





# Sociology (SOCI) 381

## The Rich and the Rest: The Sociology of Wealth, Power, and Inequality (Revision 2)

**Status:** Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

**Delivery mode:** Individualized study 

**Credits:** 3

**Areas of study:** Arts or Social Science

**Prerequisites:** None. **SOCI 287** or **SOCI 288** is strongly recommended.

**Precluded:** None

**Challenge:** SOCI 381 has a challenge for credit option.

**Faculty:** [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

## Overview

*Sociology 381* introduces students to one of the most important—and burning—issues of our time: the study of the causes, the conditions, and the consequences of inequality in human societies. As students will see, inequality in the world today can be observed through a number of different dimensions—most notably in the forms of economic, social, and political inequality. According to many reports, including those from non-government organizations, current estimates show that both global and national inequality have reached unprecedented levels over the past several decades. Never in recent recorded history have the rich owned and controlled such a disproportionately large share of global wealth, and never have the poor owned such a disproportionately small share. The global income gap between the fabulous wealth of the few and the abject poverty of the many has never seemed so stark and so severe.

As students will see throughout this course, the problem of inequality—especially the problem of poverty—is closely associated with a variety of other social problems, including poor physical and mental health, higher rates of drug abuse and alcoholism, lower levels of trust and weaker community life, lower social mobility, low educational attainment among impoverished youth, violence and crime, higher rates of incarceration, higher rates of teenage pregnancy, and higher infant and maternal mortality, amongst many other social and environmental problems.

As students proceed through the units of this course, they will constantly be encouraged (and prodded) to ask themselves the question, “How does this issue affect me, both as a private individual and as a citizen in a liberal democracy?” In other words, “Why should I care?” Or, as the late sociologist C. Wright Mills would have asked, how is the microcosm of inequality that is experienced as a “private trouble” by many unfortunate individuals connected to the macrocosm of inequality as a “public issue” rooted in the large-scale political and economic organization of our society?



This is a course that addresses one of the most troubling social issues of our age.

## Outline

- Unit 1: Studying Social Inequality


- Unit 2: Social Inequality in Feudal Europe
- Unit 3: Explaining Social Inequality: Classical and Contemporary Theories
- Unit 4: The Social Costs of Inequality
- Unit 5: The Rich and the Rest: The Canadian Case
- Unit 6: Intimate Ties: The Political Power of Economic Wealth
- Unit 7: Canada's Poor: The Faces of Poverty
- Unit 8: Gender Inequality: Institutional and Intimate
- Unit 9: The Long Legacy of Race and Ethnic Inequality in Canada
- Unit 10: The Perfect Crime: How the Rich Rob the Rest of their Income and Wealth


## Evaluation

To **receive credit**  for SOCI 381, you must achieve a course composite grade of at least **C- (60 percent)**  and a grade of at least 60 percent on the final examination. The weighting of the composite grade is as follows:

Activity	Weight
Assignment 1	20%
Assignment 2	20%
Assignment 3	20%
Quiz	10%
Final Exam	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

The **final examination** for this course must be requested in advance and written under the supervision of an AU-approved exam invigilator. Invigilators

include either ProctorU or an approved in-person invigilation centre that can accommodate online exams. Students are responsible for payment of any invigilation fees. Information on exam request deadlines, invigilators, and other exam-related questions, can be found at the [Exams and grades](#)  section of the Calendar.

To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's [online Calendar](#) .

## Materials

*The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Is Better for Everyone* (2010), by

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett  (Print)

*The Trouble with Billionaires* (2010), by Linda McQuaig and Neil Brooks 

(Print)

## Other Material

All other course materials are available online.



## Challenge for credit

### Overview

The challenge for credit process allows you to demonstrate that you have acquired a command of the general subject matter, knowledge, intellectual and/or other skills that would normally be found in a university-level course.

Full information about [challenge for credit](#)  can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar.






### Evaluation

To [receive credit](#)  for the SOCI 381 challenge registration, you must achieve a grade of at least **C- (60 percent)**  on the challenge examination. The two parts of the exam must be written on the same day.



**Challenge for credit course registration form**

## Important links

- › [Questions about our Program](#) 
- › [Academic advising](#) 
- › [Program planning](#) 
- › [Request assistance](#) 
- › [Support services](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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*Updated May 28, 2024*

View [previous revision](#) 

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