Sociology of Work, Occupations & Labor Markets
Sociology 570
Department of Sociology
Rutgers University
Fall 2019

Professor: Quan D. Mai
Time: Tuesdays, 9:30AM to 12:10PM
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30PM or by appointment
Room: Davison Hall – Conference Room
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
In this course, we apply a sociological perspective to the broad and fast-growing subfield of work, occupations, and labor markets. This course cannot cover the entire subfield. Instead, it is designed to provide a broad introduction, as well as to dive deep into a selected set of subjects. Over the course of the seminar, we will cover three major themes: [1] classical perspectives on work, [2] the changing nature of the labor market, and [3] how work, occupations, and labor markets intersect with other social structures. In the first section, we will revisit the classic theoretical foundations of the sociology of work. The second section explores how employment norms are rapidly changing, and how these changes affect workers who no longer operate in permanent standard organizational careers. In the third section, we analyze how the labor market intersects with important social structures such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, family, education, and organized labor to generate stratified outcomes in modern society. The materials covered in this course will operate both at the macro level of analysis (global economies, changing structure of labor markets), mezzo level of analysis (the family, the workplace, occupational groups/sectors), and micro level of analysis (workers themselves). These inquiries adopt a diverse set of methodological toolkits including qualitative, quantitative, and experimental approaches.

LEARNING GOALS
In this course, you will

1. Become familiar with main theoretical and empirical frameworks that influenced social research on work, occupations, and labor markets.
2. Improve your critical writing skills, specifically the ability to synthesize separate authors’ arguments in ways that go beyond summarizing, but rather demonstrate analytic and interpretive value.
3. Learn how scholars use qualitative, quantitative, and experimental methods to investigate and explain the labor process and how it contributes to reproducing inequality.
4. Develop your oral and written communication skills through critical discussion, intellectual debate, and writing.
5. Cultivate your own research interest, develop ideas for qualifying papers, dissertations, primary and/or secondary research areas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
1. Weekly memos (20%)

Each week, you are required to produce a 1-2 page typed, double-spaced reaction to the readings. The assignment briefly summarizes the themes of the reading and the debates that the readings are engaged with. You should also share your critiques of the readings, and provide TWO questions that you will raise in class discussions. Your weekly memos need to be emailed to me by Mondays at 5PM. Please be on time. This portion accounts for 20% of your grade.
2. **Lead discussion (20%)**

Over the course of the semester, each student is expected to lead and/or co-lead a class discussion on that week’s application reading. I will share more details during the first week.

3. **Participation (20%)**

Each student is expected to attend every single class and actively participate in class discussions of the reading.

4. **Research proposal (40%)**

You are required to submit a research proposal by the end of the semester. The topic must be related to work, occupations, and the labor market. A good proposal should engage with theories and concepts derived from the reading materials.

The proposal should have the following structure.

a) Clearly state your topic and explicitly discuss its relevance to the sociology of work, occupations, and labor markets. How does it move the field forward, which gaps does it fill, what puzzle does it solve? Why should we care about this topic at all? (3 pages)

b) Discuss 6-10 relevant articles and/or books that inform your topic of inquiry. You may use readings that we cover or come up with materials on your own. This section should explicitly address what the limitations of the readings are? Which aspects remain undertheorized? What is gained by addressing these gaps? What are your research question(s) and your contributions? (8-10 pages)

c) Explain the method that you’ll use to address your research question – i.e. interviews, focus groups, survey methods, content analysis, ethnography, etc. Explain how you will execute the project. I will be extremely impressed if you can identify a realistic funding source for your project (4 pages)

d) Provide a reference list at the end of your proposal.

Overall, the final product will be about 15-18 pages in length.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

I follow the Rutgers University's policy on academic integrity. Please explore the website indicated below to become more familiar with this policy: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/). Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or citation of the source. My policy on plagiarism is to award an F for the course.

**DISABILITIES**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where they are officially enrolled, participate in an intake meeting, and provide documentation: [https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services](https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with me as soon as possible, and discuss the accommodations with me as early as possible.
DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

CLASS & READING SCHEDULE

I. Classical Perspectives On Work

Week 1: September 3 - Work, Concepts, and Theories


Week 2: September 10 - Conceptual Foundations

Marx, Karl. Alienated Labor

Weber, M. Bureaucracy

Taylor, F. Fundamentals of Scientific Management

Braverman, H. The Division of Labor


II. The Changing Nature of The Labor Market

Week 3: September 17 – Occupational Differentiation


Recommended:


Week 4: September 24 – Good jobs & bad jobs


Week 5: October 1 – No Job


Recommended:


Week 6: October 8 – Working in the New Economy


Recommended:


**Week 7: October 15 – Consequences of Precarious Work**


Recommended:

**III. How Work and The Labor Markets Intersects with other Social Structures**

**Week 8: October 22 – Work and Social Class**


Recommended:

**Week 9: October 29 – Work and Race/Ethnicity**


Recommended:


**Week 10: November 5 – Work and Race/Ethnicity (Continued)**


**Week 11: November 12 – Work and Family, Gender, and Sexuality**


Recommended:

**Week 12: November 19 – Work and Family, Gender, and Sexuality (Continued)**


Recommended:

**Week 13: November 26 – Work and Education**


Recommended:

**Week 14: December 3 – Work and Labor Unions**


Week 15: December 10 – Oral presentation of research proposals.