Sociology 3550
The Sociology of Work
Location TBA
Monday and Wednesday, 10:00 – 11:30

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Catalog Description:

Sociological understanding of work, and in particular, how work reduces or replicates inequality. Classic and contemporary sociological theories of work; how work in the U.S. has changed over time; and how workers are matched to “good” and “bad” jobs. Threaded through the course is the exploration of barriers to racial, gender, and class inclusion and advancement at work. We will explore how organizational structures, policies, and practices can increase or decrease those barriers. Prerequisite: introductory course in sociology or consent of the instructor.

Course Description
This course is an overview of a sociological understanding of work, and in particular, how work reduces or replicates inequality based on gender, race, and class. We will explore classic and contemporary sociological theories of work, how work in the U.S. has changed over time, and how workers are matched to “good” and “bad” jobs. Threaded through the course is the exploration of barriers to racial, gender, and class inclusion and advancement at work; we will explore how organizational structures, policies, and practices can increase or decrease those barriers. The course has no specific prerequisites, but students should be prepared for intensive study and discussion of challenging ideas.

Course Requirements
I expect all students to complete the assigned readings listed in the syllabus and to attend every class. This course has a high reading load, so plan accordingly. This is a seminar class, so I expect students to participate in class discussion. Final grades are based on the following course requirements:

1. Reflection Memos (30%): Each student is required to complete three (3) reflection memos of 3-4 pages each (double spaced, 12pt font). On the first day of class, students will choose which three days they wish to write reflection memos. The reflection memos should focus on the readings assigned for that day. The content of the memos is up to you. You could, for example, compare and contrast readings (e.g., compare the current readings with previous weeks’ readings), reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments presented in the readings, or relate the readings to current events. Reflection
memos are due at the beginning of class and must be uploaded to the course website on Blackboard (INSERT WEBSITE HERE).

2. **Participation (20%)**: Class time will be divided into lecture and discussion. I expect students to actively participate during the discussion period. Those students who wrote reflection memos for that day are expected to help lead discussion. This should be fun! Discussion is the perfect time to clear up any confusing readings, or delve deeper into topics you find interesting.

3. **Final Paper (50%)**: Each student is required to write a final paper of 10-15 pages (double spaced, 12pt font). Students are responsible for coming up with a unique question which they will address in the final paper (e.g., Why are there so few women engineers in Silicon Valley?) The research question may be derived from the readings, meaning you might want to at least skim the topics to be discussed later in the semester. Students are expected to draw on research and theory presented in in the class material, as well as cite at least two outside sources (Wikipedia is not an outside source). Students are not expected to perform their own analysis. Before writing the final paper, students are to write a pithy, one to two paragraph abstract of their research question and how they will address it. This abstract is not graded, but it will let me know that you are on the right track. I must sign off on your abstract by Wednesday, March 29. I will only approve those final paper topics which have the potential, if executed well, to receive a top grade. This means you must come to office hours at least once to have your abstract approved. Feel free to come by early and often to discuss your final paper (or the class in general!).

**Assignment Due Dates:**

- Reflection memos: due dates determined the first day of class
- Final Paper Due: TBA (scheduled day for the course final exam)

**Required Books:**

Required Articles & Book Chapters:

Additional readings book chapters are available through Blackboard. You can access them here: [INSERT WEBSITE HERE].

Course Outline:

Conceptual Background

• Wednesday, January 18: Classic Theories of Work.
  o Taylor, Frederick Winslow. 1911. Excerpts from *Fundamentals of Scientific Management*

• Monday, January 23: Contemporary Takes.

The Way It Was and the Way It Is

• Wednesday, January 25: The Way It Was.
  o *Note: Reading is short for Day 1, so I recommend getting a jump on reading for Monday, January 30.*

• Monday, January 30: Good Jobs, Bad jobs.
• Kalleberg, Arne L. 2011. “New Workers, New Differences” Chapter 3 in Good Jobs, Bad Jobs ….


• Wednesday, February 1: Gender and Racial Segregation.

• Monday, February 6: Gender and Racial Segregation.

Matching Workers to (Good and Bad) Jobs

• Wednesday, February 8: Human Capital Theory.

  o Tam, Tony. 1996. “Sex Segregation and Occupational Gender Inequality in the United States: Devaluation or Specialized Training?”

• Wednesday, February 15: Social Capital Theory.

• Monday, February 20: Race and Gender Differences in Human and Social Capital.
Immigrant Exploitation in the Low-Wage Labor Market

  - Piore, Michael J. 1979. Introduction to *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies*.

- Monday, February 27: How the Other Half Works.
  - *Ethnic Enclaves (optional reading)*

Matching Workers to (Good and Bad) Jobs, Continued

- Wednesday, March 1: Cultural Capital and Educational Elites.

- Monday, March 6: Cultural Capital and Elite Hiring.

Rivera, Lauren A. 2012. “Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms.”

**Discrimination**

- Wednesday, March 8: Statistical Discrimination.

*** NO CLASS Monday, March 13 or Wednesday, March 15 ***

- Monday, March 20: Cognitive Bias.

- Wednesday, March 22: Job Discrimination in Action (Gender and Motherhood).

- Monday, March 27: Job Discrimination in Action (Race and Ethnicity).

**Organizations and Inequality**

- Wednesday, March 29: Bureaucracy and Formalization.
  - Revisit Weber Reading
• Baron, James N., et al. 2007. “In the Company of Women: Gender Inequality and the Logic of Bureaucracy in Start-Up Firms.”

*** FINAL PAPER TOPIC APPROVED BY WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29. ***

• Monday, April 3: Biased Formalization.

• Wednesday, April 5: Biased Formalization.
  • Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2009. “Framed Before We Know It: How Gender Shapes Social Relations”

• Monday, April 10: Equal Opportunity Legislation.

• Wednesday, April 12: Is Taking Away Managerial Discretion the Way to Go?

Organizational Composition and Culture

• Monday, April 17: Is Meritocracy Good Enough?
Castilla, Emilio J. 2008. “Gender, Race, and Meritocracy in Organizational Careers.”


Optional Readings:


Organizational Composition, Culture, and Exclusion.

- Wednesday, April 19: Tokenism.
  - Yoshino, Kenji. 2006. Introduction to The Pressure to Cover.

- Monday, April 24: Motherhood and “Women’s Work.”

The Cutting Edge of Organizational Policies and Practices to Reduce Inequality at Work

- Wednesday, April 26: Silicon Valley Gender and Discrimination Initiatives
  - Discussion.

*** FINAL PAPER DUE, DATE TBA (will be set to the day of the final exam as specified in course listings) ***