

Soc116 Sociology of Work

Spring 2013

Instructor: **Dr. Linus Huang**

Office hours: **Mondays 4:00-6:00 p.m., location TBA**

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Final exam: **Group 6, Tuesday, May 14th, 2013, 11:30-2:30 p.m.**

Course overview

Work in the U.S. is culturally and politically invisible in at least a couple of ways. First, the U.S. is culturally a *consumer* society: we think of products and services more in terms of purchasing them rather than making (products) or performing (services) them. Second, we think of getting and doing jobs as *individual* ordeals, where the rules governing the world of employment are fixed and all that matters is our individual ability to play the game.

We are all indeed necessarily consumers, and our individual actions and biographies are indeed relevant to what jobs we get. The purpose of this course however is to give us a broader understanding of work and, at the most fundamental level, how it is shaped in *social* ways rather than being simply an aggregate of individual ordeals.

There are numerous ways to approach a sociology of work. One dimension of our approach will be *historical*; we will emphasize changes in the social organization of work in the U.S. from the mid-20th century to today, with the decade of the 1980s as the key dividing line. Three major transformations have emerged since then: (1) the polarization of the occupational structure and destabilization of employment relations; (2) the transformation from a manufacturing to a service economy; and (3) the decline of organized labor. The substantive material in this course will be organized around these three issues.

Another dimension of our approach will be *methodological*. There are two conceptual ways to understand changes in work: (1) focusing on changes in *workers*; and (2) focusing on changes in *work contexts*. The first emphasizes the demographics of labor force participants—age, gender, race, educational attainment, etc. The second treats jobs as “empty positions” that can be studied independently of the people that fill them. Both are important and we will accordingly spend time with them both, although somewhat more attention will be given to the latter.

Required readings

There is one required text plus a course reader. The required text is:

- Arne Kalleberg, *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s to 2000s*

This is available at the ASUC Bookstore.

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 it is, just type "2425 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA" into Google Maps.

Course format

This is a lecture format course and I will indeed do a lot of lecturing. However, there will be ample opportunity for discussion. There are no discussion sections associated with this course, so I will EXPECT you to use class time as an opportunity to initiate and participate in discussion.

Material during lecture will naturally touch upon the readings assigned for that date but will NOT simply be a recapitulation of those readings. I will also (a) bring in supplemental material pertaining to the current topic; and (b) connect material, especially if we are deep in the midst of a case study, back to the overall themes of the course. You will be responsible for both the readings AND additional material brought up in lecture. For this reason, REGULAR ATTENDANCE is instrumental for successful performance in the course.

Grading

Course grades will be determined by a take-home midterm exam, an in-class final exam, and a paper project.

- **One take-home midterm (30%).** The midterm will be a take-home exam and will be short essay in format. It will be distributed on **Friday, March 1st** and will be due by the beginning of class a week later, on **Friday, March 8th**.

Although you will have a week to do the midterm, it will not be designed to actually take all that time. The course will not stop while you work on the exam and you will be expected to continue keeping up with the readings and attending and participating in class discussion.

- **An in-class final exam (30%).** It will be administered during the university-designated final exam group period. Soc116 is in Exam Group 6, which goes on **Tuesday, May 14th**, from **11:30-2:30 P.M.** The exact format of the final exam is to be determined but it will be in-class.
- **A paper project (40%).** This will be broken up into a preliminary report (5%) and a final product (35%). You will identify a job/occupation to research via interview of someone in that line of work. This project will probably be most rewarding if you this occupation is the one you intend to pursue, but it does not have to be (of course, you may not be certain yet of what vocation you want to pursue!). The purpose of this project is to apply themes learned in the course toward a practical and intellectual understanding of the occupation.

A preliminary report (5%) on your project will be due in-class on **Friday, March 22nd**. This should include a brief overview of the job/occupation you intend to study, information about the interview subject, and ideally a sketch of the interview “schedule” you intend to follow. An interview schedule includes not only the calendar schedule of your interviews but also a design of the questions you intend to ask. This preliminary report will be graded more on thoroughness than anything else.

The final paper itself (35%) will be due on **Sunday, May 5th at 7 P.M.** The final paper will be graded on both substance (the extent to which course themes are productively applied to your findings) and “style” (organizational/analytical clarity, and quality of prose).

As stated above, the purpose of the paper project is to apply concepts encountered in the course toward a sociological understanding of an occupation of interest/concern to you. Broadly speaking, there are four main themes that should organize your treatment of the material.

- 1) How do people get into this occupation? What is the hiring process like? What human capital (skills, educational attainment, etc.) is typically necessary to land a job here?
- 2) What is the experience on the job? What is the organizational setting of the job? What is the division of labor? What skills are used and/or developed, and how do these relate to the skills that are necessary to *get* the job (see #1, above)? What authority relations prevail? How much autonomy do workers have? Is the job fulfilling? What is the “pace” of work? Who are the “customers” of the product or service rendered, and what is the relationship between worker and customer?
- 3) What is the nature of employment relationship? What job security, if any, does the worker have? How are wages determined? How is performance evaluated? What type of career, if any, is offered? What benefits, including health insurance and retirement, are offered? How easy is it to balance work with family and/or leisure?
- 4) Unpredictability. Very likely you will find that your interview subject is not aware of some of the circumstances of employment for his/her job—or that answering such questions is taboo. Are these issues specific to the psychology of your subject? Or, do they say something about the social conditions of your chosen occupation or of work in general? I encourage you to think about unexpected responses this latter way!

This, too, can be part of your paper. In fact, to the extent that you encounter, wrestle with, and write critically about such issues, it will make your final paper **EXTREMELY INTERESTING**. And rewarding for us to read.

The above outline is not intended as a hard template for how your paper must be organized. (Indeed, the fourth point speaks to the potential but probably inevitably unpredictable nature of your project.) It is only a guide.

Writing resources: Students, faculty, and staff in the sociology department here at Berkeley have collaborated to produce a wealth of writing resources that I encourage you to avail yourselves of! They are available for free online at the URL:

<http://sociology.berkeley.edu/undergraduate-writing-resources>

Grading scale. The grading scale is as follows. '[' means including, and ')' means excluding, so '[83-87)' for example means everything including 83 up to but **NOT** including 87.

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|----|---------|---|---------|----|---------|
| | | 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 final grade. As the course progresses, you can calculate your performance and what you need to do exactly on subsequent graded assignments to get X grade.

Students with Disabilities

If you need accommodations for any disability, I need verification from the DSP office by **Friday, February 15th**.

Incompletes

Stuff happens. In a large lecture course like this, it is guaranteed that a handful of students will encounter issues they could not have foreseen. This is why there are incompletes. If unexpected circumstances arise, let me know and we can arrange something.

Lecture, Reading, and Exam Schedule

You must complete the readings associated with a given date **PRIOR** to the class on that date. Some items we will spend multiple class meetings with. These are marked with a “cont’d”. There are no new readings for these days unless otherwise indicated.

All readings except Kalleberg’s *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs* are in the course reader.

Overview of Work

Jan 23 Wed Introduction: what is “work” and why should we study it?
Readings: none

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| Jan | 25 | Fri | Classical theoretical perspectives on work: Marx & Polanyi <i>Readings: none</i> |
| | 28 | Mon | Classical theoretical perspective on work: Weber & Durkheim <i>Readings: none</i> |
| | 30 | Wed | Changes in the labor force over the 20 th century <i>Reading: A.L. Kalleberg, Good Jobs, Bad Jobs ch 3</i> |
| Feb | 1 | Fri | (cont'd) |
| | 4 | Mon | Changes in the occupational structure over the 20 th century <i>Reading: A.L. Kalleberg, Good Jobs, Bad Jobs ch 4</i> |
| | 6 | Wed | (cont'd) |
| | 8 | Fri | How are job seekers connected to jobs? <i>Reading: A.L. Kalleberg, The Mismatched Worker ch 2 (Note that this is from a different Kalleberg piece than the rest! It's in the course reader.)</i> |
| | 11 | Mon | The hiring process <i>Reading: L. Rivera, "Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms"</i> |
| | 13 | Wed | The skills issue <i>Reading: D. Shipler, The Working Poor ch 5 "The Daunting Workplace"</i> |
| | 15 | Fri | (cont'd) |

Polarization and Destabilization of Work Since the 1980s

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| | 18 | Mon | ***** ACADEMIC/ADMINISTRATIVE HOLIDAY. NO CLASS ***** |
| | 20 | Wed | The destabilization of employment <i>Reading: A.L. Kalleberg, Good Jobs, Bad Jobs ch 2</i> |
| | 22 | Fri | (cont'd) |
| | 25 | Mon | Explanations for polarization: outsourcing <i>Video: PBS/Frontline, "Is Wal-Mart Good for America?"</i> |
| | 27 | Wed | (cont'd) |

Mar 1 Fri From welfare to workfare
Reading: D. Shipler, The Working Poor ch 2 “Work Doesn’t Work”

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED MARCH 1st, 2013

Where Does the Division of Labor Come From?

- 4 Mon Marxist perspectives
Reading: R. Edwards, Contested Terrain ch 1, 2
- 6 Wed The system of professions
Readings: none
- 8 Fri Institutional perspectives
Reading: H. Haveman, A. Swaminathan & E. Johnson, “Structure at Work: The Division of Labor in U.S. Wineries”

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM DUE IN CLASS MARCH 8th, 2013

Authority in the Workplace

- 11 Mon Control over work activities
Reading: A.L. Kalleberg, Good Jobs, Bad Jobs ch 7
- 13 Wed Authority in the workplace: examples
Reading: J. Bowe et al., Gig: Americans Talk About Their Jobs “Welcome” + “Workers and Managers”
- 15 Fri (cont’d)

Service Work and Emotional Labor

- 18 Mon Service work: emotional labor
Reading: R. Sherman, Class Acts intro + ch 1
- 20 Wed Service work: normalizing inequality
Reading: R. Sherman, Class Acts ch 3
- 22 Fri (cont’d)

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON PAPER PROJECT DUE MARCH 22nd, 2013

- 25 Mon ***** **SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS** *****
- 27 Wed ***** **SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS** *****
- 29 Fri ***** **SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS** *****

Apr 1 Mon Service work: aesthetic labor
Reading: C.L. Williams & C. Connell, “Looking Good and Sounding Right’: Aesthetic Labor and Social Inequality in the Retail Industry”

Work/Family Balance

3 Wed Time and autonomy in the workplace
Reading: Kalleberg, *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs* ch 8

5 Fri (cont’d)

8 Mon Work/family balance: the reversed worlds thesis
Reading: A.R. Hochschild, *The Time Bind* intro + ch 1-4

10 Wed Work/family balance: from the executive suite to the factory floor
Reading: A.R. Hochschild, *The Time Bind* ch 5-7, 10, 13

12 Fri (cont’d)

Obstacles to Equality

15 Mon Ineffective reform
Reading: F. Dobbin, S. Kim & A. Kalev, “You Can’t Always Get What You Need: Organizational Determinants of Diversity Programs”

17 Wed Why don’t the unemployed rise up and revolt?
Reading: O. Sharone, “Constructing Unemployed Job Seekers as Professional Workers: The Depoliticizing Work-Game of Job Searching”

19 Fri (cont’d)

Organized Labor

22 Mon The institutional context of organized labor
Reading: R. Fantasia & K. Voss, *Hard Work* ch 2

24 Wed The post-World War II context of “business unionism”
Reading: R. Fantasia & K. Voss, *Hard Work* ch 3

26 Fri (cont’d)

29 Mon Effective labor organization in a neo-liberal world
Reading: R. Fantasia & K. Voss, *Hard Work* ch 4

May 1 Wed (cont’d)

May 3 Fri Course wrap-up and evaluations

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| 5 | Sun | FINAL PAPER DUE SUNDAY, MAY 5th, 2013, 7:00 P.M. |
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6 Mon **READING/**
8 Wed **RECITATION/**
10 Fri **REVIEW**

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| May 14 | Tue | FINAL EXAM Group 6 11:30-2:30 P.M. |
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