

Soc 110 Organizations & Institutions

Spring 2020| UC Berkeley

Instructor: Dr. Linus Huang, Continuing Lecturer

Office hours: drop-in, Wednesdays 2:15-4:00 PM, 487 Barrows

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Final exam: In-class, Tuesday, May 12th 2020, 7-10 PM

What will this course be about?

What do organizations do, why do they do them, and what implications do their practices have for society? Sociology has long directly or indirectly focused upon the role that organizations play in society. Classical perspectives such as Marx's focus on the for-profit organization as a site of capitalist exploitation. Durkheimian perspectives might pay attention to social solidarity within the organization and/or the role that collective representations shared by organizational members play in organizational life. Weber developed the most systematic theory of organizations of the three; he understood the modern, bureaucratic organization as the principal instrument of the rationalization of social action that defines modernity. Subsequently, organizational sociology in the U.S. in the mid 20th century was concerned about explaining the gap between Weber's depiction of bureaucracy as the embodiment of efficiency and the observed reality of bureaucracies as hopelessly inefficient.

This course however will focus on sociological perspectives on organizations developed from the 1970s onward. The ways organizations behave have changed, and so have the ways that sociologists think about how organizations behave. Contemporary organizational sociology tends to reject macro-level "grand" narratives about organizational behavior, but also rejects micro-level approaches such as those offered by symbolic interactionism or even microeconomics. Instead, we will focus on how different parts of the organizational world are shaped by different "local" orders (a meso-level approach). The foundation of the course, which will be laid out in the first weeks and leading up to the first midterm, will be three major, and different, conceptual approaches—the population ecology, the relational, and the institutional perspectives—for understanding what this meso-level order that shapes an organization's behavior is.

Concretely, the course will be built around case studies, each from a different part of the organizational world—public higher education, the fast food industry, the shareholder corporation, agencies in the federal government, and more. The purpose of each case study is to demonstrate the usefulness of contemporary sociological perspectives in illuminating what these organizations do, why, and what implications their practices have for society.

Readings

All course readings are available in PDF format on the bCourses site.

Grading

Your course grade will be determined by:

- An **organizational theory exercise**, aimed at getting us to understand how to think about behavior in organizations familiar to us, but in a specifically sociological way. This exercise will be worth 20% of the course grade.
- Two **take-home midterm exams**, each 30% of the course grade. They will be “short essay” style in nature (further details to be given later).
- An **in-class final exam**, administered during the University’s officially scheduled timeslot for the course (exact time yet to be announced). The final exam will be cumulative and multiple choice. The final exam is worth 20% of the course grade.

The course grading scale is as follows:

A+	97+	A	93-96	A-	90-92
B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
D+	67-69	D	63-66	D-	60-62
		F	0-59		

When it comes time to compute overall course grades, I will round to the nearest whole number using standard rounding conventions. It doesn’t really matter what the letter grade on the individual assignments are.

There are no other discretionary considerations that will factor into your grade. Furthermore, I do not offer extra credit beyond that which I may build in to the midterm and final exams.

There are no surprises in how I calculate course grades. The GRADES section on bCourses incorporates the weightings above and will accurately keep you apprised of your course progress. During the semester, with a little arithmetic, you can figure out how you need to do on subsequent exams to earn a particular grade.

Recommendation Letters

Writing recommendation letters is an aspect of an instructor’s job which I embrace readily. However, it is difficult for me, and unhelpful to all parties involved, to write letters for students I do not know very well. I do have, and have exercised, the discretion to decline to write letters when I don’t know students beyond what grades they’ve earned in the course. If you anticipate asking me to write a letter, it is in your interest to participate in class discussion, visit me during my office hours, etc., and let me know what your plans and interests are above and beyond course material.

Resources

The Academic Accommodations Hub (<https://evcp.berkeley.edu/programs-resources/academic-accommodations-hub>), courtesy of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, lists a wide variety of resources and references for students, including:

- Classroom climate (learning, not physical, climate)
- Academic Integrity and Honor Code
- Academic Accommodations
- Support Resources
- Conflict, Resolution, and Troubleshooting

There are a variety of resources available to sociology students, both for course-related matters as well as for research opportunities, student organizations, advising, what one can do with a sociology major, etc. These are available on the department website at the following URL: <https://sociology.berkeley.edu/undergraduate-resources>.

Academic Honesty & Classroom Conduct

The UC Berkeley Honor Code states that “As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others” (<https://teaching.berkeley.edu/berkeley-honor-code>). I expect you will follow these principles. You may not copy specific text or ideas from others, whether from fellow students, from authors of our readings or other material you find, without specific attribution. To do otherwise is to plagiarize. You may not cheat on any of the exams by bringing in illicit outside material, copying from fellow students, or engaging in other dishonest practices. Violation of these rules will result in an immediate **-0-** on the *entire* assignment in question, plus a report to the Office of Academic Affairs at my discretion.

You may of course discuss the lectures and readings with your fellow students. Forming studying groups on your own is encouraged, especially since there are no discussion sections to accompany this course. If these groups are used to struggle through ideas or debate topics (both are also good uses of class time, by the way!), then the effort expended can be very rewarding. However, if groups are used simply to memorize a classmate’s notes by rote, to subsequently recite on exams, **this is effectively another form of plagiarism** as far as I am concerned. I use this specific example because it has popped up in my courses before.

Study group meetings should be suspended during periods where a take-home exam is active. They can begin again after the exam due date has been reached.

Use of laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc. in class. I use my laptop for virtually everything and do not expect students not to utilize the various digital technologies we have at our disposal today. However, if you are texting, Twittering, Facebooking, watching YouTube or Netflix, or some other such thing in class, you are likely distracting others and I will ask you to leave.

Reading/Exam Schedule

All readings for this course are available on bCourses in the READINGS folder of the FILES section.

Readings associated with a date are to be completed prior to the class meeting on that day. It may become necessary to adjust the reading schedule as the semester unfolds. If this happens, I will make the change(s) on bCourses—check the SYLLABUS section online to see the most up-to-date schedule. I will not change this PDF file.

Jan 22-29	Introduction: theorizing about organizations	<i>No readings.</i>
Jan 31-Feb 5	Population ecology	<i>Read:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M.T. Hannan & J. Freeman, “The Population Ecology of Organizations” excerpts (see bCourses) • G. Carroll & A. Swaminathan, “Why the Microbrewery Movement?” excerpts (see bCourses)
Feb 7-12	Relational perspective	<i>Read:</i> J. Pfeffer & G. Salancik, “The Social Control of Organizations”
Feb 12	Organizational theory exercise distributed on bCourses Wednesday, February 12th 2020 →	
Feb 14-19 <small>Feb 17: President’s Day, No Class</small>	Institutionalist perspective	<i>Read:</i> P. DiMaggio & W. Powell, “The Iron Cage Revisited”
Feb 20	← Organizational theory exercise due on bCourses Thursday, February 20th 2020	
Feb 21-24	Institutionalist perspective (cont’d)	<i>No new readings.</i>
Feb 24	Take-Home Midterm #1 distributed on bCourses Monday, February 24th 2020 →	
Feb 26-28	Emergence of the fast food industry	<i>Read:</i> E. Schlosser, <i>Fast Food Nation</i> ch 1, 2
Feb 28-Mar 2	Expansion of the fast food industry	<i>Read:</i> E. Schlosser, <i>Fast Food Nation</i> ch 4
Mar 3	← Take-Home Midterm #1 due on bCourses Tuesday, March 3rd 2020	
Mar 4-6	The re-organization of American agriculture	<i>Read:</i> E. Schlosser, <i>Fast Food Nation</i> ch 5, 6
Mar 9-11	How do organizations understand what their biggest problems are?	<i>Read:</i> N. Fligstein, “The Intraorganizational Power Struggle”
Mar 13-20	The rise of the shareholder value corporation	<i>Read:</i> K. Ho, <i>Liquidated</i> ch 3
Mar 23-27	***** SPRING BREAK *****	
Mar 30	Financialization and income inequality in the U.S.	<i>Read:</i> K. Lin & D. Tomaskovic-Devey, “Financialization and U.S. Income Inequality, 1970-2008” pp. 1284-1294

Apr 1	Financialization @ UC	<i>Optionally read:</i> C. Eaton, J. Habinek, M. Kumar, T. Stover & A. Roehrkasse, “Swapping Our Future: How Students and Taxpayers Are Funding Risky UC Borrowing and Wall Street Profits”
Apr 1	Take-Home Midterm #2 distributed on bCourses Wednesday, April 1st 2020 →	
Apr 3-6	Social movements	<i>Read:</i> K. Voss & R. Sherman, “Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy” pp 303-305, 308-314, 320-333, 338-341 (see notes online)
Apr 8	What social movement tactics are successful?	<i>Read:</i> F. Rojas, “Social Movement Tactics, Organizational Change and the Spread of African American Studies”
Apr 9	← Take-Home Midterm #2 due on bCourses Thursday, April 9th 2020	
Apr 10-13	Does college re-produce inequality?	<i>Read:</i> E. Armstrong & L. Hamilton, <i>Paying for the Party</i> intro + ch 2, 5, 6
Apr 15-17	How well have colleges promoted upward mobility?	<i>Optionally read:</i> R. Chetty, J.N. Friedman, E. Saez, N. Turner & D. Yagan, “Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility”
Apr 20-22	Why did FEMA perform so poorly during Hurricane Katrina in 2005?	<i>Read:</i> C. Cooper & R. Block, “Homeland Insecurity” (ch 4 from Cooper & Block, <i>Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Insecurity</i>)
Apr 24	What is the DHS’s mission and what is it <u>not</u> ?	<i>Read:</i> C. Cooper & R. Block, “The Undodged Bullet” (ch 6 from Cooper & Block, <i>Disaster</i>)
Apr 27-29	Social networks I: organizations are embedded within networks ...	<i>Read:</i> R. Burt, “Structural holes and good ideas”
Apr 29-May 1	Social networks II: ... but networks are embedded within organizations	<i>Read:</i> M. Small, <i>Unanticipated Gains</i> ch 1, 2
May 4-8	Reading, Recitation and Review (RRR) week	
May 12	Final Exam in-class, Tuesday May 12th 2020 7-10 PM	