Soc 110 Organizations & Institutions   Fall 2020 | UC Berkeley

Schedule: MWF 1:00-2:00 PM, **online**, on Zoom
Instructor: Dr. Linus Huang, Continuing Lecturer
Office hours: Tuesdays on Zoom, 1:00-3:00 PM; sign up on bCal
E-mail: lbhuang@berkeley.edu
Final exam: online during University's officially scheduled timeslot, Wednesday, December 16th, 7-10 PM Pacific Standard Time

What will this course be about?

Organizations are an inescapable part of our everyday lives. We're employees, students, or customers of them; we buy their goods and services; we drive or ride on roads built and maintained by them; we're bound by their rules, but also, as in the case of governments, receive rights and protections from them. And yet, in practical terms, what organizations do and don't do, and why, are undertheorized. Our "cultural repertoire" for thinking about organizations, to adopt a concept offered by Berkeley Sociology's Ann Swidler, is limited. We tend to think of organizations either in terms of "red tape", or as simple instruments of their leaders—so that if we need an organization to change, all we need to do is replace the leader.

Both of these ways of thinking about organizations have more than an element of truth to them, but they represent only a limited way for understanding problems in organizations today. The object of this course is to add new tools to our "conceptual toolkit" for thinking about organizational behavior. To do so we will look at three major perspectives in contemporary organizational theory—population ecology, the relational perspective (aka resource dependence theory), and the institutionalist perspective—that will offer a deeper, more sociologically-informed, understanding of organizations.

Organizations & Institutions, and the Coronavirus

This course will be entirely online this Fall 2020 semester. Despite this, I intend the course to be given synchronously, as if we were meeting in-person. I will lecture live, over Zoom, on the regular MWF 1:00-2:00 PM schedule. Since the course material has been fashioned over the years according to the "Berkeley time" schedule that starts 10 minutes after the hour, I will continue observing the Berkeley time convention even though we are online. So we will begin at 1:10 PM on MWF.

Although I don't recommend it, it will be technically possible to take the course **asynchronously**. All lectures will be recorded and posted to bCourses shortly after class ends, where they will remain until the end of the semester. Attendance/participation will not be part of the grade. Of the graded assignments, only the final exam will require online attendance at a specific time, but even there, accommodations can be made for those in different time zones, etc.

But, while asynchronous participation will technically be possible, I recommend synchronous participation in the course. This course will indeed follow a lecture format, as it would have if we had been holding the course in-person, but the Zoom sessions will not be me just playing a pre-recorded lecture. I intend to take full advantage of Zoom's interactive features, including both normal audio/visual interaction, as well as chat.

I will hold weekly office hours during the Fall 2020 term, on Tuesdays from 1:00-3:00 PM. These will be held over Zoom, at the same URL as for the lecture sessions. Students can sign up for 20-minute appointments over bCal.

Readings

All course readings are available in PDF format on the bCourses site. There are no books or paper readers to purchase.

All readings should be completed *prior* to the first class we begin discussing them.

Grading

Your course grade will be determined by the following components:

- **2 take-home midterm examinations**, each worth 20% (40% of your course grade total). These will be "short-essay" style (more details later). Consult the schedule below for the dates the midterms will be released, and when they are due.

- **an online final exam**, worth 15%. This will be administered as a multiple-choice quiz on bCourses during the University's official timeslot on Wednesday, December 16th, 7-10 PM Pacific. Accommodations can be arranged for those outside Pacific Standard Time, for whom this 7-10 PM timeslot doesn't work.

- **a campus map assignment**, worth 25%. More on this assignment below.

- **4 case study mini-papers**, each worth 5% (20% of your course grade total). For four of our case studies this semester, you will write a short (2 single-space pages <u>maximum</u>) paper designed to 1) give you an incentive to do the readings; and 2) think about the implications of the argument for how we understand organizational behavior. These papers lie somewhere between being open-ended response papers and being quizzes. I will provide you specific questions which should occupy your attention in the papers, so they are not the former. However, we will be looking for evidence of substantive engagement with the readings rather than having a precise, specific response, so they are not exactly the latter, either.

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.

Campus Map Assignment

UC Berkeley itself will be a recurring case study in this course. What makes UC Berkeley distinctive as an organization is that it does a variety of things—instruction, but also research, athletics, arts, and a multitude of functions associated with student affairs (including housing & dining, recreation, student organizations, and student government).

One question organizational sociology asks is: which among a variety of objectives does an organization place the highest priority on? There are a number of ways of going about answering this question. We can look at differences in expenditures, or we can simply count the number of employees in each part of the university. We will do both of these in the context of lecture. The purpose of this assignment is to extend our in-lecture consideration to the dimension of physical space. How are the physical buildings on campus allocated to different functions, and what does this say about where the priorities are at UC Berkeley?

For this assignment you will use information from the campus website to construct a map that describes visually how space is allocated to different functions at UC Berkeley. Although I will provide some guidelines about how this map should be constructed, there will be considerable room for discretion—both substantive and aesthetic—on what your final product looks like. You will also supplement this map with a brief report highlighting what your findings imply.

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.

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.

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 <u>prior</u> to the class meeting on that day.

Aug 26-31	Introduction	*No readings.*
Sep 2-9 Sep 7: Labor Day. No class.	Population ecology	Read: • M.T. Hannan & J. Freeman, "The Population Ecology of Organizations" • G. Carroll & A. Swaminathan, "Why the Microbrewery Movement?"
Sep 11-18	Relational perspective	*Read:* J. Pfeffer & G. Salancik, "The Social Control of Organizations"
Sep 21-28	Institutionalist Perspective	*Read:* P. DiMaggio & W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited"
Sep 28	**Take-Home Midterm #1 released on bCourses**	
Sep 30	Emergence of the fast food industry	*Read:* E. Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* ch 1, 2
Oct 2	Expansion of the fast food industry	*Read:* E. Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* ch 4
Oct 4 This is a Sunday.	**Take-Home Midterm #1 due on bCourses**	
Oct 5	Expansion of the fast food industry (cont'd)	*No new readings.*
Oct 7-9	The re-organization of American agriculture	*Read:* E. Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* ch 5, 6
Oct 12-14	How do organizations understand their biggest problems?	*Read:* N. Fligstein, "The Intraorganizational Power Struggle"
Oct 16	The rise of the shareholder value corporation	*Read:* K. Ho, *Liquidated* ch 3
	Case study mini-paper #1 due on bCourses	
Oct 19-23	The rise of the shareholder value corporation (cont'd)	*No new readings.*

Oct 26	Financialization & income inequality in the U.S.	*Read:* K. Lin & D. Tomaskovic-Devey, "Financialization and U.S. Income Inequality, 1970-2008"
Oct 28	Financialization @ UC	*No readings.*
Oct 30	College's highest priority: academic development, or facilitating personal growth and well-being?	*Read:* R. Arum & J. Roksa, "College and Emerging Adults" (ch 1 from *Aspiring Adults Adrift*)
	Case study mini-paper #2 due on bCourses **Take-Home Midterm #2 released on bCourses**	
Nov 2-6	Does college re-produce inequality?	*Read:* E. Armstrong & L. Hamilton, *Paying for the Party* intro + ch 2, 5, 6
Nov 8 This is a Sunday.	**Take-Home Midterm #2 due on bCourses**	
Nov 9-13 Nov 11: Veterans Day. No class.	Social movements	*Read:* K. Voss & R. Sherman, "Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy"
Nov 16	What social movement tactics are effective?	*Read:* F. Rojas, "Social Movement Tactics, Organizational Change, and the Spread of African American Studies"
	Case study mini-paper #3 due on bCourses	
Nov 18-20	Why did FEMA perform so poorly during Hurricane Katrina in 2005?	*Read:* C. Cooper & R. Block, "Homeland Insecurity"
Nov 23 Nov 25-27: Thanksgiving. No class.	What is the DHS's mission and what is it *not?*	*Read:* C. Cooper & R. Block, "The Undodged Bullet"
Nov 30-Dec 2	Social networks: organizations are embedded within networks …	*Read:* R. Burt, "Structural holes and good ideas"
Dec 2	Social networks: … but networks are embedded within organizations	*Read:* M. Small, *Unanticipated Gains*
	Case study mini-paper #4 due on bCourses	
Dec 4	Social networks (cont'd)	*No new readings.*
Dec 7-11	**Reading, Recitation and Review (RRR) week**	
Dec 11	**Map assignment due on bCourses**	
Dec 16	**Final Exam as bCourses multiple choice quiz, online, Wednesday, December 16th, 7-10 PM Pacific Time**	

There are 8 total graded items due this semester. They are included in the schedule grid above, but for convenience, they are re-listed here with their due dates. All assignments are to be submitted on bCourses unless otherwise directed.

All times are Pacific Standard Time (Universal Coordinated Time -8 hours).

Take-home Midterm #1	Sunday, October 4 11:59 PM
Case study mini-paper #1	Friday, October 16 11:59 PM
Case study mini-paper #2	Friday, October 30 11:59 PM
Take-home Midterm #2	Sunday, November 8 11:59 PM
Case study mini-paper #3	Monday, November 16 11:59 PM
Case study mini-paper #4	Wednesday, December 2 11:59 PM
Map assignment	Friday, December 11 11:59 PM (end of RRR week)
Final exam	This will be administered as a bCourses quiz during the University's official final exam timeslot for this course, Wednesday December 16, 7:00 PM.