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Student Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30pm-4:30pm (online)
or by appointment

POL 198: SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE CITY

Wednesday 12:00-2:00pm

Course Description

Cities highlight the best and worst aspects of modern life and they reveal the starkest contradictions of our time. Cities, for example, produce the majority of the world's wealth and are engines of the global economy yet they also give rise to extreme forms of poverty and inequality. They are hubs of creativity, innovation, and ingenuity as well as social disorder, dysfunction, and environmental degradation. Cities foster transnational connections, diverse communities, and rich public lives but they also breed alienation, exclusions, and social antagonisms. They promise liberty, progress, and prosperity for all at the same time that they institutionalize systems of control, exploitation and violence. How do we make sense of this complex and contradictory picture? Who benefits and who loses from different modes of urban development? How can we build cities that promote 'the good life' for all residents equally?

The course examines the dynamics of social justice and the city. The course first introduces a variety of ways (e.g. liberal, Marxist, feminist) that we can think about social justice. With these various dialogues on social justice sketched out, the course turns its attention to the urban context. It asks what is distinctive about social justice in cities and how we might view justice and injustice as matters of *spatial* politics. In the final section of the course, several timely urban themes are examined. Here we will apply our understandings of social justice to issues of housing, mobility, and public space. Thus, the course considers the city as a crucial setting for social theorizing as well as a key site of social change.

Overall the class claims that the various forms of urban injustice that surround us are not natural phenomena but political creations – and therefore always resistible and transformable through emancipatory movements. In this way, we will consider the extent to which various conceptions of social justice can help us to understand the forces that shape urban environments, provide us with critical tools to address urban problems, and enable us to build alternative, more inclusive and sustainable communities.

Objectives

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to various notions of social justice so that they can better understand diverse urban issues and use this knowledge to reflect on their own lives. The objectives for student learning in this course can be roughly grouped into two main categories: knowledge and skills. At the end of the semester, you should:

- Be able to define, describe, and debate a number of key theories of social justice
- Recognize the highly uneven and differentiated character of urbanization and how various hierarchical structures affect contemporary urban politics
- Understand how justice and injustice are operate through institutions of urban development and dynamics of urban life

- Examine various urban issues (including access to housing, mobility and public space) from a social justice perspective
- Have a better understanding of your own embeddedness within urban relations and your capacities for individual and collective action
- Have an improved ability to critically read texts and analyze complex arguments about the social world
- Be better able to communicate ideas both verbally and in writing

Requirements

Participation

Students are expected to attend every session and arrive on time. Our classroom will be a safe academic environment where ideas are devised, debated, and deconstructed. Feel free to speak your mind on any and all of the issues that will arise during the course. A university is an important place to debate difficult issues—and in doing so, to challenge others, to appreciate unfamiliar viewpoints, and to reflect upon and deepen one’s own convictions. All students are encouraged to think out loud and to exchange ideas openly and respectfully.

As a seminar, this course will be directed **by and for students**. My role as the instructor is to provide you with a shared conceptual framework for discussion and to facilitate your learning with each other. My role is not to deliver factual material to passive learners. It is essential that you take your role as active participant seriously. The success of the seminar is dependent on the group's ability to work together and, through intelligent discussion, develop an understanding of the material that you would not have come to on your own. A seminar is an ongoing and open conversation that unfolds through our shared collective engagements. Each member of the class therefore carries the burden of responsibility for the quality of the discussion. Good discussions tend to occur when participants study texts closely in advance, listen actively, share their ideas and questions in response to the ideas and questions of others, and are generous and respectful to their peers and interlocutors.

NB: Weekly class attendance is necessary, but not sufficient for a top class participation grade. Your participation will be evaluated according to the following guidelines:

Grade	Description of Contribution
A	Actively supports, engages, and listens to peers. Contributions reflect exceptional preparation. Ideas offered are consistently substantive and provide insights and direction for the class. Analyses are persuasive and thoughtful. Group dynamics are improved by this student’s presence.
B	Makes a sincere effort to support, engage, and listen to peers. Contributions reflect thorough preparation. Ideas are substantive, they provide good insights, and frequently provide useful direction for the class discussion. Analyses are persuasive and are grounded in the required course materials. The quality of group discussions and exercises are improved by this student’s contributions. No more than one to two unexcused absences.
C	Has limited interaction with peers. Contributions reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas are generally useful but seldom offer a new direction for the discussion. Analyses are not well substantiated, may be only tangentially related to the course, or may not be compelling. The student may have several unexcused absences.
D	Virtually no interaction with peers. Adequate preparation is rare. Remarks tend to be unsubstantiated, irrelevant, or inappropriate to the discussion at hand. The student may have many unexcused absences.
F	Does not interact with peers. Contributions reflect inadequate preparation. Ideas offered do not provide a constructive direction for the class. Integrative comments and effective analyses are absent. The student may have many unexcused absences.

In addition to in-class seminar activity, participation will also take place through ongoing asynchronous conversations using our Quercus discussion forum.

Reading

The texts are the foundation of the course. Students should read *all* of the required materials *before* class and be prepared—with notes and question—to discuss the major issues raised therein. You will be asked to rely on various critical and interpretive skills to explore the theories and concepts presented. Students are also encouraged to suggest additional readings based on your interests and to circulate relevant texts (news articles, multimedia clips, event notices etc.) to each other throughout the course. Feel free to share these directly on the Quercus discussion board or to bring them to my attention for distribution in class.

Assignments

In addition to ongoing seminar participation, to successfully fulfill the requirements for the course, there are two major assignments. Students must complete one Reflective Essay (due October 27) and one group Urban Issues Project (due December 1, 8). Details of each assignment will be given in class and posted on Quercus.

Evaluation

The grade for the class will be determined as follows:

Seminar Participation	40%
Reflective Essay	30%
Urban Issues Project	30%

Academic Policy:

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and achieving course goals. The assignments in this course are designed to give you an opportunity to learn important skills and concepts by making honest attempts through your own thinking, writing, and hard work. I am strongly committed to assigning grades based on my students' honest efforts to demonstrate learning in this course. Academic dishonesty in any form will thus not be tolerated.

Acts of academic dishonesty include:

- copying material word-for-word and not acknowledging the source by placing the text within quotation marks, even with a citation
- submitting work produced by someone else as though it was your own (e.g. a friend's paper, work purchased from a custom essay site)
- submitting the same work, in part or in whole, for multiple courses
- "editing" that results in a paper which is no longer entirely your own work.

For a complete list of offences, see section B of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. Any assignments received after the due date will be penalized 5% per day or part thereof. However, if you have extenuating circumstances that are affecting your ability to meet deadlines—including situations related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic—please speak with me

as soon as possible. Reasonable extension requests will be granted provided you have a revised plan and timeline for completion.

Office Hours

Office hours are times I have specifically reserved to speak with students. I am available to discuss course content and themes, to answer questions, to assist with assignments, and to offer general academic advice. Please feel free to meet with me one-one or in small groups. Office hours will be held online using Zoom. Please email me in advance to schedule a meeting.

Email Policy

Please use your U of T email for course related correspondence. Be sure to include a meaningful subject line that includes the course code. I will try to respond to email within 1-2 working days. I do not typically reply to emails within 24 hours of an assignment due date.

Other Resources

College Registrar

Your college registrar is available for both general academic advising and personal problem solving. Your college is responsible for holistic advising that takes into account all the elements of student life: academic, personal, financial, and more. If you are facing challenges or have questions about how to succeed at the University of Toronto, this office should be your first point of contact.

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach the Accessibility Services Office <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let them and me know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Writing

The University of Toronto offers an extensive collection of resources and tools to aid students in academic writing. I strongly suggest that you familiarize yourself with the workshops, tutoring services, and advice guides provided at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca>. Information about the English Language Learning program (ELL) is available at <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>.

Health and Wellness

Health & Wellness offers University of Toronto students a wide range of medical and mental health services to help support you in achieving your personal and academic best.

These supports are especially important right now, when you may be experiencing a variety of negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. To find out more and to access supports, please visit <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness>. If you are feeling distressed, see particular supports (including those for mental health) at <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/support-when-you-feel-distressed/>

Libraries

The U of T library system is an extraordinary resource for accessing information, conducting research and enhancing your learning. I especially encourage students to consult with librarians for

assistance on their research projects. In addition, the following guide, How to Cite: <http://guides.library.utoronto.ca/citing> will be helpful for this class.

Readings

All materials will be made available through the course Quercus site and/or through the U of T library system.

Weekly Schedule

	<p style="text-align: center;">Theorizing (Urban) Social Justice</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>What do we mean by social justice? Is justice contextual or universal? For example, does social justice look different in the global north and the global south? Are justice concerns unique in small vs. large cities? How do systems of justice and injustice come to be? How do they change over time? (How) does the city require us to rethink categories of justice and injustice?</i></p>
September 15	<p><u>On Just and Unjust Cities</u> Susan Fainstein. 2010. <i>The Just City</i>. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. pp 23-56.</p> <p>Iris Marion Young. 2004. “Five Faces of Oppression” adapted from I. M. Young <i>Justice and the Politics of Difference</i>. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 39–65.</p>
September 22	<p><u>Spatial Justice and the Right to the City</u> Ed Soja. 2009. “The city and spatial justice.” <i>justice spatiale/ spatial justice</i>. n° 01, September.</p> <p>Attoh, K.A., 2011. What kind of right is the right to the city? <i>Progress in human geography</i>, 35(5), pp.669-685.</p>
September 29	<p><u>Settler Colonialism, Urbanization, and Reconciliation</u> Heather Dorries. “Reconciliation as an Urban Practice,” Working toward reconciliation from an urban perspective, National Capital Commission’s Urbanism Lab, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqBj-cufS3Q (12:00-28:30)</p> <p>First Story Toronto, https://firststoryblog.wordpress.com/</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Accessing the Diverse City</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>How do different “differences” matter to questions of (in)justice? How do social hierarchies—of for example, race, class, gender, and ability—become cemented in the urban environment? Is the pursuit of urban diversity compatible with the desire for universal equality, democracy, and liberty?</i></p>
October 6	<p><u>Plural Identities/Differences</u> Jay Pitter. 2016. “Introduction.” in <i>Subdivided</i>. Pitter and Lorinc (eds.) Toronto: Coach House Press. pp 5-12.</p>

	Beyhan Farhadi. 2016. "Identity and the City: Thinking Through Diversity." in <i>Subdivided</i> . Pitter and Lorinc (eds.) Toronto: Coach House Press. pp 13-30.
October 13	<p><u>Race</u> Julian Agyeman. 2020. Urban planning as a tool of white supremacy – the other lesson from Minneapolis, <i>The Conversation</i> https://theconversation.com/urban-planning-as-a-tool-of-white-supremacy-the-other-lesson-from-minneapolis-142249</p> <p>Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. 2021. Did Last Summer’s Black Lives Matter Protests Change Anything? <i>The New Yorker</i>, https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/did-last-summers-protests-change-anything</p>
October 20	<p><u>Gender and Sexuality</u> Leslie Kern. 2021. How to remake the manmade city. <i>CBC Ideas</i>, https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/how-to-remake-the-manmade-city-1.5951786</p> <p>Toronto Women’s City Alliance. 2014. “Making Equality Matter: Municipal Literacy Toolkit.” http://www.twca.ca/resources/</p>
October 27	<p><u>Class</u> David Hulchanski. 2010. <i>The Three Cities within Toronto: Income Polarization among Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005</i>. Toronto: Cities Centre, University of Toronto.</p> <p>REFLECTIVE ESSAY DUE</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Justice in Context</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>What does it mean to understand contemporary urban problems as social justice issues? How are important urban resources—such as housing, mobility, and public space—produced, distributed, and used? Who has access and who is denied access to these goods? How do activist groups in the city make claims to resources and rights using a social justice framework?</i></p>
November 3	<p><u>Housing</u> Andrew Lee. 2020. What is gentrification? How It Works, Who It Affects, and What to Do About It, <i>Teen Vogue</i>, https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-is-gentrification-how-works</p> <p>Jamie Jover. 2021. A Global Right-to-Housing Movement Versus Financialization, <i>Metropolitix</i> https://metropolitix.org/A-Global-Right-to-Housing-Movement-Versus-Financialization.html</p>
November 10	Reading Week- No Class
November 17	<p><u>Transit and Mobility</u> Sean Hertel, Roger Keil and Michael Collens. 2015. Switching Tracks: Toward Transit Equity in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.</p>

	http://suburbs.apps01.yorku.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Switching-Tracks_9-March-2015.pdf Theresa Enright. 2020. Commotion. <i>Society and Space</i> , https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/commotion
November 24	<u>Public Space</u> Seth Low and Kurt Iveson. 2016. "Propositions for More Just Urban Public Spaces." <i>City</i> , 20(1): 10-31.
	Sharing of Research and Learning
December 1	Presentations and Discussion
December 8	Presentations and Discussion