SOC495H1S: New Topics in Sociology: The Sociology of Markets
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto

Instructor: James Braun
Term: Summer 2018
Seminars: Tuesdays and Thursdays 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.
Seminar Room: FE41 (basement), 725 Spadina Avenue
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Office: Room 335, 725 Spadina Avenue
Course Website: on Quercus
Office Hours: TBD

PREREQUISITE

The prerequisite for taking this course is 1.0 FCE at the SOC 300+ level. Students without this prerequisite will be removed from the course without notice by the department.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Markets are institutions that pervade many aspects of our lives. We compete for jobs in labour markets, and buy things as trivial as gum and as important as homes in markets for different goods. We rely on investment plans such as RRSPs and RESPs for our retirement and education, and borrow in credit markets through student loans, credit cards and mortgages. Governments create markets to solve a growing range of policy problems, such as “cap and trade” markets for CO₂ to limit emissions and combat climate change, or privatizing services in hopes that market competition will lower costs or increase availability.

Economists assume that markets are efficient, apolitical mechanisms for allocating resources. But sociologists theorize markets as social arenas in which transactions are embedded within social networks and cultural or institutional logics; in other words, markets are constructed through social relations rather than existing independently of them. These contrasting understandings of markets have important implications for explaining how markets form and evolve, the way actors behave in markets, and the consequences of living in a market society.

This course will examine the role of markets in society by engaging key debates in the sociology of markets: What is a market? How do social forces influence the ways markets are created and exchange is conducted? Why have markets become so prominent in our lives, and what are the consequences of living in a market society?
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This is a seminar-based class that emphasizes effective writing, critical thinking and constructive discussion. You should think of yourselves and co-learners/teachers with the instructor acting as a facilitator and mentor.

Upon completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Identify key sociological theories of markets and understand key debates between them
- Explain markets and market society from different sociological perspectives
- Lead and contribute constructively to topic-oriented group discussions
- Critically evaluate social science research through the relationship between argument, theory and evidence
- Design and propose independent research, including how to identify gaps in literature calling for sociological investigation.
- Present and discuss a scholarly analysis in a collegial setting

COURSE MATERIALS

Weekly assigned readings are detailed in the course schedule below. All required materials will be made available through Quercus.

Required Readings:

1. July 3 - Introduction

Syllabus

2. July 5 - What is a Market? Three sociological theories of markets


3. July 10 - Research Methodologies


4. July 12 - Market Formation I: Who is included and excluded from the market?


5. July 17 - Market formation II: What’s for Sale?


6. July 19 - Market formation III: How are goods valued?


**research critique due**


8. July 26 - Market Actors II: Is Homo Economicus Real?


10. August 2 – Life in a Market Society II: Finance, Credit and (In)Equality

**proposal outline due**


11. August 7 – Student presentations

12. August 9 - Student presentations

**Research proposals due August 13**

EVALUATION:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Format</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar presentation</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research design critique</td>
<td>July 24</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal outline</td>
<td>August 2</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of Research Proposal</td>
<td>August 7/9</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer discussant feedback</td>
<td>August 7/9</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>August 13</td>
<td>25%</td>
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SUMBITTING ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments (except presentation notes and participation exercises) should be uploaded to Quercus. Assignments submitted by email will not be accepted.

Assignments submitted to Quercus will automatically go through an originality screening from Turnitin.com Assignments not submitted through Quercus/Turnitin will receive a grade of zero.
(0%), **unless a student provides, along with their assignment**, sufficient secondary material (i.e.: reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own.

**Participation (10%)** This is a seminar class where you are expected to collaborate in each other’s learning. This means coming to lectures having done the readings and prepared to discuss them. This does not mean you need to understand the materials perfectly; coming to class confused or with questions about what you have read is an excellent starting point for co-learning. Rather, you should be aware of the argument and key themes of the readings and be ready to talk about how they contribute to the topic of the week and the core questions of the course.

The classroom is a learning community where we will develop ideas in an environment of mutual respect. Your participation grade is a reflection of your ability to listen to your colleagues and contribute constructively to a group conversation.

Severe social anxiety or other factors can make verbal participation difficult or unduly stressful to some students. If this applies to you, please speak with me during the first few sessions (preferably the first week) so that we can arrange alternate ways for you to participate in the class.

Effective participation requires regular attendance. If you regularly miss class, your attendance record will likely result in a low participation mark. **There are no make-up participation exercises.**

**Seminar Presentation (10%)**: You and one or two colleagues (depending on enrolment) will co-lead one of our class discussions by presenting on the readings for the week. Seminar presentations begin July 12.

You can divide the work among yourselves however you choose: you might each discuss a reading separately, or talk about different themes across the readings. You should expect that each of you will speak for approximately 10 minutes.

Your presentation should involve: a summary of the readings’ main arguments, an explanation of how they contribute to the course, and points of theoretical tension between them. As a fourth year student, you are expected to draw on your training to date to identify sociological interpretations of the readings’ themes, as well as alternative or additional considerations. You should conclude the presentation by posing 2-3 questions to the class that we will consider for discussion.

All presentation notes must be turned in. Your presentation will be evaluated for clarity, your comprehension of the readings and ability to synthesize them, and the quality of your discussion questions. This will be a group mark.

10=excellent  8=good  6=adequate  4=marginal  2=poor  0=unacceptable
**Research design critique (20%):** You will submit a critique on the research design of two of the studies covered by the syllabus (5 double-spaced pages, not including references). I will provide detailed guidelines for drafting research design critiques and discuss these items in class. Research design critiques are due on July 24th by 11:59 pm, to be submitted via Quercus and Turnitin.

**Research Proposal (25%) and Outline (5%):** You will submit an outline (2 double-spaced pages, not including references) as well as a short research proposal (15 double-spaced pages, not including references) that expands on one of the topics covered by the syllabus (see Reading List), or otherwise addresses one of the central questions of the course. Research proposals are critical thought pieces that should synthesize and analyze the current literature on a subject area (a literature review), identify a question either emerging from the literature or not addressed by current research, and offer an intended method for data collection to answer the research question. I will provide detailed guidelines for drafting research proposals and discuss these items in class. Outlines are due on August 2nd by 11:59 pm, to be submitted via Quercus and Turnitin. All Final Research Proposals are due on August 13th by 11:59 pm, to be submitted via Quercus and Turnitin.

Your outline will be made available to the discussant for your presentation, to help them provide constructive feedback on your project.

**Project presentation (20%):** The last two sessions are devoted to student presentations on your proposals in progress. You will explain your research problem and question, offer an hypothesis and briefly outline your method for testing it.

This presentation should include some kind of visual component, such as a Powerpoint or Prezi presentation.

**Discussant feedback (10%):** In the session that you do not present, you will be asked to serve as a discussant to someone else’s presentation.

Your feedback should be about 2 minutes long, and should tell the presenter three things:
1) One strength of their project
2) One thing you’d like clarification on
3) Something you think would be exciting to add to the project

This feedback should be delivered both orally after the presentation and in writing both to the presenter and to me.

Peer feedback will be assessed for its clarity, constructive advice and appropriateness to the paper:
10=excellent  8=good  6=adequate  4=marginal  2=poor  0=unacceptable
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The University of Toronto is dedicated to fostering an academic community in which the learning and scholarship of every member may flourish, with vigilant protection for individual human rights, and a resolute commitment to the principles of equal opportunity, equity and justice.

1. Accessibility
Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. I will work with you and AccessAbility Services to ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course. Enquiries are confidential.

AccessAbility Services is located at Suite 400, 455 Spadina Avenue (Phone: 416-978-8060; email accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). Please consult https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as for more information.

2. Academic Integrity
Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student’s individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html).

3. Turnitin
Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

4. Email policy
In most cases, I will respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving them. Please note that I do not check email after 7 pm, so emails sent in the evening will be considered received the following morning. I will not respond to emails that can be answered by reading the syllabus.
Do not submit assignments via email. Email submissions will be ignored and will not count against deadlines.

It is important that any email you send complies with the following standards:
• You must use a valid “utoronto” email address. If you do not have a valid “utoronto” email address, you will not receive email correspondence sent from Quercus. (Instructions for getting an address are available on ACORN).
• Please include the course code (Sociology 495) in the subject line.

5. Laptop Policy
Cellphones should be turned off or to vibrate. Laptops or tablet devices are acceptable for notetaking but should not be used in ways that may distract your classmates. You are reminded that this is a seminar class that requires your full attention and engaged participation in discussion.

6. Quercus
The course website is a Quercus site. Visit the site frequently to check announcements, to download the course materials, and to submit written assignments.

7. Assignments/late penalties
Assignments submitted after the deadline will be subject to a 5% penalty per day. Late assignments will not be accepted more than 7 days after the deadline.

If you miss a test or a paper deadline, do not contact me unless you have followed the steps described here. Telling the professor why you missed a deadline or a test will not be considered.

· In case of illness, you must supply a duly completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca), or a doctor’s note that specifies the start and (anticipated) end dates of the illness. This documentation must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work at class or to me during office hours.

· If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). The letter must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work at class or to me during office hours.