

LS 815: Social Realities: Select Massey Lectures

Spring 2020 | Dr. Eleanor Stebner

Course Description

Organizing Social Realities: Gender, Class, Race and Nation will examine how distinctions among people create pattern and conflict, by studying some of the fundamental organizing concepts of society which both unite and divide people.

All humans live within complex social realities. Some social realities are largely accepted as real and permanent, while others may be deftly navigated, and still others publicly defied. In this seminar we will discuss a variety of visible and not-so-visible social realities.

Reading and discussing the lectures of six Massey scholars will help us ponder this broad topic.

Lawrence Hill will help us think about how humans have used blood as a symbol and measure of both unity and division; Margaret Atwood uplifts the significance of money, debt, and corresponding obligations and duties; Sally Armstrong talks about the idea of gender and its social and political implications; Martin Luther King, Jr. – speaking amid the civil rights turmoil of 1960s America – addresses racial discrimination, economic disparities, and nonviolent change; Jane Jacobs raises questions about independence movements within nation states at the height of the late 1970s Quebec separation movement; and Jennifer Welsh grapples with current notions of liberal democracies, violence, and mass migrations.

Each student will lead one seminar presentation (15 to 20 minutes) on a specific assigned text, present a draft of their final essay, and submit a final essay of about 15 pages.

Students are to purchase (or borrow) these texts on their own:

Lawrence Hill, *Blood: The Stuff of Life* (2013)

Margaret Atwood, *Payback: Debt, and the Shadow Side of Wealth* (2008)

Sally Armstrong, *Power Shift: The Longest Revolution* (2019)

John Kenneth Galbraith et al, *The Lost Massey Lectures: Recovered Classics from Five Great*

Thinkers (2007)

[Contains the lectures of Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968) and Jane Jacobs (1979)]

Jennifer Welsh, *The Return of History: Conflict, Migration, and Geopolitics in the 21st Century*
(2016)