading, especially independent reading of material not recommended in the course outline. Just make sure that the readings you consult are from a reliable sociological source such as a published book, a sociology department website or a refereed journal article.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AND INEQUALITY

This section introduces the course. Students will be introduced to sociological understandings of social institutions and social inequality. At the end of this section, students should be able to: (i) identify and define institutions and inequalities; (ii) distinguish between social institutions and organisations and; (iii) should be able to determine and explain the different types of institutions and inequalities. The following readings are compulsory:


PART 2: GENDER INEQUALITY AND SEXISM

This section begins by introducing students to home/household/family as the oldest and most fundamental social institution. The main goal of this section is to demonstrate the ways in which the home, as a social institution, is deeply implicated in the creation and
perpetuation of gender inequalities in society. At the end of this section, students should be able to: (i) define and identify home as a social institution; (ii) demonstrate an understanding of how the home, through gender socialisation, creates gender inequalities; (iii) Describe and evaluate the ways in which the home reproduces gender inequalities, and; (iv) be able to explain and apply the different theoretical traditions about gender inequality. The following readings are compulsory:

**The Family/Household as a Social Institution**

**Home/Household as the Plantation of Patriarchy and Violent Masculinities**

**Gender Inequality and Oppression in the Family/Household**

**Gender Inequality: Overview of Theoretical Contributions**
Sexual Violence and Institutions (Home, Police, Schooling)


PART 3: CLASS INEQUALITY

This section introduces students to the concept of class and class inequalities. The institutions through which class inequalities are examined are the media and the health system. At the end of this section, students should be able to identify and define class and class inequality, (ii) demonstrate an understanding of Marx and Weber's theoretical understandings of class, (iii) explain and apply Ralph Miliband’s theory of legitimation in relation to advertising, and (iv) assess class inequalities within the health system in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. The following readings are compulsory:

Introduction to Class


Theoretical Contributions to Class: Marx and Weber


Legitimation and Advertising (the promotion of capitalist social relations) (Media)


Class Inequalities in the Time of Covid-19 (Health)


**PART4: GLOBAL INEQUALITIES**

This section begins by tracing the origins and development of the world capitalist system and looks at the various forces which resulted in a specific instantiation of capitalism in South Africa, defined as ‘racial capitalism’. At the end of this section, students should be able to describe (i) capitalism as a global system, (ii) how the discovery of gold led to a specific form of racial capitalism in South Africa, (iii) the violent attempts to deny the culture of those oppressed by racial capitalism, and (iv) the role played by the institution of education in perpetuating colonial and class inequalities.

**Imperialism: Origins of Global Capitalist Expansion**


**Colonialism in South Africa**


**Cultural Assimilation and Cultural Struggle**


**Theoretical Approaches to Capitalism and Education: Functionalism, Marxism and Interactionism**


**Capitalism, Colonialism and Education**

PART 5: RACE AND RACISM

In this section, you will be introduced to various sociological approaches to understanding a crucial inequality of modern society, that is, racism. At the end of this section, you should be able to (i) discuss sociological perspectives on the connection between race, racism, and modernity; and (ii) explain the national legacy of racial capitalism as reflected in present day post-apartheid education systems.

Introduction to Race and Racism


Racism and Colonialism


Race, Class and Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa


FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

- Tutorial Assignments
You are required to complete and submit two compulsory tutorial assignments. If you fail to submit an assignment without a valid reason that would necessitate a Leave of Absence (LOA) certificate, you will put your Duly Performed (DP) certificate in jeopardy. LOA forms are available in the department – please consult with the departmental secretary (noluvuyo.sakata@ru.ac.za) in this regard. An application for an LOA must be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation (doctor’s certificate, letter from warden, letter from psychologist, etc.). You must find out if your application has been approved, as the granting of an LOA by the Head of Department is not automatic (see Handout 1 for details).

- **Tests**
There will be two tests for this course. The tests constitute 100% (each 50%) of the term mark (which, in turn, constitutes 30% of your overall mark for this course).

  Test 1: 24 May 2021

  Test 2: 14 June 2021

- **June Examination**
You will write an examination on the first semester’s work in June. This exam will count for 70% of the overall mark for this course.

**Tutorial Assessment 1:**
(Due date: 21 May 2021)

Before answering the following questions, refer to page 15 of Handout 1 for an explanation of the terms used when phrasing questions. This will enable you to answer these questions adequately. Your answers should not be longer than one paragraph.

1. Define social institutions.
2. Describe the main purpose of social institutions.
3. List five social institutions.
4. Illustrate the distinction between a social institution and a social organisation.
5. In the Introduction to Sociology in the first term you learned about primary and secondary socialisation. **Discuss** one institution responsible for primary socialisation and one institution responsible for secondary socialisation.

6. **Define** inequality.

7. **Explain** the difference between inequality and inequity.

8. **List** five types of inequalities prevalent in society.

9. When you learned about the sociological imagination in the first term, you were introduced to the distinction between personal troubles vs public issues. **Explain** whether you would classify gender inequality and the oppression of women as a public issue or personal trouble.

10. **Define** class in the sociological tradition.

11. **Outline** and **compare** Marx and Weber's theories in relation to class inequality (not more than two paragraphs).

12. Which social institution, according to you, breeds class inequalities in South Africa and why? (One paragraph)