Sociology 110 Organizations & Institutions   Fall 2023 | UC Berkeley

Instructor: Professor Linus Huang, Lecturer
Office Hours:
- *In-person, strictly drop-in:* Mondays, 1:15-3:00 PM, 487 Social Sciences Building
- *Zoom, sign-up needed:* Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00 PM, sign up on Google Calendar

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Final Exam: Friday, December 15th, 2023, 11:30-2:30 PM
Graduate Student Readers: Jasmine Sanders

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 "vocabulary" for thinking and talking about organizations, so to speak, is limited. Often our understanding of why organizations fail reduces to questions of bureaucratic "bloat" (or "red tape"). Or, we understand an organization's failure in terms of the failures of its individual leaders—so that if we need an organization to change, the key thing that needs to be done is to 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", to use Berkeley Sociology professor Ann Swidler's term, 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.

Instruction Mode

Sociology 7 will be in-person only for the duration of the semester. There will be no recordings of classes available.

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.

Grading

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

Graded work comes from three components:

- Two **midterm exams** (20% each, 40% total). Both will be take-home, "short-answer" (four questions, 1 or perhaps 2 pages per question) in format. Both will be distributed online and will be submitted online.

- Two **analysis papers** (20% each, 40% total). Although I call these "papers", neither will be very long—perhaps 2 or 3 pages each. Both will ask you to apply theoretical themes from the course toward analyzing specific problems in an organization of significance to all of us: UC Berkeley. More details about these papers will be given as the term unfolds.

- A **final exam** (20%). The exam will be administered during the University's officially scheduled timeslot for this course, on Friday, December 15th, 11:30 AM-2:30 PM. However, it will be administered over bCourses, <u>not</u> physically in-class. The exam will be <u>100% multiple-choice</u> and <u>cumulative</u>. A study guide for the exam will be distributed during the last week of instruction.

Note: For the two midterm exams 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.

<mark>Late work policy</mark>: All graded work submitted late will be marked down **20%** per 24-hour period it is overdue.

Disabled Student 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 an 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. (And this goes for any professor you're contemplating asking for a letter!)

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.

About ChatGPT, or any of the large-language model/generative AI variants

For the sake of drawing a bottom line: you may **NOT** use any AI app/tool/etc. to compose any of the graded assignments for the course. Submissions that are suspected of having been illegimately produced, whether detected by Turnitin and/or the judgment of any on the instructional staff, will be treated as cheating, with appropriate consequences (see above).

Now that I've offered a bottom line, some qualification is in order. I see ChatGPT ultimately as a tool, like laptops, smartphones, the Internet, or any other technology. Simple prohibition is perhaps not, in the long run, the philosophy that higher education should take. One of the objectives of college courses might well be precisely to impart training about how to use ChatGPT in a constructive, supplemental (as opposed to substitutional) way. … But, well, even if we allow that AI is something that should be embraced, higher education (and I) will take a while to learn how to do this.

Although foolhardingly declaring that ChatGPT would not be of use in the graded assignments is likely (a) incorrect; and (b) would be perceived as a challenge to be disproven, I *will* say that the design of this semester's assignments is not simply to recite definitions or summarize isolated arguments—things that ChatGPT can do effortlessly. Instead, the intention behind the assignments is to develop a practical familiarity with multiple—and often competing—ideas about how society (and specifically, the organizational world) works. Blindly pasting in the output from an AI bot doesn't accomplish this.

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 <u>prior</u> to the first meeting of the associated topic.

Introduction
Aug 23, 25, 28, 30

No readings.

Demographic perspective
Sep 1, 6, 8, 11
No class on Monday, Sep 4 (Labor Day).

Read:
- Glenn Carroll & Michael T. Hannan, "Organizing Principles of Demography" and "Demographic Explanation" (from chapter 2 "The Demographic Perspective" from Carroll & Hannan, *The Demography of Corporations and Industries,* 2000)
- Heather Haveman, "The Demographic Perspective" (chapter 4 from *The Power of Organizations,* 2022)

Relational perspective
Sep 13, 15, 18, 20

Read: Heather Haveman, "The Relational Perspective" (chapter 5 from *The Power of Organizations*, 2022)

Midterm Exam #1 distributed on bCourses Friday, September 22nd

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Cultural perspective
Sep 22, 25, 27, 29

Read: Heather Haveman, "The Cultural Perspective" (chapter 6 from *The Power of Organizations,* 2022)

Midterm Exam #1 due on bCourses Tuesday, September 26th

The organizational context of social ties
Or, why making friends is about more than just about being out-going.
Oct 2, 4, 6

Read: Mario Small, *Unanticipated Gains* excerpts

College & class inequality: class inequality <u>within</u> schools
Oct 9, 11, 13, 16

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

Analysis Paper #1 due on bCourses Tuesday, October 10th

College & class inequality: class inequality <u>between</u> schools
Oct 16, 18, 20, 23

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

Analysis Paper #2 due on bCourses Tuesday, October 24th

The rise of Shareholder Value culture in the American corporation
Oct 25, 27, 30, Nov 1

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

Shareholder value and income inequality in the United States
Nov 3, 6, 8
No class on Friday, Nov 10 (Veterans Day).

Read: three distinct explanations for rising wage inequality in the U.S. since 1980.
- "Carrier Workers See Costs, Not Benefits, of Global Trade" *The New York Times* Mar 19 2016
- "The '1 Percent' isn't America's biggest source of inequality. College is." *The Washington Post* May 22 2014
- "When Bosses Shared Their Profits" *The New York Times* Jun 25 2020

Midterm Exam #2 distributed on bCourses Friday, November 10th

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Why hasn't the American labor movement acted like a movement?
Nov 13, 15

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

Midterm Exam #2 due on bCourses Tuesday, November 14th

What social movement tactics are effective?
Nov 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?
Nov 20, 27
No class on Wednesday, Nov 22 & Friday, Nov 24 (turkey).

Read: Christopher Cooper & Robert Block, "Homeland Insecurity" ch 4 from *Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security*

What do organizations have to do with ethnic identity?
Nov 29, Dec 1

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

Dec 4-8 Reading, Recitation and Review

Final Exam online Friday, Dec 15, 2023 11:30 AM-2:30 PM