Business 9861 - Inequality and Business

Fall 2023

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Fridays 9:00am – 12:00pm  
(12 sessions)

Course homepage: https://learn.ivey.ca/courses/5188

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

How are ‘opportunities’, both within organizations and in society more generally, created and constrained by social stratification in modern capitalist societies? What role do growing economic inequality and ethnic diversity play? Do inequality and diversity affect innovation and productivity? As government and business leaders grapple with how to respond to these questions, it is important that they understand how society is stratified, how this stratification is perpetuated, and its consequences. This course tackles these questions by addressing the following topics:

- Meritocracy, stratification and social mobility;
- Social and cultural capital;
- Gender inequality;
- Stratification by ethnicity, race, and immigrant status;
- Stratification, economic inequality, and attitudes;
- Discrimination in hiring;
- Salaries and compensation;
- Diversity and innovation;
- How diversity and inclusion have been (poorly) tackled in organizations.

2. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course will challenge you to consider how inequality is produced in modern capitalist societies, how business contributes to it, and why it is important that business leaders pay attention to it. It will also challenge your ability to evaluate empirical research on this topic.
You will be expected to contribute informed and critical discussion of the readings and issues that they cover.

3. METHODS OF EVALUATION

Grades in this course will be based on four elements:

1. Weekly seminar participation (20%)
2. Weekly position papers (20%) - Due at noon on the Thursday before class (London, ON time)
3. Seminar moderating (20%) - Dates to TBD
4. Final term paper (40%) - Due Friday, December 14, 2023 at 3pm (London, ON time)

The weekly position papers should be entered directly into the text box for the assignment on Learn (https://learn.ivey.ca/courses/5188), though I suggest saving your work as a Word file before copying it into Learn. The final term paper must typed, double-spaced and in 12-point font, and submitted as a PDF file.

3.1 Class Participation (20%)

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) and to put their findings in a wider context.

3.2. Position Papers (20% - 10 papers x 2 grades each)

You are required to write weekly 10 position papers on the required readings. Although I expect that you will do the readings for the first session, there is no position paper for the first week. You are required to complete 10 position papers over the remaining 11 weeks. You thus have one ‘free’ week. It is your decision on which week to ‘take off’.

The position papers are worth a total of 20 grades (i.e., two points each). You will receive the full points 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. If you satisfactorily complete all 10 position papers, you will receive 20/20 for this element of the course. While I will be happy to look at everything you submit, you will not receive a extra grades for competing eleven paper.
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. 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.

Position papers should not simply summarize the week's readings. Instead, they should point out the essential findings of the required readings, draw connections between the required readings (including those in weeks before), and raise problems or questions that are meant to stimulate seminar discussion. You should be critical! At the end of each position paper (but still within the two-page length), you must also three questions based on the readings that you plan to consider for seminar discussion.

3.3 Seminar Moderating (20%)

Aside from the regular class participation in weekly seminars, each student will take the role of moderator for one or two classes (depending on the final number of students enrolled in the course). These presentations are worth a total of 20 percent of your final grade. The specific dates (and associated readings) on which you must moderate will be determined during the first seminar on September 15th.

The moderator’s role is to stimulate discussion around the major ideas and evidence of the week’s readings. Your primary role is to encourage informed discussion and debate. You should not lecture. Also, try to avoid asking questions that have simple yes or no answers. They seldom provoke discussion. Finally, while it is a good idea to have personal notes to guide your discussion, and you are welcome to share a handout or two to clarify a point if necessary, you should not give a PowerPoint presentation or provide extensive handouts.

A good moderator will ensure that the class discussion addresses the following:

- 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, when appropriate, current affairs.

You should start by providing a short summary—5-7 minutes—*that ties the readings together*. Do not summarize each of the readings separately. Instead, layout how the readings overlap, complement each other, and/or contradict each other.

3.4 Final Term Paper (40%) – Due: Friday, April 15 at 3pm

The final paper must be between 15 and 18 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 18 pages as it is to ensure that you have more than 15 pages. The paper is due on Friday, December 14, 2023 at 3pm. Late papers will not be accepted.
The final paper must **directly address** at least one of the weekly topics covered in this course. It must have clear relevance to business and/or management. You must ask for special permission to write on an issue outside of these topics. The paper must take the form of a **critical review** of the major theoretical and methodological developments, and empirical findings related to the topic that you choose. While you should be sure to include the most important and influential sources in the field, the paper should not be an **annotated bibliography**. Instead, you will be expected to describe how the field has developed, what we know now, where there continues to be debate, and areas for future research. When necessary—for example, when studies have contradictory findings—you should critique the theory, data and methods of the influential works you discuss with the goal of explaining the reasons for the discrepancies between them. There is no set number of articles that should be discussed, though I expect that you will have little problem considering 20 influential articles.

The final paper should be written in a format acceptable for publication in a top academic journal (such as APA, Chicago or MLA style). I don’t care which you use as long you are consistent and there are **no footnotes**. I expect both assignments to be polished, so you should start as soon as possible.

**4. COURSE SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READINGS**

Please complete the required readings BEFORE attending class (including for the first session). I suggest reading the articles in the order they listed. Supplemental readings are not required.

1. **Sept 15: Why study inequality and business?**


   **Supplemental reading:**


2. **Sept 22: Meritocracy and stratification**


3. **Sept 29: Race, ethnicity and immigration**

Lang, Kevin and Ariella Kahn-Lang Spitzer (2020) ‘Race Discrimination,’
4. **Oct 6: Gender and sexuality**


5. **Oct 13: Cultural capital**


6. **Oct 20: Social capital, networks and careers**


7. **Oct 27: Hiring, promotion and performance assessment**


8. **Nov 3: Within firm pay dispersion**


9. **Nov 10: Executive compensation**


10. **Sept 17: Stratification and attitudes**


11. **Nov 24: Organizational diversity, ideas and performance**


12. **Dec 1: Policy on equity, diversity and inclusion**


**ACADEMIC OFFENCES: PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf).

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 for such checking 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](http://www.turnitin.com)).

**SUPPORT SERVICES: HEALTH AND WELLNESS**
As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. See https://www.uwo.ca/health.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Additionally, 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 or program coordinator.

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION WESTERN

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 strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW 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.

A FINAL WELCOME AND REQUEST OF STUDENTS

I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability, and other visible and nonvisible differences. I consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. If it is appropriate to our learning and you feel comfortable doing so, I ask that you share your unique point of view as we explore the course content.