

Sociology 348: Sociology of Work

Instructor: Ed Collom, Ph.D.
Office Hours: Will be held in Gorham on
Tues/Thurs 11:15am-12:15pm by appt.
Phone: (207) 228-8385
Email: collom@usm.maine.edu

University of Southern Maine
Spring 2007
CRN G0585
T/Th 12:30-1:45pm Bailey 104
<http://www.courses.maine.edu/>

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, 3rd 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 the examinations.

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. The Blackboard course web site contains twelve 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 three students can choose the same article (for which you will also deliver a joint in-class presentation with your article colleague(s) – 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 type-written 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 (see below) depend upon the article you choose. No late papers will be accepted. Papers are due and presentations will occur on Tuesday, April 17th for the following articles (Set "A"):

- Hoffman's "Exit and Voice: Organizational Loyalty and Dispute Resolution Strategies"
- Kennedy's "Joining, Constructing and Benefiting from the Global Workplace: Transnational Professionals in the Building-Design Industry"
- Morgan & Martin's "Taking Women Professionals Out of the Office: The Case of Women in Sales"
- Pershing's "To Snitch or Not To Snitch? Applying the Concept of Neutralization Techniques to the Enforcement of Occupational Misconduct"

Papers are due and presentations will occur on Thursday, April 19th for these articles (Set "B"):

- Roth's "Engendering Inequality: Processes of Sex-Segregation on Wall Street"
- Sallaz's "The House Rules: Autonomy and Interests Among Service Workers in the Contemporary Casino Industry"
- Videla's "It Cuts Both Ways: Workers, Management, and the Construction of a 'Community of Fate' on the Shop Floor in a Mexican Garment Factory"
- Balser's "Agency in Organizational Inequality: Organizational Behavior and Individual Perceptions of Discrimination"

Papers are due and presentations will occur on Tuesday, April 24th for these articles (Set “C”):

- Blanchard and Matthew’s “The Configuration of Local Economic Power and Civic Participation in the Global Economy”
- Dixon’s “Status Divisions and Worker Mobilization”
- Reynolds’ “You Can’t Always Get the Hours You Want: Mismatches between Actual and Preferred Work Hours in the U.S.”
- Weiss and Reid’s “Low-Quality Employment Concentration and Crime: An Examination of Metropolitan Labor Markets”

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.

Examinations

Two midterms will be given during the course of the semester. These exams will consist of both multiple choice and short-answer essay questions. The final is a take-home essay examination that is to be typewritten. **The essay examination will be distributed during our Tuesday, May 1st class meeting and is due in the Sociology office in Portland by 4pm on Thursday, May 10th.** No late examinations will be accepted.

Grading

| | |
|-----|---|
| 25% | Midterm 1 |
| 25% | Midterm 2 |
| 30% | Essay Examination |
| 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 (readings are underlined and due on the date on which they appear; films are *italicized*)

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Tuesday 1/16 Work Under Capitalism <i>Business of America</i> Part 1</p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 1</u></p> | <p>Thursday 1/18 Work Under Capitalism <i>Business of America</i> Part 2</p> <p><u>Rubin*: Ch. 2</u></p> | <p>Tuesday 1/23 Work Under Capitalism</p> <p><u>Rubin*: Ch. 3 and HS: Ch. 6 Pt. 1 (140-156)</u></p> | <p>Thursday 1/25 Organized Labor</p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 6 Pt. 2 (156-168), Freeman & Rogers*, and Greenhouse*</u></p> |
| <p>Tuesday 1/30 Work Organizations <i>American Dream</i> Pt. 1</p> <p><u>HS: Chs. 7 and 8 Pt. 1 (198-209)</u></p> | <p>Thursday 2/1 Work Organizations <i>American Dream</i> Pt. 2</p> <p><u>HS: Chs. 8 Pt. 2 (210-224) and 9</u></p> | <p>Tuesday 2/6 Work Mismatches <i>American Dream</i> Pt. 3</p> <p><u>Kalleberg*: Ch. 1</u></p> | <p>Thursday 2/8 Work Mismatches <i>American Dream</i> Pt. 4</p> <p><u>Kalleberg*: Ch. 2</u></p> |
| <p>Tuesday 2/13</p> <p>Midterm I</p> | <p>Thursday 2/15 Contingent Work</p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 14, Presser*, and Phoenix Articles*</u></p> | <p>Tuesday 2/27 Hazardous Work <i>A Dangerous Business</i></p> <p><u>Barstow Articles*</u></p> | <p>Thursday 3/1 Hazardous Work</p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 5 Pt. 2 (128-138) and Schlosser*</u></p> |
| <p>Tuesday 3/6 Corporate Power</p> <p><u>HS: Chs. 15 and 16</u></p> | <p>Thursday 3/8 Retail Power <i>Is Wal-Mart Good for America?</i></p> <p><u>M: Intro and Ch. 1</u></p> | <p>Tuesday 3/13 Retail Power</p> <p><u>M: Ch. 2</u></p> | <p>Thursday 3/15 Retail Consumption</p> <p><u>M: Chs. 3 and 5 (skip 4)</u></p> |
| <p>Tuesday 3/20 Government Policy</p> <p><u>M: Ch. 7</u></p> | <p>Thursday 3/22</p> <p>Midterm II</p> | <p>Tuesday 4/3 Anti-Box Movement</p> <p><u>M: Ch. 8</u></p> | <p>Thursday 4/5 Independent Businesses</p> <p><u>M: Ch. 9</u></p> |
| <p>Tuesday 4/10 Networks <i>The Corporation</i> Part 1</p> <p><u>Erickson*, McDonald & Elder*, & Cummings & Cross*</u></p> | <p>Thursday 4/12 Corrosion of Character <i>The Corporation</i> Part 2</p> <p><u>S: Preface, Chs. 1 and 2</u></p> | <p>Tuesday 4/17 Contemporary Research Article Reviews A Due Article Presentations</p> <p><u>Your Article* or S: Chs. 3, 4, and 5</u></p> | <p>Thursday 4/19 Contemporary Research Article Reviews B Due Article Presentations</p> <p><u>Your Article* or S: Chs. 3, 4, and 5 or S: Chs. 6, 7, and 8</u></p> |
| <p>Tuesday 4/24 Contemporary Research Article Reviews C Due Article Presentations</p> <p><u>Your Article* or S: Chs. 6, 7, and 8</u></p> | <p>Thursday 4/26 Alienation <i>Wage Slaves</i></p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 4, Marx*, and Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza*</u></p> | <p>Tuesday 5/1 Alternatives & Future</p> <p><u>HS: Ch. 17 and Rothschild-Whitt*</u></p> | <p>Thursday 5/3 Alternatives & Future <i>Democracy in the Workplace</i></p> <p><u>Cheney*, 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]