

# Soc110 Sociology of Organizations and Institutions

Fall 2013

Instructor: **Dr. Linus Huang**

Office hours: **Mondays 3:30-5:30 p.m. or by appt., 434 Barrows Hall**

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Final Exam: **Exam Group 15, Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 3-6 PM**

Graduate Student Readers: **TBA**

## Course overview

We live in “a society of organizations”, as the sociologist Charles Perrow says. More and more of social life today is shaped by organizations. For example, over the past 100 years, 90% of the U.S. population went from being self-employed to working for someone else in an organization. Therefore a key piece of understanding social life is understanding life inside organizations.

Organizational sociology seeks to understand how and why organizations behave, whose interests they serve, and under what conditions they can be changed. The organizational sociology subfield is a long-standing one characterized more than most by distinct theoretical paradigms. We will consider three major paradigms in this subfield—ecological, resource dependence, and the institutionalist perspectives.

To enhance our understanding of how the world is shaped by organizations we will take an extended look at three case studies: the fast food industry, the shareholder value-driven capitalist enterprise, and our very own UC Berkeley. Regarding the observation from the first paragraph above, much of this change can be seen in the fast food industry, which we will examine through the book *Fast Food Nation*. A century ago, many Americans were self-employed as farmers; today many Americans work either in the lower rungs of large agribusiness organizations, or in the fast food chains which agribusiness is designed to serve.

## Required readings

Readings come from (1) two required texts; (2) a course reader (essentially a “textbook” customized for this specific course); and (3) PDFs available in the Resources tab of the course bspace site. The two texts are:

- Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*
- Bethany McLean & Peter Elkind, *The Smartest Guys in the Room: The Amazing Rise and Scandalous Fall of Enron*

Both of these texts are available at the ASUC Bookstore. If you have an earlier edition of *Fast Food Nation*, that will be fine.

The balance of the course’s readings will come from a **course reader**, soon to be available at **University Copy Services** at **2425 Channing Way**, two blocks south of campus in the arcade under the Durant-Channing garage. If you’re not sure where this is, just type “2425 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA” into Google Maps.

## **Course format**

This is a lecture course and I will indeed do a fair amount of lecturing. However, class participation is expected and will make everyone's experience far, far, more enlightening, not to mention enjoyable. Furthermore, although an obviously substantial part of the course material will come from the readings, additional material—both theoretical and empirical—will be presented in class that is not strictly from the readings. You will be responsible for this additional material on the exams. Therefore, class attendance and participation are crucial to success in the course.

## **Grading**

Course grades will be determined by two in-class midterm exams (30% each) and a final exam (40%) administered during the University's officially-designated exam slot for the course. The two midterms will be given on **Friday, September 27**, and **Friday, October 25**. Soc110 is in Exam Group #15, which means our final exam is on **Thursday, December 19, from 3-6 P.M.**

All three exams will be of a short answer variety, where “short answer” means from one to four paragraphs per question. You will need to bring exam booklets (“blue books”, for sale at the ASUC Store) for each exam.

The grading scale is as follows. All scores are significant to the first digit after the decimal. ‘[’ means including, and ‘)’ means excluding, so ‘[83-87)’ for example means everything including 83 up to but **NOT** including 87.

		A	[94+	A-	[90-94)
B+	[87-90)	B	[83-87)	B-	[80-83)
C+	[77-80)	C	[73-77)	C-	[70-73)
D+	[67-70)	D	[63-67)	D-	[60-63)
		F	[0-60)		

I will use the “Assignments” tool on the course bspace site to keep a record of your scores, so as midterm scores are released, make sure that what is on bspace matches what is on your actual returned paper/exam. If there is a problem, report it immediately. Do not wait until the end of the semester to report an issue with either of the midterms.

*Note:* There are no other discretionary considerations that factor in to the calculation of your course grade. As the course progresses, you can calculate your performance for yourself, given the weightings indicated above, and determine exactly what you need to do on subsequent graded assignments to get X grade.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must have their statuses verified by the DSP office by **Wednesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>**.

The course will require a modest degree of English writing proficiency during the three in-class examinations. If you are an ESL student for whom this may prove difficult, accommodations can be made provided you get in touch with me at the beginning of the semester. During exams, the use of language translation dictionaries is permitted, provided that the dictionaries are on actual paper (paperback or hardcover). For purposes of fairness, software-based dictionaries running on general-purpose computing devices (i.e., smartphones, tablets, laptops) will not be allowed during exams.

## **Resources**

**Writing for Sociology.** Although this course will not be as writing-intensive as others, writing will still be important on the in-class midterm and final exams. Graduate students and faculty in the sociology department at Berkeley have put together a writing guide specifically geared toward sociology students. It is intended for longer-form writing assignments, but could still be useful for the short-answer (e.g., 1-4 paragraphs) questions that will be on the exams.

The URL for this guide is: <http://sociology.berkeley.edu/undergraduate-writing-resources>.

**Student Learning Center.** The campus Student Learning Center (SLC) offers various services for both ESL and native-speaking students. See their website at:

<http://slc.berkeley.edu/ucftr/index.htm>

and in particular their writing resources at:

<http://slc.berkeley.edu/writing/index.htm>.

**International Students.** The Berkeley International Office offers a variety of services, including ESL resources. See their website at:

<http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/>

And note their English Language Resources section, drawn from various online resources throughout the U.S.

[http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/english\\_resources](http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/english_resources)

## **Academic Honesty**

The University has recommended the following guidelines concerning academic honesty and they apply for this course:

**The student community at UC Berkeley has adopted the following Honor Code:** “As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.” The hope and expectation is that you will adhere to this code.

**Collaboration and Independence:** Reviewing lecture and reading materials and studying for exams can be enjoyable and enriching things to do with fellow students. This is recommended.

However, unless otherwise instructed, homework assignments are to be completed independently and materials submitted as homework should be the result of one's own independent work.

**Cheating:** A good lifetime strategy is always to act in such a way that no one would ever imagine that you would even consider cheating. Anyone caught cheating on a quiz or exam in this course will receive a failing grade in the course and will also be reported to the University Center for Student Conduct. In order to guarantee that you are not suspected of cheating, please keep your eyes on your own materials and do not converse with others during the quizzes and exams.

**Plagiarism:** To copy text or ideas from another source without appropriate reference is plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for your assignment and usually further disciplinary action. For additional information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see, for example: <http://gsi.berkeley.edu/teachingguide/misconduct/prevent-plag.html>

**Academic Integrity and Ethics:** Cheating on exams and plagiarism are two common examples of dishonest, unethical behavior. Honesty and integrity are of great importance in all facets of life. They help to build a sense of self-confidence, and are key to building trust within relationships, whether personal or professional. There is no tolerance for dishonesty in the academic world, for it undermines what we are dedicated to doing – furthering knowledge for the benefit of humanity.

Your experience as a student at UC Berkeley is hopefully fueled by passion for learning and replete with fulfilling activities. And we also appreciate that being a student may be stressful. There may be times when there is temptation to engage in some kind of cheating in order to improve a grade or otherwise advance your career. This could be as blatant as having someone else sit for you in an exam, or submitting a written assignment that has been copied from another source. And it could be as subtle as glancing at a fellow student's exam when you are unsure of an answer to a question and are looking for some confirmation. One might do any of these things and potentially not get caught. However, if you cheat, no matter how much you may have learned in this class, you have failed to learn perhaps the most important lesson of all.

### **Lecture, Reading, and Exam Schedule**

All indicated readings are in the course reader (see above). Assigned readings must be completed **BEFORE** the class they are associated with. In many cases I will go over the readings, especially the more difficult ones. But in other cases I will build upon rather than recapitulate the readings.

Aug	30	Fri	Introduction: why a sociology of organizations? <i>readings: none</i>
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Sep	2	Mon	##### LABOR DAY. NO CLASS. #####
	4	Wed	Introduction, cont'd: the rational adaptation perspective <i>readings: none</i>

Sep	6	Fri	Population ecology <i>reading:</i> Michael T. Hannan & John Freeman, "The Population Ecology of Organizations" <b>on bspace</b> (focus particularly on pp. 929-939 and 946-949)
	9	Mon	Population ecology: density dependence <i>readings:</i> none
	11	Wed	Population ecology: resource partitioning <i>reading:</i> Glenn Carroll & Anand Swaminathan, "Why the Microbrewery Movement?" <b>on bspace</b>
	13	Fri	Resource dependence <i>readings:</i> none
	16	Mon	Resource dependence: the case of UC Berkeley <i>readings:</i> none
	18	Wed	(cont'd)
	20	Fri	Institutionalist perspective <i>reading:</i> Paul DiMaggio & Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited" <b>on bspace</b>
	23	Mon	Institutionalist perspective: the case of UC Berkeley <i>reading:</i> John Douglass, "From Chaos to Order and Back?" <b>on bspace</b>
	25	Wed	(cont'd)
	27	Fri	***** <b>MIDTERM EXAM #1 IN-CLASS</b> *****
	30	Mon	Emergence of the fast food industry <i>reading:</i> Eric Schlosser, <i>Fast Food Nation</i> ch 1, 2
Oct	2	Wed	(cont'd)
	4	Fri	Expansion of the fast food industry <i>reading:</i> Schlosser, <i>Fast Food Nation</i> ch 4, 5
	7	Mon	(cont'd)
	9	Wed	The reorganization of American agriculture <i>reading:</i> Schlosser, <i>Fast Food Nation</i> ch 6, 7
	11	Fri	(cont'd)

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Oct	14	Mon	The labor process in the fast food industry <i>reading: Schlosser, <i>Fast Food Nation</i> ch 3, 8</i>
	16	Wed	(cont'd)
	18	Fri	A theory of organizational change <i>readings: none</i>

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	21	Mon	Case study of organizational change: labor unions <i>reading: Kim Voss &amp; Rachel Sherman, "Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy" in reader</i>
	23	Wed	(cont'd)
	25	Fri	***** <b>MIDTERM EXAM #1 IN-CLASS</b> *****

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	28	Mon	Social networks and organizational theory, Part 1: organizations embedded within networks <i>reading: Ronald Burt, "Structural Holes and Good Ideas" in reader</i>
	30	Wed	Social networks and organizational theory, Part 2: networks embedded within organizations <i>reading: Mario Small, <i>Unanticipated Gains</i> ch 1, 2 in reader</i>

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Nov	1	Fri	(cont'd)
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	4	Mon	The rise of the shareholder value corporation <i>reading: Michael Useem, <i>Executive Defense</i> ch 2 in reader</i>
	6	Wed	The rise of Enron <i>reading: Bethany McLean &amp; Peter Elkind, <i>The Smartest Guys in the Room</i> ch 1-3</i>
	8	Fri	(cont'd)

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	11	Mon	##### <b>VETERAN'S DAY. NO CLASS.</b> #####
	13	Wed	The Enron model(s) of making money <i>reading: McLean &amp; Elkind, <i>The Smartest Guys in the Room</i> ch 4-7, 15</i>
	15	Fri	(cont'd)

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	18	Mon	The flaws in the Enron model <i>reading: McLean &amp; Elkind, <i>The Smartest Guys in the Room</i> ch 8-11</i>
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Nov	20	Wed	(cont'd)
	22	Fri	What effect did shareholder value have on employment in the U.S.? <i>reading:</i> Arne L. Kalleberg, "Economic Transformation and the Decline of Institutional Protections" <b>in reader</b>
	25	Mon	(cont'd)
	27	Wed	<b>##### NO CLASS. INSTRUCTOR CANCELLED. #####</b>
	29	Fri	<b>##### TURKEY DAY. NO CLASS. #####</b>
Dec	2	Mon	Financial institutions & UC Berkeley <i>reading:</i> Charlie Eaton, Jacob Habinek, Mukul Kumar, Tamara Lee Stover & Alex Roehrkasse, "Swapping Our Future" <b>on bspace</b>
	4	Wed	Why is it so hard to address organizational inequality? <i>reading:</i> Frank Dobbin, Soohan Kim & Alexandra Kalev, "You Can't Always Get What You Need" <b>in reader</b>
	6	Fri	Wrap-up and course evaluations
	9	Mon	<b>READING,</b>
	11	Wed	<b>REVIEW, and</b>
	13	Fri	<b>RECITATION week</b>
	19	Thu	<b>***** FINAL EXAM IN-CLASS 3-6 PM *****</b>