

SOCIOL 110 Organizations & Institutions

Spring 2023 | UC Berkeley

Instructor: Professor Linus Huang, Lecturer

Office hours:

- *in-person (drop-in)*: Mondays, 10:00 AM-11:45 AM, 487 Social Sciences Building
- *Zoom*: Tuesdays, 1-3 PM, sign up on Google Calendar

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Final exam: online, Wednesday, May 10, 3-6 PM

Graduate Student Readers: Geronimo Walker, Helen Zhu

What is this course 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's 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 are in PDF format on the bCourses site, in the "Readings" folder under the Files section of the 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

Course content is organized into case studies, each of which (except for the Introduction) has associated readings. The reading are required, and you will be tested on your understanding of them in the midterm and final “emails”/exams. However, there is nothing specific to submit for them.

Graded work comes from four components:

- **An orientational survey** (5%). A quick survey about the organizations, including UC Berkeley, that are part of your everyday life.
- **Two analysis “emails”** (15% each, 30% total). Topics and format to be announced!

These “emails” won’t actually be emails. They’ll be files you upload through bCourses. Why do I call them “emails”? I’ll explain in lecture.

- **Two midterm “emails”** (25% each, 50% total). Both will be take-home affairs in short-answer (think: three questions, 1 or perhaps 2 pages per email) format. The logistics of the emails will be discussed in more detail when the time arrives.

These also won’t actually be emails (see above), but I’m again calling them emails anyway.

- **A final exam** (15%), which will be administered **online** as a bCourses quiz during the University’s official exam timeslot for this course: Wednesday, May 10th, 2023, 3-6 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.

Note: For the two midterm emails and the final exam, you will be responsible for material from the readings but also additional material *not* in the readings but which is presented in lecture. This is not simply to give you an incentive to attend lecture, but to focus reading assignments on conveying conceptual understanding while using lecture to flesh out this understanding with data and other empirical detail.

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 as soon as possible. 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 unless otherwise noted, and must be completed prior to the first meeting of the associated topic.

Introduction

Jan 18, 20, 23, 25

No readings.

Demographic Perspective: Overview

Jan 27, 30

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

Orientation Survey due on bCourses, Friday, January 27th, 11:59 PM

Demographic Perspective: the Resource Partitioning Hypothesis

Feb 1, 3

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

Relational Perspective

Feb 6, 8, 10, 13

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

Cultural Perspective

Feb 15, 17, 22, 24

No class on Monday Feb 20, 2022 (Washington's Birthday).

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

Analysis Email #1 due on bCourses, Wednesday, February 15th, 11:59 PM

Social Networks, Part I

Feb 27, Mar 1

Read: Ronald Burt, “Structural Holes and Good Ideas”

Midterm Email #1 distributed on bCourses Monday, February 27th

Midterm Email #1 due on bCourses, Thursday, March 2nd, 11:59 PM

Social Networks, Part II

Mar 3, 6

Read: Mario Small, *Unanticipated Gains* excerpts

College and Inequality: Class Inequality within Schools

Mar 8, 10, 13

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

College and Inequality: Class Inequality between Schools

Mar 15, 17, 20

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

Analysis Email #2 due on bCourses, Friday, March 17th, 11:59 PM

The Rise of Shareholder Value Culture in Corporate America

Mar 22, 24

Read: Karen Ho, *Liquidated* chapter 3 “Wall Street Historiographies and the Shareholder Value Revolution”

March 27-31 Spring Break**The Rise of Shareholder Value Culture in Corporate America (finish up)**

Apr 3

No additional new readings.

Financialization and Income Inequality in the U.S.

Apr 5, 7, 10

Read: Ken-Hou Lin & Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, “Financialization and U.S. Income Inequality, 1970-2008”

Midterm Email #2 distributed on bCourses Friday, April 7th

Midterm Email #2 due on bCourses, Tuesday, April 11th, 11:59 PM**Why hasn't the American labor movement acted like a movement?**

Apr 12, 14

Read: Kim Voss & Rachel Sherman, “Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy”

What Social Movement Tactics Are Effective?

Apr 17

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

Why did Homeland Security fail Americans so badly during Hurricane Katrina?

Apr 19, 21

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

Why do Conservative Politics dominate at the state level?

Apr 24, 26

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

What do Organizations have to do with Ethnic Identity?

Apr 26, 28

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

May 1-5 Reading, Recitation and Review

Final Exam online Wednesday, May 10, 2023 3-6 PM