

## **Inequality and poverty – analysis and policy**

First introductory class - some 18 pieces of food for thought

### **Nine issues from *Social Inequality: Forms, Causes and Consequences* by Charles E. Hurst, 2013**

1. Are social inequalities inevitable, especially in a capitalist society that stresses competition and individual success?
2. Why do some people have more than others? Is this natural or unnatural?
3. Do “you always have the opportunity to try” ... and does “hard work” always pay off despite the odds against average people...?
4. Is inequality a social problem or an individual one?
5. Is inequality desirable or undesirable?
6. Is inequality a source of divisiveness or a basis for integration in our societies?
7. Are social classes really present in our country, and, if so, are they the most important dimension of inequality in our society?
8. Can equality in political power even exist if economic resources are distributed unequally? Or does the golden rule operate – those with the gold rule? Can Capitalism and Democracy Coexist? Do economic and political inequality necessarily go together?
9. Does the globalization in the world economy strengthen or weaken inequality?

### **Nine issues from *The Economics of Inequality, Discrimination, Poverty and Mobility* by Robert S. Rycroft, 2009. Slicing the pie problem.**

1. How the marketplace and government policy interact to determine the relative size of the slices consumed by different people?
2. How are the owners of the factors of production (e.g. owner of labour power and owner of the capital) rewarded in the marketplace?
3. How and to what extent does government policy redistribute income and what impact does it have on incentives?
4. Whether the size of a slice depends on race, ethnicity, gender, or any of a host of factors that do not represent individual “merit”?
5. What is the impact of government policies to combat the problem of discrimination in slicing the pie?
6. Poverty means a slice “too small”, but how do we define too small?
7. How many people receive slices too small and are the people or the economy to blame?
8. Can people with small slices today reasonably hope to get larger slices later in life? Is there hope for their offspring?
9. Is mobility in the long term an antidote to inequality in the short term, or does short term inequality prevent long-term mobility?