

Sociology 116, The Sociology of Work

UC Berkeley, Fall 2024

MWF 11-12, 126 Social Sciences Building

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:30-3:30pm, 419 SSB. Appointments are from 1:30-3:00, drop-in from 3:00-3:30. Sign up here:

<https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/bbntp>

Course Description:

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. Why not learn more about it? The social organization of work and employment relationships underpin patterns of social inequality and the organization and conditions of our daily lives. This course will explore the social organization of work and employment in the U.S. today. We will consider what is defined as “work”, and the structures in which we labor-- the types of jobs available, working conditions for those jobs, the composition of the workforce and how these have all changed over time. 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. Throughout the course, 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.

Evaluation:

Take-Home Exam 1(Midterm) and Exam 2 (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. **Take-home Exam 1 is due Oct. 7. Take-home Exam 2 is due Dec. 16.**

Good/Bad Jobs Interview and Reflection paper: (25% 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. **Due Nov. 1**

Labor Market Struggles Paper: (20% of total grade) Students will research a current unionization effort or campaign or a specific aspect of labor law or policy currently being debated or undergoing change. This paper will require students to engage in independent research about their topic as well as engage with class materials. **Due Dec. 4**

Optional Creative Project: Instead of the Labor Market Struggles 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 week 10.

Reading Quizzes and Reflection Assignments: (10% of total grade) The reading assignments form the backbone of our class. The goals for the quizzes are to incentivize keeping up with the reading as well as provide some benchmark of your comprehension. Quizzes are open-book. There will be 5 quizzes. Each quiz will be released in the quiz section of bCourses after class on Friday when a quiz is scheduled, and due the following Monday before class. You will have two chances to take the quiz and your score will be an average of the two attempts. Your final quiz grade will be the average of your best 4 quiz scores. This means Quiz 5 is optional if you are happy with the cumulative average of the first 4 quizzes.

Quiz release dates: Sept. 13, Sept. 27, Oct. 25, Nov. 15 and Nov. 25

Participation: (5% of total grade) Your participation grade will be based on the completion of in-class activities that will be turned in on bCourses. These activities will not be announced in advance and may only be completed during class. Make

sure to bring a device to class that enables you to access bCourses and type some sort of response. To allow for occasional absences, everyone will be allowed to miss two of these activities without any negative effects on their participation grade.

Course Schedule*

Week 1: Aug. 28 & 30 **Introduction**

Readings: Syllabus and bCourses . Please read through the entire syllabus and familiarize yourself with bCourses.

Wharton, A. (2023) *Working in America: Continuity, Conflict, and Change in a New Economic Era*, 5th Edition. "Introduction" pp. 1-8. New York: Routledge

Week 2: Sept. 4 & 6 **What is "work"?: Defining work and workers**

Readings: 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". New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Kisner, J. (2021) "The Lockdown Showed How the Economy Exploits Women. She Already Knew". *New York Times Magazine*, Feb. 17, 2021
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/17/magazine/waged-housework.html>

Week 3: Sept. 9, 11 & 13 **Classic Theories of Work**

Quiz 1 released 9/13

Readings: Marx, K. "Alienated Labor", Weber, M. "Bureaucracy", Taylor, F. "Fundamentals of Scientific Management", in Wharton, A. (2006, 2023) *Working in America, Continuity, Conflict and Change, 3rd edition*

In class viewing of film: *Capital*

Week 4: Sept. 16, 18 & 20 **Classic and contemporary theoretical perspectives on work**

Readings:

Braverman, H. "The Division of Labor", Hochschild, A. "The Managed Heart". Pp. 44-78 in Wharton, A. (2006, 2023) *Working in America, Continuity, Conflict and Change*, 3rd edition.

Kalleberg, A. (2018) *Precarious Lives: Job Security and Well-Being in Rich Democracies*. Ch. 1 "The New Age of Precarious Work". Medford, MA: Polity Press

Week 5: Sept. 23, 25 & 27

Current labor market structures

Quiz 2 released 9/27

Readings: 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", New York: Russell Sage Foundation

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>

Week 6: Sept. 30, Oct. 2 & 4

Current labor market structures: Unions and Labor Market Regulation

Readings: 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

Week 7: Oct. 7, 9 & 11

Current labor market structures: Unions, Labor Market Regulation and the Labor Force

Take-Home Exam Due Oct. 7 (No lecture)

Readings: Galvin, D. & Hacker, J. (2020) "The Political Effects of Policy Drift: Policy Stalemate and American Political Development". *Studies in American Political Development*, Cambridge University Press.

Note: focus on the introduction, where the concept of "drift" is explained, and the case study on labor law.

Milkman, R. (2020) *Immigrant Labor and the New Precariat*. Ch. 1 & Ch. 4. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press

Week 8: Oct. 14, 16 & 18

Contemporary labor markets: Who works?

Readings: England, P., Levine, A. & Mishel, E. (2020) "Progress Toward Gender Equality in the U.S. has Slowed or Stalled." *PNAS*, vol. 117, no. 13.

Sweet, S. & Meiksins, P. (2021) *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*. Ch. 6 "Gender Chasms in the New Economy". Sociology for a New Century Series. Los Angeles: Sage Publications

Week 9: Oct. 21, 23 & 25

Examples of Contemporary Work and Work Transformations

Quiz 3 released on Oct. 25

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)

Levy, K. (2023). *Data Driven: Truckers, Technology and the New Workplace Surveillance*. Ch. 1 & 2. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Recommended: Blanchette, A. (2018) "Industrial Meat Production". *Annual Review of Anthropology*

Week 10: Oct. 28, 30 & Nov. 1

Examples of Contemporary Work and Work Transformations

Good Jobs/Bad Jobs Paper Due Nov. 1

Readings: Dreier, H. (2023) "Alone and Exploited, Migrant Children Work Brutal Jobs Across the U.S." *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 2023
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/28/us/politics/trump-truck-driver-shortage.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>

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

Neely, M. (2023) "The Portfolio Ideal Worker". Ch. 15 in Wharton, A., Ed. *Working in America: Continuity, Conflict, and Change in a New Economic Era*, 5th Edition. New York: Routledge

Week 11: Nov. 4, 6 & 8

Examples of Contemporary Work and Work Transformations

Readings: Neely, M., Sheehan, P. & Williams, C. (2023) "Social Inequality in High Tech: How Gender, Race and Ethnicity Structure the World's Most Powerful Industry". *Annual Review of Sociology*, 49: 319-38

Duffy, B. (2017) *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender and Aspirational Labor in the Social Media Economy*. Ch. 1 & 3. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Stuart, F. (2020) *Ballad of the Bullet: Gangs, Drill Music, and the Power of Online Infamy*. Introduction, pp. 1-15. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Week 12: Nov. 13 & 15

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

Quiz 4 released Nov. 15

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

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

Week 13: Nov. 18, 20 & 22

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

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

Week 14: Nov. 25-29 Thanksgiving Week

No class this week. Take the class and work on the paper, which is due next week.

Quiz 5 released Nov. 25

Week 15: Dec. 2, 4 & 6

Labor Market Struggles Paper Due Dec. 4

Readings: Levy, K. (2023). *Data Driven: Truckers, Technology and the New Workplace Surveillance*. Ch. 7. Princeton University Press

Dzieza, J. (2023) "AI is a Lot of Work". *The Verge*. June 20, 2023

<https://www.theverge.com/features/23764584/ai-artificial-intelligence-data-notation-labor-scale-surge-remotasks-openai-chatbots>

RRR week: Dec. 9-13

Finals week: Dec. 16- 20. Soc. 116 Final Exam is due **Dec. 16, 3pm.**

*The course schedule is subject to change at the Instructor's discretion.

Academic Expectations:

Reading: Much of the work of this class consists of keeping up with the class readings. All readings will be available to you through bCourses, but I strongly recommend purchasing a bound copy of course readings. Numerous studies have shown that we retain material better when we read it offline and handwrite notes. Also, you don't need internet access or a functioning computer to do the reading and stay caught up.

For any given week, please read in the order listed on the syllabus. Readings are assigned for the week, rather than by the day, to allow for more flexibility in the class. That said, we will generally consider them sequentially. In general, try to complete the first reading before Monday's class, and everything before Friday. Links to readings can be found in the syllabus.

Bound hard copies of course readings can be purchased at the Copy Central Store at 2411 Telegraph Ave. While not required, I strongly advise investing in your learning this semester by purchasing one.

Attendance: This is an in-person class and consistent attendance is a basic academic expectation. If you are not able, or not planning, to come to class regularly then please drop the class now. Throughout the semester we will have in-class participation activities. While these are not graded, their completion will determine your participation grade.

Class Recordings and Slides: Class recordings are available to students who miss class due to an illness or emergency or are required to miss class due to university athletics. To gain access to the recordings you will need to email me explaining the reason for your absence, and the date that you missed. Recordings will be available for five days only. Lecture slides will be posted on bCourses before class in a folder in the "files" tab.

Try to keep up with the national news, using a reliable source. This will make class more meaningful as you will see how often our class topics are relevant to current events. I suggest major news outlets such as NPR (National Public Radio), *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The LA Times* or other major newspapers.

NPR is free, and you can get access to newspapers through the UCB library. More information is on the “Library Resources” page on bCourses.

Grading Policies:

Readers: Graduate student Reader(s) will do the bulk of the grading for this class. We will all work together to make sure the grading is as consistent and equitable as possible. Around the second or third week of the semester, students will be assigned a Reader that will be their primary contact for dealing with administrative matters around DSP extensions, other extension requests and any issues around attendance checks. This same person may grade all or some of your assignments.

Grace Period for Take-Home Assignments: These assignments will have a due date, as usual. However, in the spirit of offering more flexibility to everyone, there will be a grace period that will extend for 24 hours after the deadline. An assignment turned in after the official due date, but before the end of the grace period will not be considered late. The grace period does NOT apply to reading quizzes, which will be available for a multi-day window.

Late Assignments Policy: If you have a personal emergency or are ill, contact your Reader at the *earliest opportunity* about an extension. *Unexcused late assignments will be marked down 5% for each day after the grace period of 24 hours expires.* Late assignments will be accepted up to one week after the end of the grace period. At times, Readers or I may request documentation of an illness, emergency, or other situation for an extension to be granted.

Academic Accommodations: If you are a DSP student, please make sure that the DSP office has sent me a copy of your letter. If you have an accommodation for take-home assignments, it is your responsibility to contact your Reader to ask for an extension and work out a new due date. Please bear in mind that accommodations for extra time on in-class exams do not apply to take-home assignments. You are always welcome to reach out to me to discuss any accommodations.

Accommodations are also available for the observance of religious holidays, or due to conflicts related to student athletics. Please also reach out to me if you have another issue not “officially” covered and we can talk about it. Here is a link to more information from UCB about academic accommodations and resources:

<https://evcp.berkeley.edu/requests-accommodations-adjustments-and-flexibility>

Grading Scale: Your assignments will be given a numeric score and posted on the grade book in bCourses. At the end of the semester, your scores will be totaled and converted to a letter grade based on the percentage scale below. All assignments

together total 1000 points (e.g. 100% =1000 points). If you take the course P/NP, you must earn a 70% or above to pass. A+ grades may be awarded at my discretion to the very top students in the class.

	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	59 and below is failing
93 + A	83-86 B	73-76 C	63-66 D	
90-92 A-	80-82 B-	70-72 C-	60-62 D-	

Re-grade policy: Please first talk with the person who graded your assignment for more feedback. Readers have the authority to change grades if they believe it is warranted. If you believe a mistake was made on your assignment, and want me to review it, write a short statement explaining why you think your assignment deserves a different grade, making sure to reference the assignment rubric. This statement should be about the substance of your work, rather than effort. I will then re-grade your paper and determine the final grade for the assignment. All re-grade requests must be made within a week of when an assignment is handed back. Per University policy, no re-grades are possible for final exams.

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.

Academic honesty is expected of all students. It is extremely important that everyone submits their own original work, produced specifically for this course, in order to receive credit. Suspected violations relating to this course will be reported to the office of student conduct and dealt with according to university policies. *Be aware of plagiarism.* Word for word use of even a single sentence from any author, publication or website without proper citation is plagiarism and is unethical and unacceptable. So is very closely following the structure and wording of another author's work. In addition, please be aware that you may not turn in any portion of *your own* previous work submitted for credit in another course without substantial revision. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade on the paper or exam in question with no opportunity to rewrite, as will any other kind of academic dishonesty. If you have questions about how to properly cite materials, or how to paraphrase appropriately, please ask! The student writing center is a good resource for questions about this. All of your assignments will be checked for plagiarism by **Turnitin** on bCourses. 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.

We are in a new era of much controversy and uncertainty about the role and use of artificial intelligence in academic assignments and writing. My current position is that to receive credit, students need to produce original work without using AI

platforms such as ChatGPT. I am not interested in what ChatGPT has to say in response to our assignment prompts—only in what you have to say. If the Readers or I have questions or suspicions about whether an assignment is your original work or was produced by AI, we will ask to talk with you about it and orally assess your knowledge of the subject matter in the assignment to assign you a grade. Please do not waste our time in this way.

University Resources for Students

Your Health and Well-Being: Life as a Berkeley student can be full of excitement and possibilities, but at times may feel overwhelming or be difficult in other ways. New challenges and situations are an opportunity for learning about yourself, the world and the kind of life you want to have and some degree of discomfort and adjustment is to be expected. However, if you are experiencing distress or anxiety to the extent that it is negatively affecting your academic and social life, 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. In addition to counseling appointments there are web tutorials and videos, support groups and mindfulness classes. 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>. Remember that regular exercise, getting enough sleep, healthy eating, getting together with friends in-person to have fun and not spending too much time online/on your phone are important ways to support mental health.

Student Learning Center: “The primary academic support service for students at Berkeley, the SLC helps students transition to Cal; navigate the academic terrain; create networks of resources; and achieve academic, personal and professional goals.” <https://slc.berkeley.edu/home>

Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Services: To learn more about these issues, how to support survivors, or how to file a report and receive support services, start here: <http://survivorsupport.berkeley.edu>. Please note that I am not a confidential advocate; I am a mandated reporter. You can speak to a Confidential Care Advocate.

Undocumented Students can find university resources and support at: <https://undocu.berkeley.edu/>

Economic, Food, and Housing Support: If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at the Basic Needs Center:
<https://basicneeds.berkeley.edu/home>

Technology resources and support for students: Please see this page for the latest information on university-provided support, *including borrowing laptops and other devices*. <https://studenttech.berkeley.edu/home>