

Sociol 116. Sociology of Work

Spring 2023

Robert Ovetz, Ph.D.

Meeting Day and Time: Monday and Wednesday 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm

Course Number: 33281

Classroom: Anthro/Art Practice Bldg 160

My Office Location: TBD

My Office Hours: Monday 3-4 pm and other days by prior appointment (please propose specific day and time you can call me)

Reader: TBD

Reader Office Location: TBD

Reader Office Hours: TBD

Phone number: My personal phone number can be provided upon prior appointment by email

Email: ovetz@berkeley.edu

Course Description

In this course we will study work in a capitalist economy, past, present and future, and the conflict over work. Work organizes and structures much of our waking hours and life while also defining who we are, our purpose, and value. The most important role of work is as the source of value in and the primary means of organizing the capitalist economy. Work both brings us together to produce while it simultaneously divides and separates. Work is a means of social control by organizing the population into a social hierarchy based on gender, race, age, legal status, wages, skill, and other demographic features. Because of the organization of life around work it is the terrain of both political and social conflict and a means for distributing income, privileges, wealth, and other resources. We will study theories of work and apply it to different kinds of work in the US and global economy. Students will have the opportunity to study their own and others work, reflect on the role of work in society, and think critically about transforming work today and what a post work society might look like.

Important Dates

Wed 1/18—First day of class

Wed 2/8—Research Report Part 1 due

Mon 2/20—No class, Academic and Administrative holiday

Wed 3/1—Research Report Part 2 due

Mon 3/6—Midterm Essay Exam due by 11:59 pm

Mon 3/27 & Wed 3/29—No class, Spring Recess

TBD—Cal Day

Wed 4/5—Research Report Part 3 due

Wed 4/26—Research Report Part 4 due

Wed 5/3—Last class meeting

Fri 5/12—Final Exam, 3-6 pm; all late Essays and Research Reports due by 6 pm in class.

Grading Scale

A plus 96-100

A	93-95
A minus	90-92
B plus	86-89
B	83-85
B minus	80-82
C plus	76-79
C	73-75
C minus	70-72
D	60-69
F	0-59

Assignments	Percent of Final Grade
Midterm Essay Exam	25
Research Reports (4)	30
Weekly Readings Posts (13)	20
Final Essay Exam	25
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Total	100

Grading Policies

- 10 percent will be deducted for each **week** that a Research Report is turned in late. A period of seven days or less is consider one week.
- No Research Report will be accepted after the end of the final exam. **No late assignments** will be accepted after that time.
- Weekly Readings Posts **must be posted before 11:59 am of the day of class** and **cannot be made up**. One Weekly Readings Post can be missed **for any reason** and does not require prior requests.
- There are **no make up, early, or late essay exams**. If you **miss** an essay exam without a **demonstrable excuse** you will receive a 0. A missed final exam due to demonstrable medical, religious, or university related activities may be made up. A demonstrable excuse should be related to a medical, religious, or university related events only. Please contact me in advance or as soon as possible and provide appropriate documentation and arrange the make up.
- Be sure to check your grades on BCourses closely. If there are any questions about specific assignments other than the final exam they must be made to the Reader **first no later than** the end of the last day of the course. If any issue cannot be settled with the Reader first please contact me.
- Note that your grade in BCourses is only for the graded assignments at that point in time and are subject to change with each new graded assignment up until the final grade is officially posted. To estimate your grade at any point during the semester use the BCourses grade sheet tool to estimate their grade by filling in future ungraded assignments.
- All writing assignments that are turned in on BCourses can be cut and pasted into the assignment text box or attached as a .docx file. Do not post a link. **No assignments** will be accepted by email.
- Grades will be rounded up to the next letter only when the difference is .49 or less.

About the Grading Process

There will be one graduate student Reader for this course who will be responsible for most of the grading. The grading process will occur in the following way. I have included a rubric for the Essays that the Reader will be following when grading the Essays, Research Reports, and the Final Essay Exam. Please look at the rubric closely before turning in each Essay.

The Reader and I will review the grading rubric. With each Essay and Research Report the Reader will provide me with examples graded at each letter grade so that we can make sure the grading is consistent.

All Essays and Research Reports will be graded and returned to you within two weeks unless there are extenuating circumstances that will cause a short further delay. Essays and Research Reports will be returned to students for two classes after which time they can be picked up at the Reader offices during their office hours. If you have a question about your graded Essay or Research Report please raise it with the Reader who graded it first during their office hour. If you are unable to resolve the issue you are welcome to ask me to regrade it during my office hour after I speak with the Reader about it. Your grade may go up but it could also stay the same. It will not go down. When requesting a regrade it is very helpful to provide a specific reason related to the rubric.

Readings

All the readings listed in the Course Outline below are required readings. Doing readings is incredibly important not only in a Sociology class but especially in an upper division class. With this in mind, I have tried to keep the assigned readings to be between 50 to 70 pages per week although some weeks will have less and some more. It is strongly encouraged that you annotate and/or take notes on each reading.

There is one book that will need to be purchased or downloaded:

Michael Yates, *Work Work Work: Labor, Alienation, and Class Struggle*, Monthly Review Press: NY, 978-1583679654

You may either obtain the print edition or use the ebook available through the library here:

<https://web-p-ebshost-com.libproxy.berkeley.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=23334968-789e-4a9b-8e25-ca3a50d6b5ac%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtG12ZQ%3d%3d#db=nlebk&AN=3063694>

All the other readings can be read as pdf's on BCourses.

There are also pdf's of recommended articles and book chapters to read and links to recommended films to watch.

Weekly Readings Posts

Each week class students are required to post a maximum 100-150 word post that answers the prompt posted in the Canvas assignment window. Students are expected to use the assigned book chapters) and/or journal articles for that week to answer the prompt. Answering the prompt requires using one more concepts from each assigned readings from the Yates book or one of the book chapters or journal articles for that class. Students are encouraged to connect the concept to the assigned news article readings or do their own research to apply outside sources. Students are encouraged but not required to respond to other students's posts.

All Weekly Readings Posts must be made before each Monday at 11:59 am. After noon it will no longer be possible to post.

For more information about how to identify a concept see the "Guide to Identifying a Concept" on Canvas.

For instructions for writing the Weekly Readings Posts see "Weekly Readings Posts Assignment Instructions" posted on Canvas.

Essay Exams

There will be a Midterm and Final Essay Exam. Questions will be provided 1 week in advance with instructions about how to take each Exam. See the “Essay Exam Grading Rubric” for how the Essay Exams will be graded. The Midterm Essay Exam will be turned in on BCourses and cut and pasted into the text box or attached as a .docx file. Do not post a link.

The Final Essay Exam will be given in class and will be written by hand in a blue book. Questions will be provided 1 week in advance, however, students will be given specific questions to answer. Essays must be written so that they can be clearly read. Students may bring one 8.5 x 11 inch page of notes that can be filled front and back.

About the Research Reports

Please see the “Research Reports Assignment Instructions” on bCourses for directions how to write the Essays. The rubric is included in the instructions.

Course Outline

Notes:

- All readings should be completed **before** the class meets.
- Links to films on the Kanopy database will be added when I receive the links from the library.

Week	Date	Topic	Due	Readings in Yates Book	Chapter & Journal Readings on BCourses	New Article Readings on BCourses	Recommended Readings & Films	Videos & Songs
1		Introduction & What is Work						
	Wed 1/18							• Anne Feeney, “ <u>We Do the Work</u> ”
2		Origin of Work in Capitalism						
	Mon 1/23		Weekly Readings Post		• Cleaver, “Work is Still the Central Issue!”	Jaffe, “Against Loving Your Job”		• Schor, “ <u>Why Do We Work So Hard?</u> ” • Dropkick Murphys, “ <u>Worker's Song</u> ”
	Wed 1/25				• Marx Part VIII, pp. 873-940	Winstanley, “The True Levellers Standard Advanced”	“Winstanley,” https://archive.org/details/winstanley1975	Chumbawamba, “ <u>The Diggers' Song</u> ”
3		Labor Power, Alienation & Exploitation						
	Mon 1/30		Weekly Readings Post	Yates, ch 1, pp. 22-28	• Marx, ch. 6, pp. 270-280 • Marx, ch 7, pp 283-306		• Cleaver, ch. 5, pp. 176-185 • “Snowpiercer”	• Dolly Parton, “ <u>9 To 5</u> ” • Lou Reed, “ <u>Don't Talk To Me About Work</u> ”

	Wed 2/1				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 70-81 	Warren, "How to Fight Back Against the Inhumanity of Modern Work"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaver, ch. 6, pp. 186-217 • "<u>Manufactured Landscapes</u>" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utah Phillips, "<u>All Used Up</u>" • Barbara Dane, "<u>Song of My Hands</u>"
4		Division of Labor						
	Mon 2/6		Weekly Readings Post		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braverman, "The Division of Labor," ch. 3, pp. 49-58 	Ovetz, "The Algorithmic University," pp. 1065-1084	"Sorry We Missed You"	Joe Glazer, " <u>Automation</u> "
	Wed 2/8		Research Report Part 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braverman, Scientific Management," ch. 4, pp. 77-85 • Woodcock, "Working in the Call Centre," ch. 2, pp. 34-59 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Sorry to Bother You" • "Moneyball" 	Joe Glazer, " <u>Fight that Line</u> "
5		Discipline and Technology						
	Mon 2/13		Weekly Readings Post	Yates, ch. 5, pp. 97-110	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foucault, "Docile Bodies," pp. 135-169 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ovetz, "Taylor's Digital Stopwatch" 		Chumbawamba, " <u>The Triumph Of General Ludd</u> "
	Wed 2/15				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCallum, Worked Over, ch. 3, pp. 79-101 • Anderson, "Private Government," pp. 37-75 			Joe Glazer, " <u>VDT</u> "
6		Class Composition						
	Mon 2/20	No class, Academic and Administrative holiday	Weekly Readings Post					
	Wed 2/22			Yates, ch 3, pp. 44-74	Notes From Below, "Workers' Inquiry and Social Composition"	Holland, "Amazon Inquiry," pp. 7-22		The Replacements, " <u>Waitress in the Sky</u> "
7		Class Composition continued						
	Mon 2/27		Weekly Readings Post		Ovetz, "Workers' Inquiry & Global Class Struggle, pp. 1-29	Harnois and Andersson, "In gender discrimination, social class matters a great deal"		Bob Dylan, " <u>Maggie's Farm</u> "
	Wed 3/1		Research Report Part 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yates, ch. 4, pp. 75-96 • Yates, ch. 6, pp. 111-123 				
8		Unwaged Labor						

	Mon 3/6	Midterm Essay Exam due by 11:59 pm	Weekly Readings Post		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federici, "Wages Against Housework," pp. 15-22. • Davis, "The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework," pp. 222-244 • Wages For Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hess, "Here's what women could earn if household chores were compensated" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>"Waging a Living"</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNL, <u>"Get COVID"</u> • Working: A Musical, <u>"Just a Housewife"</u>
	Wed 3/8				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federici, "Reproduction and Feminist Struggle," pp. 65-75 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridgman et al "Accounting for Household Production in the National Accounts, 1965-2010" 		
9		Precarious Work						
	Mon 3/13		Weekly Readings Post		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing, "The Precariat," pp. 1-42 	ILO, "Informal Economy"	"Human Resources"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mush, <u>"Gig Economy"</u> • The Jam, <u>"Smithers Jones"</u>
	Wed 3/15				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hammer and Ness "Informal and precarious," pp. 1-15 • Moody, "Precarious Work," ch. 2, pp. 1-12 		"Parasite"	
10		Emotional labor						
	Mon 3/20		Weekly Readings Post		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hochschild, ch. 1, pp. 3-23 	Jaffe, "Work Won't Love You Back. Reproductive Health Workers Have Rights, Too"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>"Support the Girls"</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lippies <u>"Fuck The Customer"</u>
	Wed 3/22				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hochschild, ch. 6, pp. 89-136 	Max Stein, "Fighting the Man at 30,000 Feet and Winning"		
	Mon 3/27 & Wed 3/29	No class, Spring Recess						
11		Gig Work						
	Mon 4/3		Weekly Readings Post		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodcock and Graham, "How does the gig economy work?," pp. 41-49 	Feliz Leon, "While Many in New York Stayed Dry and Safe, Immigrant Gig Workers Braved a Deluge"		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mush, <u>"Gig Economy"</u>
	Wed 4/5		Research Report Part 3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodcock, "The algorithmic panopticon at Deliveroo," pp. 67-95 • Ovetz, "Prop 22," pp. 276-294 			
12		Robots Will Take Our Jobs						

	Mon 4/10		Weekly Readings Post		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorz, ch. III, "Automation and the death of capital," pp. 29-39 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tufekci, "Failing the Third Machine Age/ When Robots Come for Grandma" 		Joe Glazer, " <u>Automation</u> "
	Wed 4/12				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCallum, Worked Over, ch. 4, pp. 103-128 • Frase, "Four Futures" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kim, "The Gig Economy Is Coming for Your Job" • Guerguerian, "Automation Nation Who Will Reap the Benefits As AI Changes the Economy?" 		
13		Workers Movements & Unions						
	Mon 4/17		Weekly Readings Post		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moody, "The Coming Upsurge," ch 6, pp. 2-18 • Ness, "The Industrial Proletariat of the Global South," ch 1, pp. 2-32 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenhouse, "How Unions Work for the Economy" 	"Bread and Roses"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D.O.A., "<u>General Strike</u>" • Strawbs, "<u>Part of the Union</u>"
	Wed 4/19				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rawick, "Working Class Self-Activity," pp. 23-31 • James, "The Workers Councils," pp. 7-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyderson and Tracy, "The Real Audacity of Hope" • van Meter, "We Should Demand Democratic Workplaces..." 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billy Bragg, "<u>There Is Power In A Union</u>" • Utah Philips, "<u>Solidarity Forever</u>"
14		Work of the Future or Post-Work?						
	Mon 4/24		Weekly Readings Post	Yates, ch. 9, pp. 171-220	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russell, "In Praise of Idleness," pp. 9-29 • Keynes, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren," pp. 358-373 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ovetz, "Let's All Work Less" • Malesic, "Returning to the Office and the Future of Work" • Naudé, "Five reasons why the four-day week won't work" • Schor, "Less Work, More Living" • ILO, "<u>Working time and work-life balance</u>," podcast • Logan, "The folly of the work-life balance" • Manley, "Not Working" comic 	" <u>The Wobblies</u> " <u>Industrial Workers of the World</u> "	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDC, "<u>I Hate Work</u>" • Johnny Cash, "<u>One Piece at a Time</u>" • Dead Kennedys, "<u>Take This Job and Shove It</u>"
	Wed 4/26		Research Report Part 4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noble, "In Defense of Luddism," pp. 3-23 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ovetz, "It's Time to Break Work Before it Breaks the Planet" 		
15		Post Capitalism & Utopia						

	Mon 5/1		Weekly Readings Post		• More, “Book One,” pp. 15-47 and 109-113		“The Spanish Civil War” Inside the Revolution” Episode 5	• David Rovics, “After the Revolution” • The Ex, “People Again”
Last Class	Wed 5/3				• bolo’bolo, pp. 49-67	Weeks, “The Future is Now;” pp. 175-177 and 227-333		
	Fri 5/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Essay Exam, 3-6 pm • All late Essays and Research Reports due by 6 pm in class 						

Resources About Work

If you are looking for more materials about work on line I suggest visiting the following web news sources. Nearly all of these have a paywall for some of their content so it is encouraged to make a contribution to help them keep publishing.

Economics and Work

Dollars & Sense magazine, <https://www.dollarsandsense.org/>

Economic Hardship Reporting Project, <https://economichardship.org/category/workers/>

Center for Economic and Policy Research, <https://cepr.net/>

Labor and Unions

The Chief, <https://thechiefleader.com/?cb=1656618663>

Cornell ILR Labor Action Tracker, <https://striketracker.ilr.cornell.edu/>

Labor Radio Network, <https://www.laborradionetwork.org/>

Payday Report, <https://paydayreport.com/>

Work Bites, <https://www.work-bites.com/>

Workday magazine, <https://workdaymagazine.org/>

Portside, <https://portside.org/>

Organizing Work, <https://organizing.work/>

Northwest Labor Press, <https://nwlaborpress.org/>

Strikewave, <https://www.thestrikewave.com/original-content>

More Perfect Union, <https://perfectunion.us/>

The Labor Tribune, <https://labortribune.com/>

Union Elections, <https://unionelections.org/>

Labor Press, <https://www.laborpress.org/>

Jacobin, <https://jacobin.com/>

Global Labor and Unions

Strikemap, <https://www.strikemap.co.uk/>

Brave New Europe, <https://braveneweuropa.com/>

Radio Labour, <https://www.radiolabour.net/>

Global Labour Column, <https://globallabourcolumn.org/>

China Labour Bulletin, <https://clb.org.hk/>

Labor Video Project, <http://www.laborvideo.org/>

Labournet.tv, <https://de.labournet.tv/>

Rankandfile.ca, <https://www.rankandfile.ca/>

Social Europe, <https://www.socialeurope.eu/>

Academic Sources on Work and Unions

Journal of Labor and Society, <https://brill.com/view/journals/jlso/jlso-overview.xml?contents=About>

Global Labour Journal, <https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/globallabour>

Review of Radical Political Economics, <https://urpe.org/the-journal/>

On Labor, <https://onlabor.org/>

New Labor Forum, <https://newlaborforum.cuny.edu/>

UC Berkeley Labor Center, <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/>

UCLA Labor Center, <https://www.labor.ucla.edu/what-we-do/rework/>

University of Oregon Labor Education & Research Center, <https://lerc.uoregon.edu/publications-research/>

Government Sources on Labor Issues

US Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/>

US Current Population Survey, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/>

International Labour Organization (ILO), <https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) labor data, <https://data.oecd.org/emp/labour-force.htm>

Podcasts About Unions and Work

The Future of Work Podcast, <https://podcasts.apple.com/podcast/the-future-of-work-podcast/id1548510943>

Dissent Belabored, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/belabored/id634955549>

It's Going Down, <https://itsgoingdown.org/category/podcast/>

Work Week Radio, <https://soundcloud.com/workweek-radio>