

## Sociology 348: Sociology of Work

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### INTRODUCTION

As in most areas of specialization in the discipline, the sociology of work is quite diverse. This course will survey three strands of the literature: (1) the nature of work under capitalism, (2) the consequences emerging from such labor, and (3) alternatives to capitalist relations in production. In the first unit we will explore the relationship between work and the global economy, the division of labor, the structure of work, power and control in the workplace, hazardous work, and corporate dominance. The second unit focuses on consequences and we will consider the importance of work networks as well as personal consequences including character, attitudes, and worker alienation. During the last unit we will study alternative forms of production such as cooperatives and workplace democracy.

#### *Course Objectives*

This course is designed to provide students with the opportunity to master the major theoretical concepts within the field of the sociology of work, to become familiar with recent sociological research in the area, to gain historical knowledge about the transformation of work across time, to understand the many ways that our work affects other areas of our lives, and to assess the efficacy and potentiality of several alternatives forms of production. Through our readings, class discussions, and writing assignments, it is intended that students will enhance their sociological imaginations, sharpen and gain critical thinking skills, and increase their ability to comprehend and analyze original research publications.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### *Readings*

There are three required books for this course:

- Randy Hodson and Teresa A. Sullivan *The Social Organization of Work, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.* (2002) Wadsworth (ISBN 0534552781)
- Stacy Mitchell *Big-Box Swindle: The True Cost of Mega-Retailers and the Fight for America's Independent Businesses* (2006) Beacon (ISBN 0807035009)
- Richard Sennett *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (1998) W.W. Norton (ISBN 0393319873)

Many of the readings will be distributed electronically via Internet download (in .pdf format) from the Blackboard course website. Please note that .pdf files occasionally take a long time to print and that the campus computer laboratories charge 4 cents per page. I electronically distribute these readings to save students money. If requested, I will provide you with the exact citations of our electronic readings in case you prefer not to be burdened by printing out all of this material and wish to acquire it by other means (such as purchasing the original texts). The readings are the core of this course and on-time completion of this material is critical to having a successful experience here. Many portions of many of the chapters will not be covered in class. It is your responsibility to come prepared with any questions you may have about material from the books that we do not discuss in class. I encourage you to take notes and study these readings holistically. You want to make sure that you are able to summarize the chapters and to engage the key concepts. You need to have read and be prepared to discuss and engage the readings in class on the day in which they appear in the schedule. Snow Day Policy: In the event that class is

canceled, you are still responsible for having completed the scheduled readings by the date indicated in the schedule. Any revisions to this schedule will be announced via the Blackboard web site and/or by email.

### *Films*

Films will play an important role in this course as they will better illustrate certain themes and will provide opportunity for application of course material. Class attendance is mandatory and many of these films are from my personal collection and are not available for viewing elsewhere. I will not make any alternative viewing arrangements. Material from the documentary films will appear on quizzes and essay questions.

### *Quizzes*

Five quizzes will be administered during the course of the semester (see Schedule below). These quizzes will be in multiple-choice format and will typically contain around 10 questions. Each question will be worth one point and each quiz will comprise 5% of your final course grade. Your lowest quiz score (based on the percentage of correct responses) will be dropped from the computation of your final grade. If there is an emergency or if you are seriously ill and are absolutely unable to attend class on a quiz day, that missed grade will be the one that is dropped. Quizzes are intended to assess students' mastery of the readings.

### *Essay Questions*

Five sets of essay questions will be assigned during the course of the semester (see Schedule below). These questions will be distributed electronically at least five days prior to their due date. Essay questions should be 3-4 type-written pages and formatted in the following manner: double spaced, 1.25 inch or less margins on all sides, and Times New Roman 12 point font. The questions will be based on the assigned course readings and give students an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the material without the anxiety of an in-class examination. Each set of essay questions will comprise 5% of your final course grade. Essay questions are always due at the beginning of class on their due date and no late papers will be accepted.

### *Book Reviews*

Students are required to prepare book reviews of Stacy Mitchell's *Big Box Swindle* and Richard Sennett's *The Corrosion of Character*. These assignments will be distributed before these readings appear in the schedule and will contain specific questions to be addressed. Book reviews should be around six typewritten pages and formatted in the following manner: double spaced, 1.25 inch or less margins on all sides, and Times New Roman 12 point font. The due dates are provided in the Schedule below. Each book review will comprise 17.5% of your final course grade. No late book reviews will be accepted.

### *Journal Article Review*

You are required to prepare a written review of a journal article. This is an opportunity for students to gain a thorough understanding of a recent sociology of work research study. About half-way through the semester, the Blackboard course web site will contain 9-12 journal articles (.pdf files) that you may download and peruse. You need to pick one of these articles for your analysis, but no more than two students can choose the same article (for which you will also deliver a joint in-class presentation with your article colleague – see below). I will assemble a sign-up sheet to track who will be reviewing which articles. As soon as you know what article you want to review, let me know (via email, telephone, or personally in class). This is a first come, first served deal. So, have a couple of backup choices in case your article is already reserved. I will provide updates to let you know which articles are already booked.

In your sole-authored typewritten analysis, you need to: (1) State the research question (What are the authors investigating? What is the puzzle that they are trying to solve?), (2) Describe the specific theories the authors apply to the topic, (3) Summarize the major hypotheses or the authors' predicted findings

(explicit or implied), (4) Describe the empirical data source employed in the analysis, (5) Explain how the concepts were measured during data collection (Which questions were asked? How were the major concepts operationalized?), (6) Summarize the fashion in which the data is analyzed, (7) Summarize the major findings (Do they support the stated hypotheses?), (8) Identify what the authors conclude from their analysis, (9) Discuss what you believe the major implications of this research are (why is this research of sociological or practical importance?), and most importantly, (10) Provide an assessment of the research (What are the strengths and weaknesses? How could this research be improved or expanded upon?). This assignment should be around six typewritten pages and formatted in the following manner: double spaced, 1.25 inch or less margins on all sides, and Times New Roman 12 point font. Your paper due date and presentation date will depend upon the article you choose.

#### *Class Presentation of Journal Article Reviews*

Journal Article Reviews will be formally presented in class. Each article will be reviewed in a joint in-class presentation by those who chose the same article. As a presenter, this is an opportunity to develop skills in summarizing a research study to an audience in a concise fashion. As a listener, this is a chance to gain knowledge about cutting-edge sociology of work research (and participation is expected and will be tracked). Each of the ten points from the Journal Article Review should be covered briefly in your presentations. The division of labor is entirely up to the discretion of the team (though each team member should be responsible for equitable amounts of the oral presentation time). You are responsible for arranging meeting times and coordinating this presentation. It is required that teams have some form of visual summary documentation—you must use handouts, the overhead projector, or a PowerPoint slide show (PC only) for the presentation. The presentations must be 12 to 15 minutes in duration, so plan accordingly.

#### *Grading*

20% Quizzes (four at 5%)  
25% Essay Questions (five at 5%)  
35% Book Reviews (two at 17.5%)  
13% Journal Article Review  
7% Class Presentation of Journal Article Review and Attendance

#### *Blackboard*

An online Blackboard course web page exists at: <http://www.courses.maine.edu/>. Course announcements and readings will be posted at this site. Here you will also be able to check your grades and send messages to your fellow classmates. There is a toll-free assistance line and online tutorials to provide help should you experience any difficulties with the system.

#### *Accommodation Needs*

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. At any point in the semester, if you encounter difficulty with the course or feel you could be performing at a higher level, please meet with me. There are a number of academic support services available on campus including Academic Support Center (242 Luther Bonney, 780-4470, for help with writing, time management, or general study skills), Office of Academic Support for Students with Disabilities (237 Luther Bonney, 780-4706) and the Counseling Center (106 Payson Smith, Portland, 780-4050 or 110 Upton Hall, Gorham, 780-5411).

#### SCHEDULE

On the next page the readings are underlined and due on the date on which they appear; films are *italicized*; assignment due dates are **bolded**; all subject to change at discretion of instructor.

<p>Wednesday 1/21 Work Under Capitalism <i>Business of America</i> Part 1</p> <p><u>No Readings</u></p>	<p>Monday 1/26 Work Under Capitalism <i>Business of America</i> Part 2</p> <p><b>Quiz 1</b> <u>HS: Ch. 1</u></p>	<p>Wednesday 1/28 Work Under Capitalism</p> <p><u>Rubin*: Ch. 2</u></p>	<p>Monday 2/2 Work Under Capitalism <b>Essay Questions 1 Due</b></p> <p><u>Rubin*: Ch. 3 and HS: Ch. 6 Pt. 1 (140-156)</u></p>
<p>Wednesday 2/4 Organized Labor <i>American Dream</i> Pt. 1</p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 6 Pt. 2, Freeman &amp; Rogers*, and Greenhouse*</u></p>	<p>Monday 2/9 Work Organizations <i>American Dream</i> Pt. 2</p> <p><b>Quiz 2</b> <u>HS: Chs. 7 and 8 Pt. 1 (198-209)</u></p>	<p>Wednesday 2/11 Work Organizations <i>American Dream</i> Pt. 3</p> <p><u>HS: Chs. 8 Pt. 2 (210- 224) and 9</u></p>	<p>Monday 2/23 Work Mismatches <i>American Dream</i> Pt. 4</p> <p><u>Kalleberg*: Ch. 1</u></p>
<p>Wednesday 2/25 Work Mismatches</p> <p><b>Essay Questions 2 Due</b></p> <p><u>Kalleberg*: Ch. 2</u></p>	<p>Monday 3/2 Contingent Work</p> <p><b>Quiz 3</b></p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 14, Presser*, and Phoenix Articles*</u></p>	<p>Wednesday 3/4 Retail Power <i>Is Wal-Mart Good for America?</i></p> <p><u>M: Intro and Ch. 1</u></p>	<p>Monday 3/9 Retail Power</p> <p><b>Essay Questions 3 Due</b></p> <p><u>M: Ch. 2</u></p>
<p>Wednesday 3/11 Retail Consumption</p> <p><u>M: Chs. 3 and 5 (skip 4)</u></p>	<p>Monday 3/16 Government Policy</p> <p><u>M: Chs. 7 and 8 Pt. 1</u></p>	<p>Wednesday 3/18 Anti-Box Movement</p> <p><b>Book Review 1 Due</b></p> <p><u>M: Chs. 8 Pt. 2 and 9</u></p>	<p>Monday 3/30 Hazardous Work <i>A Dangerous Business</i></p> <p><u>Barstow Articles*</u></p>
<p>Wednesday 4/1 Hazardous Work</p> <p><b>Quiz 4</b></p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 5 Pt. 2 (128-138) and Schlosser*</u></p>	<p>Monday 4/6 Corporate Power</p> <p><u>HS: Ch.15</u></p>	<p>Wednesday 4/8 Contemporary Research</p> <p><b>Article Reviews A Due Article Presentations</b></p> <p><u>Your Article*</u></p>	<p>Monday 4/13 Contemporary Research</p> <p><b>Article Reviews B Due Article Presentations</b></p> <p><u>S: Preface, Chs. 1 and 2</u></p>
<p>Wednesday 4/15 Contemporary Research</p> <p><b>Article Reviews C Due Article Presentations</b></p> <p><u>S: Chs. 3, 4, and 5</u></p>	<p>Monday 4/20 Corrosion of Character</p> <p><u>S: Chs. 6, 7, and 8</u></p>	<p>Wednesday 4/22 Corrosion of Character</p> <p><b>Book Review 2 Due</b></p> <p><u>No Readings</u></p>	<p>Monday 4/27 Alienation <i>Wage Slaves</i></p> <p><b>Quiz 5</b></p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 4, Marx*, and Sousa-Poza &amp; Sousa-Poza*</u></p>
<p>Wednesday 4/29 Alternatives &amp; Future</p> <p><b>Essay Questions 4 Due</b></p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 17 and Collom*</u></p>	<p>Monday 5/4 Alternatives &amp; Future <i>Democracy in the Workplace</i></p> <p><u>Rothschild-Whitt* and Cheney*</u></p>	<p>Wednesday 5/6 Alternatives &amp; Future</p> <p><b>Essay Questions 5 Due</b></p> <p><u>Wright* and To Be Announced*</u></p>	

[KEY TO READINGS: HS = Hodson & Sullivan book; M = Mitchell book; S = Sennett book;  
\*Electronic reading to be downloaded from Blackboard]