

## Sociology 110 Organizations & Institutions

Fall 2022 | UC Berkeley

**Instructor:** Dr. Linus Huang, Continuing Lecturer

**Office hours:**

- in-person: Mondays, 2:15-4PM, 487 Social Sciences Building
- Zoom: Tuesdays, 1-3PM, sign-up on Google Calendar (see front page of course website)

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**Final exam:** online, Wednesday, Dec 14, 2022 7-10 PM

**Graduate student readers:** *To Be Determined*

### 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.

This course has two main objectives. The first is to add new tools to our "conceptual toolkit" for thinking about the how and why of organizational behavior. To do so we will look at three major perspectives in contemporary organizational theory—the demographic perspective, the relational perspective, and the cultural perspective—that will offer a more sociologically-informed understanding of organizations.

The second is to understand more fully the role that organizations play in our lives. Especially in an individualist culture like the United States', we tend to understand the social order as an outcome of individual actions—some which we support, many of which we oppose. But we often don't appreciate how organizations are the fundamental "building blocks", to use Berkeley Sociology Heather Haveman's term, of society. They are not simply sidelights or obstacles to our individual freedoms, but profoundly shape the context within which individuals act. I will make the case in this course that organizations are the most effective means of achieving an objective, whether that objective be regressive or progressive or other. The case studies that comprise the bulk of the course content will illustrate how certain organizations lie behind some of society's most pressing problems—but also how other organizations effectively intervene to address those problems.

### Readings

All readings for this course will be made available in PDF format on the bCourses site. There are no textbooks or course readers to purchase.

Most, but not all, of the readings in this course will be academic research articles. These can be difficult to read—though perhaps not for the reasons one might expect. Although we will not *entirely* skip the methods and data sections of these articles, you should focus more on understanding the theoretical parts of the article that state the problem and situate the investigation in the context of a debate. I will give other tips about the readings in general as well as tips on specific readings throughout the semester.

## Grading

Your grade will be determined by three different components:

- **Three reading response papers** (10% each, 30% total). The bulk of the course is organized into case study readings. For three of them, you will write a brief (2 pages) reading response paper in advance of the first lecture we spend discussing the reading. Each of the papers should be directed at a specific question that I will articulate (I haven't yet, but I will).

There is no term paper for this course. For the writing assignments for this course—both these papers, and the exams (see next bullet point)—you will need to respond to a given question in about 2 double-spaced pages. There is a tendency in higher education writing to “perform academic writing”, if you will, rather than genuinely seek to clearly explain. For this course, you should focus on writing clearly, concisely, and directly. I will discuss the expectations about writing for 110 further during the semester.

- **Two midterm exams** (25% each, 50% total). Both will be take-home exams in a format not too different from the reading response papers (see above). The logistics of the exams will be discussed in further depth when the time arrives.
- **A final exam** (20%), which will be administered as a bCourses quiz during the University's official exam timeslot for this course: Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 7-10 PM. The exam will be 100% multiple choice. It will cover material from the entire course (i.e., it will be cumulative), but it will disproportionately emphasize material from the later parts of the course.

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—89.49 rounds down to 89, 89.50 rounds up to 90, etc. It doesn't really matter what the letter grade on the individual assignments are.

There are no other discretionary considerations, nor opportunities to earn extra credit on an individual basis, that will factor into your grade.

There are no surprises in how I calculate course grades. The GRADES section on bCourses will incorporate 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 assignments in order to earn a particular grade.

*Late grade policy:* Work submitted late will be marked down 20% for each 24-hour period the assignment is overdue.

### Disabled Students Program (DSP)

DSP students should have their arrangements made by the third week of instruction. The DSP office will automatically send me a digital copy of your letter, with explanation of your accommodations. It will not be necessary to also provide me with a physical copy of the letter.

### Recommendation Letters

Writing recommendation letters is part of an instructor's job and one 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 can 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 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 as 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.

## Mental Health and Wellness

A message from the university:

All students — regardless of background or identity — may experience a range of issues that can become barriers to learning. These issues include, but are not limited to, strained relationships, anxiety, depression, alcohol and other drug problems, difficulties with concentration, sleep, and eating, and/or lack of motivation. Such mental health concerns can diminish both academic performance and the capacity to participate in daily activities. In the event that you need mental health support, or are concerned about a friend, UC Berkeley offers many services, such as free short-term counseling at University Health Services.

An excellent campus website having links to many resources is: <http://recalibrate.berkeley.edu/>.

Another campus website addressing mental health services in specific reference to this time of the coronavirus pandemic is: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/coronavirus/student-mental-health>.

Remember that seeking help is a good and courageous thing to do—both for yourself and for those who care about you.

## Reading, Assignment, and Exam Schedule

All readings listed below are required and must be completed prior to the first meeting of the indicated topic.

### Introduction

August 24, 26, 29, 31

*No readings.*

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### Topic: The Demographic Perspective: Overview

September 2, 7

No class on Monday, September 5, Labor Day.

*Read:* Glenn Carroll & Michael T. Hannan, “The Demographic Perspective” (chapter 2 from Carroll & Hannan, *The Demography of Corporations and Industries*, 2000)

### Topic: The Demographic Perspective: the Resource Partitioning Hypothesis

September 8, 10

*Read:* Glenn Carroll & Anand Swaminathan, “Why the Microbrewery Movement?”

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**Topic: The Relational Perspective**

September 14, 16, 19, 21

*Read:* Victoria Alexander, “Pictures at an Exhibition: Conflicting Pressures in Museums and the Display of Art”

**Response Paper #1 due on bCourses, Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 11:59 PM**

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**Midterm Exam #1 distributed on bCourses Wednesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>**

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**Topic: The Cultural Perspective**

September 23, 26, 28, 30

*Read:* Paul DiMaggio & Walter Powell, “The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields”

**Midterm Exam #1 due on bCourses, Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 11:59 PM**

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**Topic: Why making connections with people is more than just about being out-going**

October 3, 5

*Read:* Mario Small, *Unanticipated Gains* excerpts

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**Topic: College and Inequality: A micro approach**

October 7, 10, 12

*Read:* Elizabeth Armstrong & Laura Hamilton, *Paying for the Party* introduction + chapters 2, 5, 6

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**Topic: College and Inequality: A macro approach**

October 12, 14, 17

*Read:* Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, Emmanuel Saez, Nicholas Turner & Danny Yagan, “Income Segregation and Intergenerational Mobility Across Colleges in the United States”

**Response Paper #2 due on bCourses, Wednesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 11:59 PM**

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**Topic: How do we get change in higher education?**

October 19

*Read:* Fabio Rojas, “Social Movement Tactics, Organizational Change and the Spread of African-American Studies”

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**Topic: Why do small businesses struggle on Amazon Marketplace?**

October 21, 24

*Read:* Stacy Mitchell, Institute for Local-Self Reliance, “Amazon’s Toll Road: How the Tech Giant Funds Its Monopoly Empire by Exploiting Small Businesses”

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**Problems in society: Inequality**

**Topic | Income inequality and organizations**

October 26, 28

*Read:* Donald Tomaskovic-Devey et al., “Rising between-workplace inequalities in high-income countries”

**Midterm Exam #2 distributed on bCourses Wednesday, October 26<sup>th</sup>**

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**Midterm Exam #2 due on bCourses, Sunday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 11:59 PM**

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**Problems in society: Environment**

**Topic: Organizations & Pollution**

October 31, November 2

*Read:* Harland Prechel & Lu Zheng, “Corporate Characteristics, Political Embeddedness and Environmental Pollution by Large U.S. Corporations”

**Topic: Organizations & Climate Change**

November 2, 4

*Read:* Don Grant & Ion Bogdan Vasi, “Civil Society in an Age of Environmental Accountability: How Local Environmental Nongovernmental Organizations Reduce U.S. Power Plants’ Carbon Dioxide Emissions”

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## Problems in Society: Politics

### **Topic: Organizations & anti-Islamic sentiment after 9/11**

November 7, 9

No class on Friday, November 11, Veterans Day.

*Read:* Christopher A. Bail, “The Fringe Effect: Civil Society Organizations and the Evolution of Media Discourse about Islam since the September 11th Attacks”

### **Topic: Why did Homeland Security fails Americans so badly during Hurricane Katrina?**

November 14, 16, 18

*Read:* Christopher Cooper & Robert Block, *Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security* chapters 4 “Homeland Insecurity” and 6 “The Undodged Bullet”

### **Topic: Organizations and the dominance of conservative politics at the state level**

November 21, 28

No class on Wednesday, November 23 or Friday, November 25.

*Read:* Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Theda Skocpol & Jason Sclar, “When Political Mega-Donors Join Forces: How the Koch Network and the Democracy Alliance Influence Organized U.S. Politics on the Right and Left”

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### **Topic: Organizations and ethnic identity**

November 30, December 2

*Read:* Cristina Mora, “Cross-Field Effects and Ethnic Classification: The Institutionalization of Hispanic Panethnicity, 1965 to 1990”

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## December 5, 7, 9 Reading, Recitation and Review

No class during RRR week. But I will hold extended office-hours (times to be announced), and there will an optional review session on Wednesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at our normal time and location.

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**Final Exam online Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022 7-10 PM**