

Sociology 116, The Sociology of Work

UC Berkeley, Spring 2021

Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30-5:00pm on Zoom

Instructor: Joanna Reed, Ph.D.

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Spring semester office hours: Tuesday 10-11am (drop-in) and Wed. 9:30-11:30am (appointments).

Sign up for appointments here: <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/pexxi>

Course Description:

Why study work? You are likely to spend a large portion of your waking hours “at work” with your activities and even thoughts and emotions under the control of another person or organization in exchange for a wage. The social organization of work and employment relationships underpin patterns of social inequality and the organization and conditions of our daily lives. These are just a few of the reasons why the study of work is central to gaining a better understanding of the social world. This course will explore the social organization of work and employment in the U.S. today. We will consider what is considered “work”, the composition of the workforce, the types of jobs available and working conditions and how these have changed over time, along with how different types of work and workers are interconnected worldwide. We will explore classic and contemporary theories of work and employment, labor market processes and segmentation, workers’ experiences, and the impact of labor market policy and institutions and market work on social organization and change. We will take an intersectional approach to considering how paid work experiences structure and interact with other aspects of our lives.

Course Goals:

- Introduce you to fundamental concepts and theories in the study of work.
- Illuminate connections between work and other areas of social life, past and present.
- Explore paid work from an intersectional perspective.
- Provide tools for understanding the role work plays in structuring social inequalities.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand and explain the landscape of the contemporary U.S. labor market.
- Understand and explain how factors like race, class and gender influence labor market experiences and outcomes.

- Understand and explain how labor market institutions and policies shape working conditions and the types of jobs that are available.
- Connect class material to current events and policy debates.
- Synthesize course materials and apply theories and concepts in written assignments.

Assignments:

Take-Home Midterm and Final Exam: (20% each of total grade) These are essay exams that will test your comprehension of course material and ability to apply theories and concepts as well as synthesize and make connections between readings. Questions and instructions will be posted one week before each exam is due.

Good/Bad Jobs Interview and Reflection paper: (20% of total grade) Students will interview a person of their choice who is currently working for pay, write up the interview and answer some questions based on the responses and an analysis of course readings. An interview guide will be provided.

Labor Market Institutions Case Study Paper or Creative Project: (20% of total grade) Students will choose a labor market institution for a case study. Examples of appropriate subjects are a regulatory agency such as OSHA or the EEOC, a current labor struggle or campaign, a worker center or organization, aspect of labor law or policy, or a comparative (i.e. considering more than one country) look at a particular area of law or policy. This paper will require students to engage in independent research about their topic as well as engage with class materials.

Instead of the paper, students may choose to do a creative project that engages with and relates to the course material. Creative projects should require a similar level of effort and time as the paper assignment and must be approved by me in advance. In addition to whatever is produced for the project, students should submit a written explanation of how their project engages with specific course themes and material. If you would like to do this, please plan to submit a proposal for your project to me (by email) by week 6 of the semester.

Participation Assignments: (20% of total grade) This portion of your grade will be assessed based on (more or less) bi-weekly short assignments that will take the form of reading memos, quizzes, personal reflections, preparing for larger assignments and posting and responding to discussion posts. Students are required to turn in 6 of the 7 participation assignments. In addition, everyone will have a chance to resubmit or make-up an additional missed assignment during RRR week. These assignments will not be graded on a regular scale, and some will be credit/no credit. Late participation assignments are not accepted. Participation assignments

will be posted during odd numbered weeks and due during even numbered weeks (i.e. posted and available during week 1, due during week 2).

Due Dates:

Take-home midterm: Feb. 16, 10:00pm

Good/Bad Jobs Paper: Mar. 16, 10:00 pm

Case Study Paper or Creative Project: Apr. 22, 10:00pm

Take-home final: May 14, 10:00pm

Participation assignments: Jan. 28, Feb. 11, Feb. 25, Mar. 11, Apr. 1., Apr. 15, Apr. 29, all due at 10:00pm

Required Readings and Materials

Some, but not all of the required readings will be available as PDFs on bCourses. **To make sure you have access to all of the readings, please purchase or rent the collection of course readings (called a “Reader”) prepared for Soc. 116 from the Copy Central store on Telegraph Ave.** You can purchase a bound paper copy of all the readings (like a class textbook) or rent an electronic copy. I strongly encourage purchasing the hard copy—Copy Central will ship it to you, you will have all the readings in one place, and you won’t need to look at a screen or have internet access to keep up. The course page for each week will specify where you can find each of the readings, and will link to the PDF, if it is on the course site.

Ordering information for the Reader:

<https://copycentral.redshelf.com/book/1709939/soc-116-sociology-of-work-1709939-none-joanna-reed>

Course Format and Policies:

Format: This semester will be fully remote. We will have “live” synchronous classes during our assigned class time, Tu./Th. From 3:30-5:00. There may be a few times over the semester when we will not have synchronous class. There will be a page on bCourses for each week of the semester, which will detail everything you need to know for class for that week, so make sure you check these pages regularly. I will record and post our class sessions, but you should not plan on taking this class if you are unable to regularly attend synchronously. Our class is unusually small this semester, which means that our class sessions will be more discussion based than usual. Plan on regular participation during class. I will post PDFs of the lecture slides after class.

Grading: A reader and I will do the grading for this course. If you would like more information about how an assignment was graded, you can see me in office hours. Our reader, Claudia Trost, will also be available to speak with you about your work after an assignment is returned. Otherwise, your questions about assignments and

the course should be directed to me. If you feel a mistake was made in assessing your work, please follow this procedure. First, wait 24 hours after receiving a grade before contacting us about potential problems. You may see things differently after reviewing your work and the comments. If you believe either of us made an error, please provide a written explanation of why your work deserves a higher grade, referencing both the assignment or exam prompt and rubric. Your argument needs to be based on the content of your work, rather than effort, and should include specific references to your submitted work. The re-grade will be the final assessment of your work, even if it results in a lower score than the original one. Re-grade requests need to be submitted to me within one week of when grades are released for a specific assignment or exam.

Academic or other accommodations: If you have accommodations for a disability or have a conflict due to the observance of religious holidays or athletics, please speak with me early in the semester to discuss appropriate arrangements. Please also reach out if you have a life circumstance (such as being a parent, or caring for a family member, working full-time in addition to school) that may affect your academics. More information on UCB's Disabled Students Programs can be found here: <https://dsp.berkeley.edu>

Grace Period on Assignments and Late Policy. During this (hopefully final!) semester of remote learning, there will be a grace period of 24 hours on the midterm, final and two paper assignments. In other words, the grace period covers all assignments except the participation assignments. After the grace period ends, a late penalty of one third of a letter grade deduction per day will be assessed.

Email: Email is generally a good way to get in touch with me, but I cannot always respond right away. Do not expect a response after hours or on weekends. Please email me directly, rather than through bCourses at joannareed@berkeley.edu.

Office Hours: This semester, all office hours will be held on zoom. I urge students to talk with me sometime during the semester, just to say "hi" and especially if you are having trouble with the course. I can't help you if you don't communicate with me! I have both appointment and drop-in times. Keep in mind for the drop-in office hours that I am teaching three classes this semester. You are welcome to drop-in anytime, but I encourage Soc. 116 students to come during the second half of the hour. If you cannot make the scheduled office hour times, you can email me and we can try to make an appointment at a mutually convenient time. I will hold extra drop-in office hours ahead of assignment due dates. Sign up for office hour appointments here: <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/pexxj>

Academic honesty is expected of all students. While I encourage students to discuss the readings and study together, everyone must do their own work. Suspected violations relating to this course will be reported to the appropriate administrative department and dealt with according to university policies. Be

aware of plagiarism. Word for word use of even a single sentence from another author, publication or website without citation is plagiarism and is considered unethical. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade on the paper or exam with no opportunity to rewrite. If you have questions about how to properly cite materials, or how to paraphrase appropriately, ask during office hours, and consult the writing guide “Writing for Sociology”, available on the Soc. department website. The work you produce for this course must be original—you may not “recycle” material produced for another class.

Turnitin: All of your assignments will be checked for plagiarism by Turnitin. Please be aware that this program keeps a database of work previously turned in for this class by other students, as well as any of your own work that you turned in for credit in a previous class.

Incomplete Grades: Incompletes are an option of last resort for students experiencing true medical or other emergencies that make it impossible for them to complete their coursework on time. To be considered for an incomplete grade, students need to speak with me about it during the semester, have completed at least half of the coursework, and provide documentation of the reason for the request.

Your Health and Well-Being: Being a college student can be full of excitement and possibilities, but at times may feel overwhelming or be difficult in other ways. Some degree of this is to be expected, but if you are experiencing a lot of distress, anxiety or have a pre-existing mental health issue, there are resources on campus to help. You are not alone; many others share your difficulties. Even if you don't think you need them, I encourage you to look at these websites now, so you know what is available. There is much more than counseling appointments: there are web tutorials and videos, support groups and mindfulness classes, for example. Counseling center staff have told me these groups and classes can be a great preventative resource and are a great way to get the semester off to a good start. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): (510) 642-9494, <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling>. More general resources on mental health, services are at <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/health-topics/mental-health>.

Circulation of Course Materials: All materials produced for this course are protected and may not be shared, uploaded or distributed. This includes the syllabus, lecture slides, handouts, rubrics, exams, papers, recorded lectures, etc. While you may share your notes with other students, it is against university policy to share your notes broadly, or attempt to use them for commercial purposes. Please see <http://campuspol.chance.berkeley.edu/policies/coursenotes.pdf> for a detailed version of the policy.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Jan. 19 & 21

Introduction

Readings: Rho, H., Brown, H. & Fremstad, S. (2020) “A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries”. Center for Economic & Policy Research, April 7, 2020. <https://cepr.net/a-basic-demographic-profile-of-workers-in-frontline-industries/>

O’Donnell, J. (2020) “Essential Workers During COVID-19: At Risk and Lacking Union Representation”, *Up Front* (blog), The Brookings Institution, Sept. 3, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/09/03/essential-workers-during-covid-19-at-risk-and-lacking-union-representation/>

Cohen, P. (2020) “Recession with a Difference: Women Face Special Burden”. *The New York Times*, Nov. 19, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/17/business/economy/women-jobs-economy-recession.html>

Week 2: Jan. 26 & 28

Classic theoretical perspectives on work

Readings: Marx, K. “Alienated Labor”, Weber, M. “Bureaucracy”, Taylor, F. “Fundamentals of Scientific Management”, in Wharton, A. (2006) *Working in America, Continuity, Conflict and Change, 3rd edition*

Participation #1 due Jan. 28

Week 3: Feb. 2 & 4

Historical perspectives: defining “work” and “workers”

Reading: Cherlin, A. (2014) *Labor’s Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class Family in America*. Ch. 2 “The Emergence of the Working Class Family” and Ch. 3 “Good Times and Hard Times”. New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Week 4: Feb. 9 & 11

Contemporary theoretical perspectives on work

Readings: Braverman, H. “The Division of Labor”, Hochschild, A. “The Managed Heart”. Pp. 44-78 in Wharton, A. (2006) *Working in America, Continuity, Conflict and Change, 3rd edition*.

Participation #2 due Feb. 11

Week 5: Feb. 16 & 18

Current Conditions in the Labor Market

Reading: Kalleberg, A. (2011). *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs*. Ch. 1 “Job Quality in the United States”, Ch. 2 “Economic Transformation and the Decline of Institutional Protection”, Ch. 3 “New Workers, New Differences”. New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Take-home exam due Feb. 16 (no “live” class)

Week 6: Feb. 23 & 25

Examples of contemporary work transformations

Readings: Ribas, V. (2016) *On The Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 2 (Reader)

Schor, J. et al. (2020) “Dependence and Precarity in the Platform Economy”. *Theory and Society*, Aug. 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-020-09408-y>

Participation #3 due Feb. 25

Feb. 26 is the last day to submit a proposal for a creative project.

Week 7: Mar. 2 & 4

Beyond skills, experience and education: how are people sorted into jobs?

Readings: DiTomaso, N. (2013) *The American Non-Dilemma: Racial Inequality Without Racism*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 2, 3

Waldinger, R. & Lichter, M. Waldinger, R. & Lichter, M. (2003) *How The Other Half Works: Immigration and the Social Organization of Labor*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Introduction and Ch. 9

Week 8: Mar. 9 & 11

More on the social processes that sort workers into jobs

Readings: Williams, C. & Connell, C. (2016) “The Invisible Consequences of Aesthetic Labor in Upscale Retail Stores”. Ch. 10 in *Invisible Labor: Hidden Work in the Contemporary World*, eds. Crain, M., Poster, W. & Cherry, M. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

Rivera, L. (2012) “Hiring As Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms”. *American Sociological Review*, 77(6) 999-102

Participation # 4 due Mar. 11

Week 9: Mar. 16 & 18

Unions and Labor Market Regulation in the U.S.

Reading: McAlevey, J. (2020) *A Collective Bargain: Unions, Organizing and the Fight for Democracy*. Ch. 1 “Workers Can Still Win Big”, Ch. 2 “Who Killed the Unions?” and Ch. 3 “Everything You Thought You Knew About Unions is (Mostly) Wrong”. New York: Harper Collins

[Good/Bad Jobs Interview Paper due Mar. 18](#)

SPRING BREAK: Mar. 22-26

Week 10: Mar. 30 & Apr. 1

Current worker/employer struggles

Reading: TBA

[Participation # 5 due Apr. 1](#)

Week 11: Apr. 6 & 8

The U.S. Labor Market in Cross-National Perspective

Reading: Kalleberg, A. (2018) “Job Insecurity and Well-Being in Rich Democracies”. *Socio-Economic Review*, 49(3):241-258

Week 12: Apr. 13 & 15

Workload, schedules and well-being

Readings: Kelly, E. & Moen, P. (2020) *Overload: How Good Jobs Went Bad and What We Can Do About it*. Ch. 2 “Overload” and Ch. 3 “How We Got Here and Why It Matters”. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Ch. 2 & 3

Schneider, D. & Harknett, K. (2019) “Consequences of Routine Work Schedule Instability for Worker Health and Well-being”. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 84, no. 1

[Participation # 6 due Apr. 15](#)

Week 13: Apr. 20 & 22

Care work and childcare

Readings: Macdonald, C. (2011) *Shadow Mothers*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 3, 5, and 6

Hochschild, A. (2003) “Love and Gold” pp. 185-197 in *The Commercialization of Intimate Life*. Berkeley, CA: UC Press

[Case Study Paper or Creative Project due Apr. 22](#)

Week 14: Apr. 27 & 29

Is this work/work of the future?

Readings: Monroe, R. (2020) "98 Million TikTok Followers Can't Be Wrong". *The Atlantic*, Dec. 2020,
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/12/charli-damelio-tiktok-teens/616929/>

Rudrappa, S. (2015) *Discounted Life: The Price of Global Surrogacy in India*. Ch. 5, "Babies as Commodities" and Ch. 6, "Fetuses as Persons, Surrogate Mothers as Nonpersons". New York: NYU Press

Participation #7 due Apr. 15

Week 15: May 3-7, RRR week.

Take-Home Final Exam due May 14, 10:00pm