# SOCI 210 discussion prompts—Jan 23–Jan 25, 2024

***due Friday, Jan 26 at 5:00pm (17h)***

*The discussion prompts below are organized by topic, mainly corresponding to the class periods on the* [*course schedule*](https://soci210.netlify.app/#schedule)*.*

*For each worksheet, please choose a facilitator who will work to direct the conversation and keep things on track. This role should change at least every week, and everyone in the group should be the facilitator at least once over the semester.*

*Your group should respond to all of the prompts below (unless otherwise noted). The appropriate length of responses will depend on the prompt but will generally be one to three paragraphs (aroung 300 words). Responses must be no longer than 500 words. The responses should reflect the conversation you had with your group—they do not need to be polished or make a formal argument. You should cite your sources, but there is no need for a formal reference list. (See* [*https://soci210.netlify.app/#group-discussions*](https://soci210.netlify.app/#group-discussions) *for the complete evaluation rubric)*

## Jan 27: Multiculturalism and immigration

***Facilitator****: (name)* ***Secretary****: (name)* ***Other participants****: (names)*

Today’s discussion will focus on Minelle Mahtani’s 2002 article “Interrogating the Hyphen-Nation: Canadian Multicultural Policy and ‘Mixed Race’ Identities.” While there are many ways to approach and read an academic article, the prompts below will walk you through one good strategy. The strategy can be summarized as:

1. Identify the research question
2. Identify and critique the methodology
3. Identify and critique the findings
4. Link the ideas to broader sociological ideas

The prompts below will guide you through this process as it relates to Mahtani (2002).

1. What were Mahtani’s (2002) research question(s)? That is, what was not known that Mahtani hoped this research would help illuminate? What were the ‘holes’ in the literature that Mahtani was trying to fill with this article? (This can probably be addressed in just a few sentences.)
2. Thinking back to the four methodological categories we discussed last week (surveys, experiments, field work, and secondary analysis), what methodology or methodologies did Mahtani (2002) use? Was her analysis quantitative or interpretive? What data did she use, and how was it collected?
3. Consider the research question and methodology that you identified above. Are the data and method appropriate for addressing the research question? Why or why not?
4. Summarize the major findings from Mahtani’s (2002) article. What answers did she come up with to her research question(s)?
5. In our discussions of race, ethnicity, and nationality, we have talked about the way social categories are shaped by social influences. In light of Mahtani’s (2002) article, would you say that Canadian multiculturalism accentuates or minimizes racial divisions? Do you think that Mahtani and her respondents would argue that Canadian multiculturalism promotes a unified, equal Canadian national identity?

## Jan 25: Social construction of disability

***Facilitator****: (name)* ***Secretary****: (name)* ***Other participants****: (names)*

1. As a group, come up with 4 or 5 examples of disability. Then, think of 4 or 5 examples of medical conditions or impairments that are *not* widely considered to be disabilities. (You can draw some of your examples from Wendell (1996), but try to think of examples of your own as well)
2. Referencing the examples from the previous prompt, discuss the social processes that define the distinction between disability and non-disability. Are legal and institutional definitions (like those used at McGill) often in disagreement with cultural understandings of what a disability is? What role does medical diagnosis play in the delineation of the category of ‘disabled’?
3. Consider the policies on [eligibility](https://www.mcgill.ca/access-achieve/contact-us/register#Eligibility) and [accommodations](https://www.mcgill.ca/access-achieve/exams-accommodations/accommodations) listed on by McGill’s Office of Student Accessibility & Achievement (formerly the Office for Students with Disabilities), as well as. What criteria does the university reference for the determination of who is eligible for accommodations? How do they discuss the different categories of students who receive accommodations (if at all)? Which models of disability—moral, medical, or social—do you think motivate these acommodations (you might argue that multiple models are in play).
4. The changes in our everyday lives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have underscored many issues of accessibility in society. What can we learn about the kinds of technical, infrastructural, and logistical accommodations we are willing to make as a society from this crisis? Knowing that many of these accommodations (e.g. options for remote participation in events, prevalance of recordings and captions, etc) have been asked for by disability activists for years, what can we say about how institutions determine whether any particular accommodation is reasonable?
5. Much (though not all) of the discussion of disability in Wendell (1996) and in this course takes an explicitly symbolic-interactionist approach, interrogating negotiated definitions and meaning of disability as a social construct. As a group, consider instead a *conflict-theoretic* approach to studying disability instead. Would that perspective change the kinds of sociological questions you would ask? (*You can look at the previous prompt about reasonable accommodation if you need some motivation…*)