



The University of Western Ontario  
**SOCIOLOGY 2229B-200**  
**Global Inequality**  
**Winter 2023**

**DRAFT**

**Class times and mode:**

Monday 1:30-4:30pm

**Hybrid:** In-person in room NCB-117 & four virtual synchronous classes on Zoom

**Instructor:** David Calnitsky

Office Hours by appointment  
Department of Sociology, Office: SSC 5402  
Email: [dcalnits@uwo.ca](mailto:dcalnits@uwo.ca)

**TA:** TBD

email:  
TA office hours by appointment

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**Technical Requirements:**



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer



Working microphone



Working webcam

**The hybrid mode:**

This is a 200, hybrid designated class – this means that most of the classes will be in-person, but four will be done over Zoom. The Zoom mode has worked really well in the past because the class is small

enough and participation can work easily. Attendance at synchronous Zoom sessions is required, and *webcams must be on*, it makes communication much easier.

There are four scheduled Zoom classes:

- (1) Feb 6 – Arguments for capitalism;
- (2) Feb 13 – Arguments against capitalism;
- (3) Mar 20 – Colonialism/imperialism/globalization;
- (4) Mar 27 – Social democracy

Otherwise, class is in person.

**Zoom invite:**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://westernuniversity.zoom.us...> TBD

Meeting ID: TBD

**Course Description:** This course introduces students to the study of social inequalities on a global scale both between and within nations. It examines the causes and consequences of this inequality.

The problem of inequality is central to sociology, but what is it? People usually have something about money or poverty in mind when they talk about inequality, but the idea is far more general. To speak of social inequality is to describe any valuable attribute which can be distributed in different amounts across relevant units. The units can be individuals or social groups in a country, but they can also be individuals or nations in the world. And the attributes can be income or wealth, but they can also be health, status, power, life expectancy, wellbeing, or other kinds of resources. Studying inequality then entails an analysis of the causes and consequences of the distribution of these attributes across the units we're interested in. In this class, we are interested most in various forms of material inequality; that is, inequality in resources, income, wealth, but also various measures of wellbeing more broadly. We will start by discussing the concept of inequality and various normative arguments related to it, before moving on to a global history of its development.

The history of our species begins with a broad and pervasive equality of resources. For most of early human history—a period called the Paleolithic, which lasted roughly 2.5 million to 12,000 years ago—high levels of material inequality were impossible because surpluses did not exist to be divided unequally. A scarce world is an equal one. Eventually class societies emerged with the productive power to produce social surpluses, and those surpluses could be shared unequally. In this case, it was the surplus from food production in the early farming and herding societies that was unequally controlled and distributed. The class societies that formed after the Neolithic Revolution (dated around 12,000

years ago) is where the story of inequality begins. We trace that history into the early history of capitalism where inequality reaches new heights.<sup>1</sup> The birth of capitalism brought with it a level of productivity that far exceeded earlier class societies and the fruits of that hitherto-unseen productivity were again divided unequally. But here the mechanisms producing inequality were different: the “have nots” did not have less, but now the “haves” had far more than ever before.

After going through the early history of inequality, most of this class will focus on the inequalities that characterize capitalist societies. This means understanding the dynamics of capitalist economies, which we will spend a good bit of time on. We will look at inequalities within nations, between nations, and inequalities across individuals in the world as a whole. We also examine the empirical causes and consequences of inequality. One potential cause has its roots in international politics, and we spend some time looking at the role of the international sphere from imperialism to globalization. Finally, we look at possible solutions to high levels of inequality, and analyze the history of social democracy and socialism.

***Prerequisite(s):*** NA

***Anti-requisite(s):*** Antirequisite(s): Sociology 2239

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

The object of this course is to introduce and examine capitalism, inequality, and poverty on a global scale.

***Policy on laptops and phones during in-person classes:***

For our non-Zoom classes: I do not allow the use of any electronic devices during in-person classes, which includes cell phones, laptops, ipads, and other devices. The World Wide Web is just too tempting. And all the current research shows that laptops reduce learning outcomes for in-person classes. Your cell phones should be off, not just set to vibrate. I promise this is not meant to be mean or punitive. Even if you are trying hard to pay attention, devices will distract you and your classmates around you. In exchange for this, I will post any slides I use to the course website on OWL, which should minimize the notes you’ll need to take. Exceptions will be made for students who require a laptop for accessibility reasons or who see the laptop as essential to their work. Students in the latter group will need to get in touch with me and provide a compelling reason.

**Course Material:**

This class uses readings available under “Resources” or “Course Readings” on OWL. Check both places. There should also be a course pack for these readings, available at the bookstore.

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<sup>1</sup> This actually will depend on how inequality is measured, a topic we’ll go into.

**Communication:**

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) on a regular basis for updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

**Method of Evaluation:**

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course.

**Evaluation Breakdown:**

Weekly reading memos	30%
Midterm exam (February 27 <sup>th</sup> 2023)	30%
Final exam (During final exam period, TBD)	40%

*Reading*

All readings listed in the syllabus are mandatory, and they should be completed before class. Completing the readings will take time, but they are essential to success in this class.

*Weekly memos*

Every week you will submit a short, paragraph long memo on the readings that week. The weekly memo—three sentences or so, and yes that means full sentences—is basically there to convince me you’ve done the reading. You don’t have to cover each specific reading (although you can, and you can comment on differences between them), but you have to write something thoughtful about what you’ve just read. This can be a reflection directly on readings, an objection to a claim that is made, or something stated by the author that you agree with. It does not need to be long; again, three sentences works.

These will be graded, each week, on a very rough three-point scale: 3 points means you clearly did the reading and engaged with it directly and thoughtfully in your comment, and 1 point means you wrote something down that’s highly general, not specific to reading, and didn’t really persuade us that you’ve engaged with the material. 2 points is somewhere in between.

To get marks for the memo it must be submitted in the correct Google Doc on OWL *BEFORE* class starts each week. There will be a Google Doc for each week in the class, the link will be at the front of our OWL page. Write the memo on your own computer and then copy and paste into that week’s Google Doc. Make sure to have your name under your comment.

*Attendance*

Class attendance is required for success in this course. To receive a passing grade in the course, you must attend at least 80% of the class meetings. This will only be waived in exceptional circumstances, with documentation.

*Mid-term exam (Feb 27) and final exam (During final exam period, TBD)*

There will be one mid-term and one final exam at the end of the semester held during exam time. They will be closed book. The exams will assess whether you have paid attention in class, and thought about the material seriously. The content will cover lecture material. Exams will not be cumulative.

The mid-term will happen in class on Feb 27<sup>th</sup> and we will have the full three hours of class time, 1:30-4:30pm. The final exam will be during the exam period. Both will consist of short answer definition questions and longer form essay questions. More information will be provided as we go along.

**Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning:**

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

**Student Absences:**

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

***Assessments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade:***

For work worth less than 10% of the total course grade, in this case, the memos, I will offer a make-up opportunity for one memo. Additionally, the lowest memo grade will be dropped.

***Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:***

For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible. In the case of valid medical or supporting documentation I will offer a make-up opportunity for exams. Course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the make-up exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

**Absences from Final Examinations:**

Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office as soon as possible. Academic Counselling will determine eligibility to write a Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

**Note:** missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is **not** sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty of Social Science Academic Counselling Office.

## Course Schedule and Readings:

### Jan 9 – Introduction

- Wright, E. O. (1994). “Inequality,” in *Interrogating Inequality*. London: Verso.

### Jan 16 – The rise of inequality and the world before inequality

- Scheidel, Walter. *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton University Press, 2018. “Ch. 1. Rise of Inequality”

#### Recommended

- Christian, David. *Maps of time: An introduction to big history*. Univ of California Press, 2011. “Ch. 8. Intensification and the Origins of Agriculture” & “Ch. 9. From Power over Nature to Power over People: Cities, States, and Civilizations”
- Diamond, J. *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. Selections. Ch. 1-3.
- Scheidel, Walter. *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton University Press, 2018. “Ch. 2. Empires of Inequality”
- World Inequality Report 2022, chapter 2, “Global inequality from 1820 to now: the persistence and mutation of extreme inequality

### Jan 23 – Understanding inequality

- Wright, E.O. (1997). *Class Counts*. Cambridge University Press. “Ch. 1 - Class Analysis”, pp. 1-34 (15 pages)

### Jan 30 –The rise of capitalism and understanding capitalism

- Bowles, S., Edwards, R., & Roosevelt, F. (1993). Capitalism shapes the world” in *Understanding capitalism*. Harper Collins College. ISBN: 9780190610937, pp. 3-21 [19 pages]
- Allen, R, *Global Economic History: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 1-52.

### Feb 6 – *ON ZOOM* – Arguments for capitalism

- Friedman, M. 2002. Introduction & Ch 1. *Capitalism and Freedom*. Pp. 1-21. Univ Chicago Press.

- Cowen, T. 2018. “Introduction” & “Wealth Makes the World Go Round,” in *Stubborn Attachments*. P. 12-47. Stripe Press, San Francisco, CA.

Recommended:

- Rosser, M. “Economic Growth”: <https://ourworldindata.org/economic-growth>

**Feb 13 – ON ZOOM – Arguments against capitalism**

- Chibber, V. 2022. “The basic structure” in *Confronting Capitalism: How the World Works and How to Change It*. Verso Books.
- Wright, EO. 2019. Ch. 1 & 2 in *How to be an anticapitalist in the twenty-first century*. Verso Books.

**Feb 20 – Reading week**

**Feb 27 – Midterm exam, in class**

**Mar 6 – Cross-national comparisons**

- Milanovic, Branko. *Global inequality: A new approach for the age of globalization*. Harvard University Press, 2016. “Ch. 1 The Rise of the Global Middle Class and Global Plutocrats” PP. 10-45.
- Milanovic, Branko. Global income inequality: Time to revise the elephant. Dec 5 2022. *Social Europe*. <https://socialeurope.eu/global-income-inequality-time-to-revise-the-elephant>

Recommended:

- Deaton, A. (2013). Ch. 1 – Wellbeing of the World, in *The great escape*. Princeton University Press.
- Roser, M. Global Economic Inequality. <https://ourworldindata.org/global-economic-inequality>
- Milanovic, B. 2010. Pp. 95-108; 115-123. *The Haves and the Have Nots*. Basic Books.

**Mar 13 – Causes and consequences of inequality**

- Pickett, K., & Wilkinson, R. (2010). *The Spirit Level*. Penguin UK. Chapters 1-3. Pp. 3-45.
- Kenworthy, Lane. (2017). "Why the surge in income inequality?." *Contemporary Sociology* 46(1): 1-9.

**Mar 20 – ON ZOOM – From colonialism to globalization**

- Piketty, T. “The Heritage of Colonialism and Slavery,” in *Brief History of Equality*. Harvard University Press, 2022. Pp. 48-67.
- Allen, R, *Global Economic History: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 53-63.

Recommended:

- Alice H. Amsden, 1990. “Imperialism” Palgrave Macmillan (ed.), *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, [https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/978-1-349-95121-5\\_1049-1.pdf](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/978-1-349-95121-5_1049-1.pdf)
- Singer, Peter. 2000. “Navigating the Ethics of Globalization”. in in Eitzen and Baca Zinn. *Globalization: The Transformation of Social Worlds*. Wadsworth. Pp 131-136.
- Chibber, V. “Ch. 28. Globalization” in *The sociology project 2.5: Introducing the Sociological Imagination* (Eds. Manza, Jeff, Richard Arum, and Lynne Haney). New York: Pearson, 2018.
- Derenoncourt, Ellora. (2018). 20. The Historical Origins of Global Inequality. In *After Piketty* (pp. 491-511). Harvard University Press.
- Derenoncourt, Ellora. (2019). *Atlantic slavery’s impact on European and British economic development*. Working Paper. [https://eaderen.github.io/derenoncourt\\_atlantic\\_slavery\\_europe\\_2018.pdf](https://eaderen.github.io/derenoncourt_atlantic_slavery_europe_2018.pdf)

### Mar 27 – ON ZOOM – Social democracy

- Kenworthy, Lane. (2019). *Social Democratic Capitalism*. In Speth, Oxford University Press. Pp. 3-11.
- Judt, T. (2009). What is living and what is dead in social democracy? *New York Review of Books*, Pp.1-10.
- Sunkara, B. *Socialist Manifesto*. “Chapter 5: The God that Failed,” Pp. 99-119.

### Apr 3 – After capitalism

- Chibber, V. 2022. “Conclusion” in *Confronting Capitalism: How the World Works and How to Change It*. Verso Books.
- Piketty, T. “Toward a Democratic, Ecological, and Multicultural Socialism” in. *Brief History of Equality*. Harvard University Press, 2022.

### Recommended:

- Scheidel, Walter. *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton University Press, 2018. “Ch. 16. What does the future hold?”

## Important Policies

**Academic Consideration for Missed Work:** Students must provide valid medical or supporting documentation in order to receive accommodation for missed work worth 10% or more of the final grade in the course. All required documentation for absences must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty. Individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds or for other reasons.

Western’s policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf). The student medical certificate is available at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

**Religious Accommodation:** When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and the Academic Counselling office of



their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at <https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

**Accessibility Options:** Students with disabilities or accessibility challenges should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD [http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)), which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: [www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/academics/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

**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: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

**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.

**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 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 (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

**Mental Health:** Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western ([www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: [Academic Counselling - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#).

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).