

SOCIAL SCIENCE 1185 9.0: WOMEN AND SOCIETY,
COURSE DIRECTOR: Professor Linda Briskin
2010-2011

Women's Economic Equality: It's time for Equality! Once and For All!

“According to the facts, it just doesn't pay to be a woman in Canada. It doesn't matter where we live. It doesn't matter what we do. It doesn't matter how much we or whether our parents have invested in a good education. At the end of the day, when women go to work, they get paid less than men. We're still not equal when it comes to the value that's placed on the work that women do in Canada ... The *Canadian Labour Congress* (CLC) is launching a campaign to highlight and suggest solutions to the ongoing economic inequality experienced by women in Canadian society. In over 30 cities and towns across the country, women are ... planning a series of actions directed at raising awareness and challenging our elected officials to take action to eliminate economic inequality Participate in our campaign. It's time for action. It's time for Equality! Once and For All!” (Canadian Labour Congress, 2008).

The campaign for women's economic equality, sponsored by the *Canadian Labour Congress*, is a series of organized actions and activities to accomplish a goal, in this case, to advance women's economic equality.

OVERVIEW OF THE ASSIGNMENT

For **PART ONE** of this assignment, you will read and answer questions on a Report prepared by the CLC about the current state of women's economic equality. You will define concepts, explain factors which contribute to women's economic inequality, and consider some solutions. Based on the expertise you develop, you will examine the positions on women's economic equality of two Canadian political parties, and write to your Member of Parliament (MP).

For **PART TWO** of this assignment, you will share your expertise with others and explore their thoughts about these issues. You will have conversations with two people, each about one of the four Fact Sheets: on the experience of young women, pay equity, women of colour, and childcare.

In addition to writing about these conversations, you will explore the relevance of this material to your own life and that of your mother **or** grandmother. You will reflect on what have you learned about unions and about organizing for women's economic equality.

For **PART THREE** of this assignment, you will present some of what you have learned during Tutorial Roundtables. More information will be forthcoming from your tutorial leader.

This is a complex assignment. Follow the directions carefully and be sure to hand in all that is required..

GRADE: 30/150 of your final grade

<p>NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED LATE. DO A TIME MANAGEMENT PLAN TO ENSURE THAT YOU WILL HAVE BOTH PARTS OF THIS ASSIGNMENT DONE ON TIME.</p>
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A NOTE ON CITATION FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT

In most instances, you are being asked to explain materials in your own words. However, if you should include text (more than 6 words) or do extensive paraphrasing of ideas from the Report, the Fact Sheets, the website of the CLC or a political party, you must give clear credit.

Should you quote directly from a Fact Sheet, here is a citation format.

Canadian Labour Congress. (2008). "Child care: It should be child's play." [On-line] Ottawa. Available: <<http://canadianlabour.ca/en/equalityFactSheets>>.

For more information, see "In-text citation .." (*Skill and Assignment Kit*) and "Integrate Source Materials..." (*Fall Reading Kit*). In the second semester, considerable time will be spent on how to cite properly. For this assignment, do the best you can. You will not be penalized for errors unless you plagiarise.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Students often do a poor job on assignments because they do not allocate enough time to them or they try to do a large assignment in the few days before it is due. Poor time management produces stress and inhibits learning.

In order to plan your time effectively, do a time management plan before you begin this assignment.

- Start by reading the assignment carefully.
- Break down this project into its different parts.
- List each step and estimate how much time it will take to complete.
- Identify the time you have available to work on this assignment over the next few weeks.
- Develop a plan which indicates by what date you will complete each step.
- Note the date you actually completed the step.
- Leave a few days after your assignment is finished before doing the final editing and proofing.
- Keep track of how much time you actually spend on each step so you can assess and improve your time management skills.

Hand in: your Time Management Plan (with Part Two)

PART ONE

1. The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

Visit the website of the union which has produced this document, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). <<http://canadianlabour.ca/>>.

a) Write 1 general paragraph about the CLC.

b) Write 2 paragraphs on its human rights/equality work for ONE of the following groups of workers: aboriginal workers, youth, pride, workers of colour OR workers with disabilities. Here is the link to the CLC human rights page: <<http://www.canadianlabour.ca/human-rights-equality>>.

TIP: You might identify what issues are critical for the group of workers you have chosen, what goals the CLC has for this group, and what strategies it uses to effect change.

TIP: Do not cut and paste from the CLC website. For both a) and b), Explain in your own words.

LENGTH: 1 page typed double-spaced.

2. The Research Report

Read: Canadian Labour Congress. *Women in the Workforce: Still a Long Way From Equality*. Ottawa, 2008 (available in the bookstore). Although this text offers many statistics to back up its claims, this section of the assignment asks you to do a careful reading of the document with a focus on concepts, problems, and solutions.

CONCEPTS (1 page)

Based on the Report, explain each of the following concepts or paired concepts in 1-2 sentences, and **in your own words**:

precarious work
privatization
male breadwinner family/dual earner family
equal pay for equal work/equal pay for work of equal value
union wage advantage

PROBLEMS (1-2 pages)

Based on the Report, identify and explain two factors which contribute to women's economic inequality, each in one paragraph.

Comment on how these problems affect different groups of women, for example, based on age, race, low income, and ability. Although the Report does not address directly the issues of women with disabilities, try to imagine how these problems would affect women with disabilities.

SOLUTIONS (1-2 pages).

Based on what you have learned in the Report, and your own views, comment on what *women* can do to improve their economic circumstances; what *employers* can do to improve women's economic equality; and what *governments* can do to improve women's economic equality

TIP: Be sure to explain how each solution would contribute to women's equality.

LENGTH: 4-5 pages typed double-spaced

3. Engaging in the Political Process

Women have been resisting discrimination for centuries, and have often been successful in making change, especially when they organize collectively with other women. One of the goals of the course is to highlight this organizing by women, and offer you some experiences participating in such organizing.

Canada operates with a form of democracy called representative democracy. It is the responsibility of those we elect to sit in Parliament to take account of (represent) our views and concerns. To ensure that representative democracy works effectively, it is a responsibility of citizens, and certainly their right, to ensure that their MPs are aware of their concerns. Our MPs are also our direct avenue to find out what the government is doing on issues of concern to us. And you may also be interested in the specific views of your MP on these issues. Engaging with our MPs is an important part of the political process.

Who is your federal MP?

<<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>>. On this web site, when you put in your postal code, the name and contact information for your MP will come up. Just below the name of the MP will be the party to which s/he belongs.

Political parties currently represented in the House of Commons

The New Democratic Party <<http://www.ndp.ca/>>; the Liberal Party <<http://www.liberal.ca/>>; the Bloc Quebecois <<http://www.blocquebecois.org/fr/publications-english.asp>>; and the Conservative Party <<http://www.conservative.ca/>> (which is currently in power).

Visit the website of two political parties, the one to which your MP belongs and one other. Examine the policies of the two parties on issues of concern to women, especially those raised in the Report (child care, pay equity, etc).

TIP: It is not always easy to find information on the party websites. What does this difficulty tell you about the party's commitment to women? After all, women do represent half of the voters in Canada. Also remember that what is absent is as meaningful as what is included. Here are a few tips:

*NDP on women: <http://www.ndp.ca/platform/otherpriorities/equality>

*National Women's Liberal Commission: http://www.nwlc-clfn.ca/default_e.aspx

*Founding principles of the Conservative Party: <http://www.conservative.ca/EN/4679/>

a) Commentary on the political parties (2 pages)

- i) What have you learned about the policies of each party?
- ii) Compare the policies of the two parties. Can you identify any differences? Be explicit.
- iii) Assess which party better serves the interests of women.

b) Email your MP (2-3 paragraphs)

From your yorku email address, send your MP an email about issues raised in the CLC campaign. You might ask questions about your MP's views on these issues, her/his Party's plans for the future, and/or raise concerns that you have about these issues.

Your letter should refer to what you have learned about the Party's policies on women. If relevant, you might include some information/queries about the differences between her/his Party policies, and those of the other party you examined.

Print out a copy of this email, in a form that demonstrates that the email was sent, and the date it was sent. If you have difficulties printing in this format, forward a copy of your email to your tutorial leader.

Some Guidelines

*Whenever you contact an MP or even the prime minister, you should receive a reply, although it might be a form letter without much substance and it may take some months. So you want to include your full name. You can indicate that you are a student at York University, and you may choose to include your regular mailing address to indicate that you live in the riding of the MP, that is, you are a constituent. Certainly include your postal code to demonstrate that you are a constituent; otherwise you are less likely to receive a reply. You will more likely receive a reply if you also mail a hard copy of the letter to your MP (address also on the website above).

*The expertise you have developed working with the research report on Women's Economic Equality should help you frame your questions and comments to your MP. Brainstorm on your tutorial listservs and in your study groups about what you might say and the questions you might ask. You might start: "I recently read a report on the economic status of Canadian women [for a course at York University] and was [how did you feel? surprised, puzzled, shocked, concerned] to find...." This is just a suggestion to help you get started. You do not need to frame the letter this way. You are also not required to take a political position on any of these issues.

*If there are no issues in the campaign that concern you, you can simply write a note asking about his or her views/plans about these issues. Engaging with one's MP is an important part of the political process.

*Your letter will be assessed for its quality. It should be carefully worded and thoughtful, and draw on material from the Report, and from the party websites. Any personal political views expressed in the letter will not be assessed.

LENGTH: 3 pages double spaced

FOR PART ONE, HAND IN:

- commentary on the CLC;
- analysis of CLC report (including discussion of concepts, problems, and solutions);
- commentary on the positions of two parties on issues of concern to women's economic equality;
- and a copy of the email you sent to your MP, and a copy of any reply you received.

TOTAL LENGTH for PART ONE: 8 pages typed double-spaced

DUE: _____ (NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED LATE)

Hand in the original and keep a paper copy for yourself. This is for your protection. Do not rely on electronic copies since computers may crash and you may lose your work. It is also strongly advised that you regularly print off paper copies of rough work.

GRADE: 15/150

TIP: Begin work on Part Two immediately. Do not wait until Part One is returned to you.

PART TWO

1. The Fact Sheets and Conversations

The CLC has prepared a series of short Fact Sheets (FS) to promote the campaign: on the experience of young women, on pay equity, women of colour, childcare, unions, manufacturing jobs, employment insurance, and pensions. Each of you will be provided with the printed version of five of the Fact Sheets: on the experience of young women, pay equity, women of colour, childcare, and unions. You can print out additional copies and the other Fact Sheets from the CLC web site at <http://www.canadianlabour.ca/action-center/womens-economic-equality/fact-sheets>.

Based on your study of the Research Report, you now have considerable expertise. The goal of this section of the assignment is for you to share this expertise with others and to explore their responses to the information.

For this section of the assignment choose two of these Fact Sheets: on young women, childcare, pay equity **OR** on women of colour. Note that the Fact Sheet on unions is for a different section of this assignment, and should not be used for these conversations.

*Identify **two** women (friends, co-workers or acquaintances) for whom the two FS you have chosen would be especially relevant. For example, you might give the FS on childcare to someone with a young child, the FS on the experience of young women to a friend, the FS on pay equity or women of colour to someone you think might be earning less than what it is fair etc. **You will discuss only one FS with each person.**

TIP: In order to have a meaningful conversation, you must select someone to talk to for whom the FS is relevant. So having a conversation about childcare with someone who does not have children would not be a good choice.

TIP: Do not have a conversation with your mother or grandmother. You will have this opportunity in #3 below.

*Make an appointment to talk to each of these women and ask each to set aside at least 20 minutes for the conversation.

*It is very important that you give them the FS before you meet with them, or email the link. It is also very important that you do preparatory work for this conversation. The better prepared you are for these conversations, the more interesting they will be.

*At the beginning of your conversation, spend five minutes going over the material in the FS. Answer any questions.

*Have a conversation about the issues. Here are some **possible** questions. However, it would be more effective to develop FS-specific questions. Be sure to focus the conversation directly on the topic of the FS.

Is the material relevant to your circumstances? If yes, in what way? If no, why not? Did any of the material in the FS surprise you? If yes, in what way? If no, why not? What do you think should be done to address these problems raised in this FS? Is there anything you yourself can do to try to address these problems?
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*In these conversations, you will share information, draw on your expertise on these issues, and learn about other people's views. You are not being asked to persuade those with whom you have conversations. For example, the person with whom you speak might say the material is not relevant to them, and your goal is to learn why, not to persuade them that the material is relevant.

*Do take some notes. After the conversation, add comments, thoughts and insights to your notes. The texture of the conversation will disappear quickly.

2. Analysing Your Conversations (2-3 pages)

a) For each conversation, identify to whom you spoke and why you chose to speak to this woman.

Although you are asked to identify with whom you spoke, you do not need to provide their full name (use first name, initials or a pseudonym [make up a name]) or any personal details about them. However, do provide some information about the person and why you chose to have a conversation with her. For example, “I had a conversation with a female co-worker (DM) who is 24 years old regarding the young women Fact Sheet.” Or “I had a conversation with a woman (RS) who works in childcare.”

b) Analyse each conversation by exploring the themes which arose, identifying insights you had, and reflect on the conversations in light of course themes/frameworks/concepts.

Be sure your comments on each conversation are directly connected to the topic of the FS you discussed.

In your report on these conversations, do not reproduce the conversations or include detailed questions and answers. The goal is to identify themes and analyse these conversations. Rather than describing the conversation, you should analyse it.

TIP: What is an insight? It is a deeper, and new understanding of a complex situation or problem.

c) Conclude with a general comment on your experience of sharing this material with others.

LENGTH: 2-3 pages typed double-spaced.

3. Relevance (2 pages)

i) In what ways does the material in this Report help you to understand the household and workplace experiences of your mother **OR** your grandmother? In your comment, use at least one of the concepts from the Report.

ii) How are your experiences in the workplace different from those of your mother **OR** grandmother? Or if you are not yet in the workplace, how do you anticipate that your experiences will differ from your mother's or grandmother's? In your comment, use at least one of the concepts from the Report.

TIP: Once you have drafted your answer, have a conversation with your mother **or** grandmother about these issues. Add any additional reflections based on these conversations.

LENGTH: 2 pages typed double-spaced

4. Reflections (2-3 pages)

a) On unions

Read the FS on unions, and re-read the section of the report on unions (pp. 31-32).

i) What were your views about unions before you read this report? Explore the origins of these views, that is, when, where and from whom did you learn these ideas.

ii) Did this assignment change your views about unions? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?

b) Identify and explain your emotional responses to the issues raised in the CLC Report and Fact Sheets, to the political party website you examined, and the conversations you had.

TIP: Your responses might include anger, confusion, ambivalence, discomfort, excitement, surprise, resistance, denial, enthusiasm, etc etc.

c) *On making change*

i) How would you describe your attitude to political activism *before* you participated in this assignment? Would you have described yourself as a ‘political’ person? How would you describe your attitude to political activism *after* you participated in this assignment?

ii) What did you learn about how change in women’s economic status will come about?

LENGTH: 2-3 pages typed double-spaced

TOTAL LENGTH for PART TWO: approximately 6-7 pages typed double spaced

HAND IN:

- report on two conversations;
- discussion of relevance of this material for you, your mother and/or your grandmother;
- reflections on your personal responses, unions, political activism and making change: and
- your Time Management Plan.

DUE: _____ (NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED LATE)

Hand in the original and keep a paper copy for yourself. This is for your protection. Do not rely on electronic copies since computers may crash and you may lose your work. It is also strongly advised that you regularly print off paper copies of rough work.

GRADE: 15/150

PART THREE: TUTORIAL ROUNDTABLES ON WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EQUALITY

You will present some of what you have learned at Tutorial Roundtables. More information will be forthcoming from your tutorial leader.

GRADE: A portion of the grade points assigned for “Tutorial Participation”.