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Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education, Transforming Lives

ECAY4004:
Agency, Empowerment and Anti-oppressive Practice
Oppression and Anti-oppressive Practice
2024



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Objectives:

- Key terms and sociological perspectives of Anti-oppressive Practice
- An Introduction to oppression within society and how oppression can socially exclude specific groups
- An understanding of social exclusion and how power can oppress society





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Module Feedback and Evaluation

Please follow the link to
Moodle

[Course: ECAY4004 Agency, Empowerment and
Anti-Oppressive Practice \(uwtsd.ac.uk\)](https://uwtsd.ac.uk)



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Oppression

An Introduction to Oppression

- Oppression refers to the malicious or unjust treatment of a group of individuals, often wielded by **governmental authority** or **cultural norms**.
- It manifests in various forms and can be either **Overt** (done or shown openly) or **Covert** (not openly acknowledged or displayed).

(Thompson, 2016)

An Introduction to Oppression: Key Aspects

- Types of Oppression:
 - Violence
 - Direct harm inflicted upon marginalised groups
 - Exploitation
 - Unfair use of people's labour for profit without proper consent (i.e. Sweatshops)
 - Marginalisation
 - Pushing specific groups to the margins of society, denying them equal opportunities
 - Powerlessness
 - Stripping individuals of agency and influence
 - Cultural Imperialism
 - Dominant cultures imposing their norms and values on others.

An Introduction to Oppression: Key Aspects

- Authoritarian Oppression
 - Authoritarian Governments employ oppression to subjugate citizens, creating fear and control.
 - The restrict freedoms, suppress dissent, and maintain power through harsh punishment and secret police forces.

(Thompson, 2016)

An Introduction to Oppression: Key Aspects

- Socioeconomic, Political, and Institutional Oppression
 - This form targets specific groups within societies
 - Women
 - People of Colour
 - LGBTQ+
 - It occurs across cultures and advanced democracies, perpetuating inequality and marginalisation

(Thompson, 2016)

An Introduction to Oppression: Summary

In summary, oppression diminishes people's humanity, restricting their potential and denying them the right to pursue life plans freely.

(Thompson, 2016)

Iris Marion Young (2004)



- (2nd January 1949 – 1st August 2006)
- An American Political Theorist and Socialist Feminist
- Focused on the Nature of justice and social difference
- Coined the ‘five faces of Oppression’ model, published in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990)

Iris Marion Young (2004): The 5 Faces of Oppression

Exploitation is the act of using people's labours to produce profit while not compensating them fairly.

Exploitation uses capitalism to oppress.

The economic theory of capitalism states that people are free to exchange goods freely.

Yet, whenever this has happened throughout history, it has created different classes of people: wealthy and poor



1. **Exploitation**
2. Marginalisation
3. Powerlessness
4. Cultural Imperialism
5. Violence

Iris Marion Young (2004): The 5 Faces of Oppression

1. Exploitation
2. **Marginalisation**
3. Powerlessness
4. Cultural Imperialism
5. Violence

Marginalization is the act of relegating or confining a group of people to a lower social standing or outer limit or edge of society.

Most commonly, people are marginalized based upon race.

One prominent example is the Aboriginal communities of Australia that were excluded from society and pushed farther and farther away from their homelands as cities grew



Iris Marion Young (2004): The 5 Faces of Oppression



1. Exploitation
2. Marginalisation
3. **Powerlessness**
4. Cultural Imperialism
5. Violence

Powerlessness links to Marx's theory of socialism: some people "have" power while others "have-not".

The powerless are dominated by the ruling class and are situated to take orders and rarely have the right to give them.

Some of the fundamental injustices associated with powerlessness are inhibition to develop one's capacities, lack of decision-making power, and exposure to disrespectful treatment because of the lowered status.

Iris Marion Young (2004): The 5 Faces of Oppression

1. Exploitation
2. Marginalisation
3. Powerlessness
4. **Cultural Imperialism**
5. Violence

Cultural Imperialism involves taking the culture of the ruling class and establishing it as the norm.

The groups that have power in society control how the people in that society interpret and communicate.

Therefore, the beliefs of that society are the most widely disseminated and express the experience, values, goals and achievements of these groups.



Iris Marion Young (2004): The 5 Faces of Oppression



1. Exploitation
2. Marginalisation
3. Powerlessness
4. Cultural Imperialism
5. **Violence**

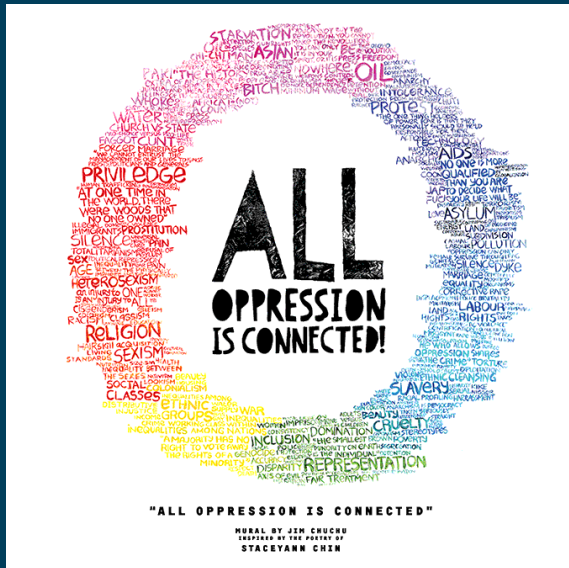
Violence is probably the most obvious and visible form of oppression.

Members of some groups live with the knowledge that they must fear random, unprovoked attacks on their persons or property.

These attacks do not necessarily need a motive but are intended to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person.



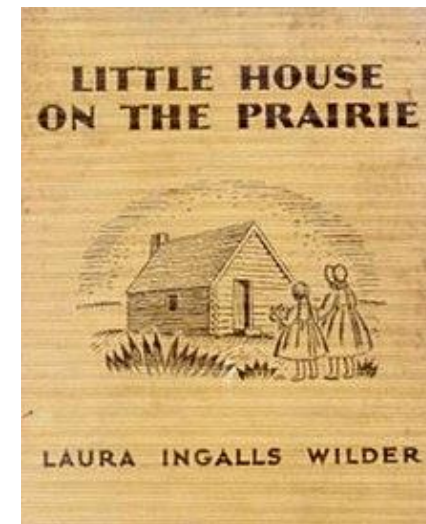
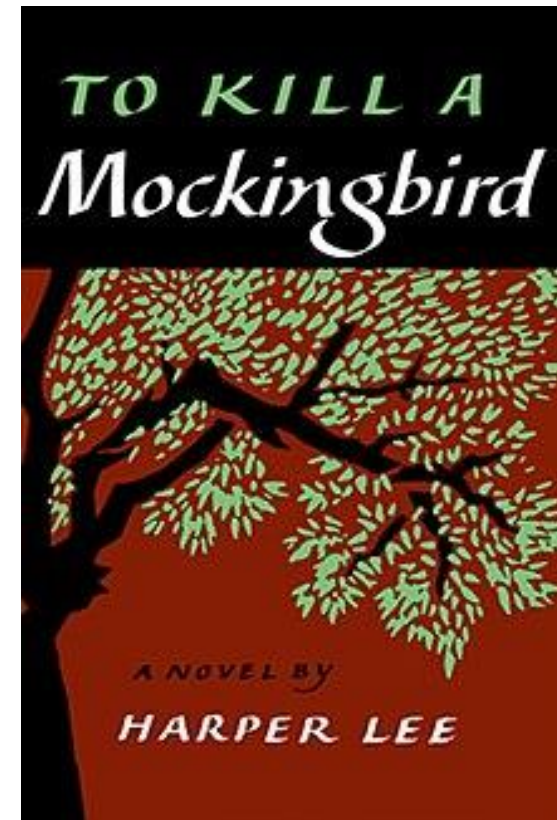
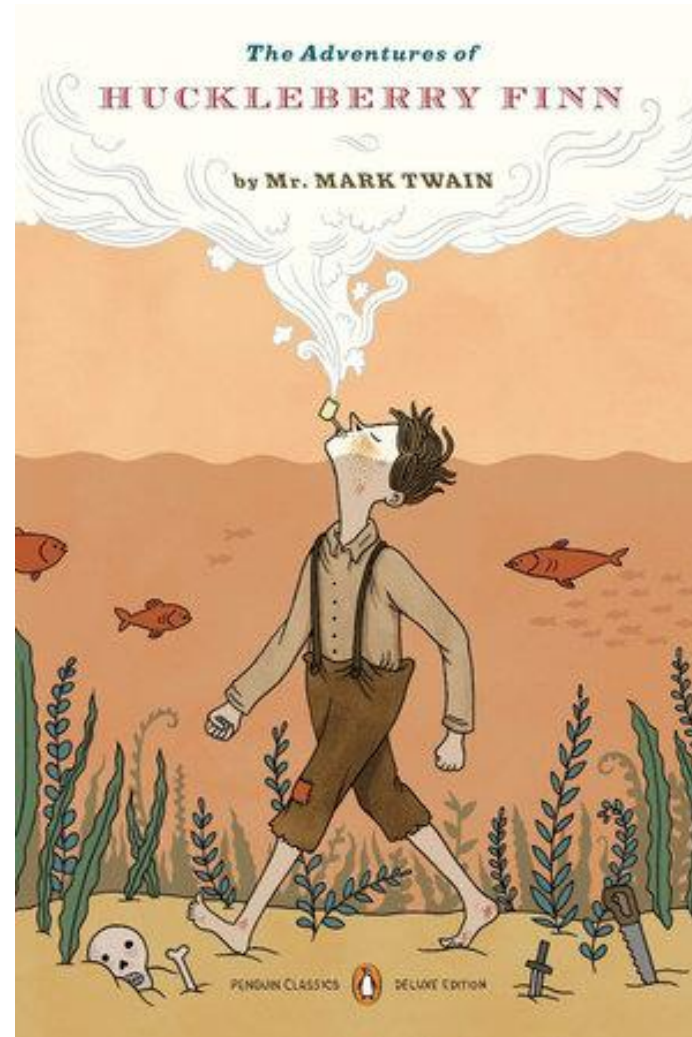
Oppression is all around us





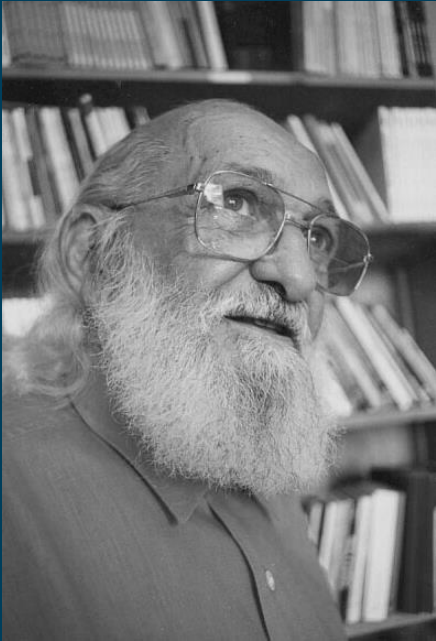
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Oppressive Literature?



Oppressive Media?





Freire's 'Culture of Silence'

- According to Freire, oppressed people become so powerless that they do not even talk about their oppression.
- If they reach this stage of oppression, it creates a culture wherein it is forbidden to even mention the injustices that are being committed.
- The oppressed are silenced. They have no voice and no will.



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Anti-Oppressive Practice

An introduction to Anti-oppressive Practice

- Anti-oppressive practice is both a theory and an approach with a broad scope
- When applied to social issues, it focusses on how larger systems create and protect unearned privilege and power for some groups while simultaneously maintaining difficult and inequitable conditions for others

(Thompson, 2016)

An introduction to Anti-oppressive Practice: Key Points

1. Recognition of Oppression:

- Anti-oppressive Practice acknowledges the existence of oppression in our society and aims to mitigate its effects.
- It recognises that all forms of oppression are interconnected in some way

(Thompson, 2016)

An introduction to Anti-oppressive Practice: Key Points

2. Power Imbalances

- The approach seeks to equalise power imbalances between individuals and groups.
- It challenges the systems that perpetuate inequality and works toward creating structures that benefit everyone

(Thompson, 2016)

An introduction to Anti-oppressive Practice: Key Points

3. Interdisciplinary Roots

- Anti-oppressive Practice draws from various disciplines, including anti-racism, decolonization theory, feminism, queer theory, and disability justice
- These disciplines deepen our understanding of power dynamics at different levels of society

(Thompson, 2016)

An introduction to Anti-oppressive Practice: Key Points

4. Continuous Learning

- Like many theories, Anti-oppressive Practice evolves over time
- It requires ongoing learning and engagement to address systemic inequalities effectively

(Thompson, 2016)

An introduction to Anti-oppressive Practice: Summary

In summary, Anti-oppressive Practices strives to empower individuals by reducing the negative effects of social hierarchies, promoting equality, and dismantling oppressive structures and practices.

(Thompson, 2016)



Anti Oppressive Practice

‘Law and order are always and everywhere the law and order which protect the established hierarchy; it is nonsensical to invoke the absolute authority of this law and this order against those who suffer from it and struggle against it’

-Herbert Marcuse

Anti Oppressive Practice

- It is an approach that seeks to reduce, undermine or eliminate discrimination and oppression and remove the barriers that prevent people from accessing services.

Anti Oppressive Practice

- Requires the practitioner to critically examine the power imbalance inherent in an organisational structure with regards to the larger social and cultural context, aiming to create an environment free from oppression, racism and other forms of discrimination.



Anti Oppressive Practice

- Anti-oppressive practice is an interdisciplinary approach primarily rooted within the practice of social work that focuses on ending socioeconomic oppression
- HOWEVER...

There are other kinds of oppression, including:

Gender oppression

Racial oppression

Age oppression

Class oppression

Sexuality oppression

Gender oppression

Racial oppression

Age oppression

Class oppression

Sexuality oppression

Class Discussion and Task

- Considering this list,
 - How can people within these groups be oppressed by society?
 - Create a list with your partner and feedback to the group.

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