

SOC306H1S: ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

University of Toronto

Term: Fall 2022 - Lecture Date/Time: Monday, 2-4 p.m.- Location: RW110

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Course Description

This course offers a sociological account of economic phenomena. It introduces students to sociological perspectives on production, consumption, exchange and distribution, economic crises, and other economic matters. In addition to exploring economic behaviour in the corporate and financial worlds, we will also examine behaviour in markets for intimacy and human goods.

Throughout, the course emphasizes two major points: (1) how in all areas of economic life people are creating, maintaining, symbolizing, and transforming meaningful social relations, and (2) how economic behaviour cannot be fully understood outside of its structural and cultural context. Economic life, from this perspective, is as just social as religion, family, or education.

Prerequisite

The prerequisite to take this course is 1.0 SOC at the 200 or higher level. Students without the prerequisite can be removed at any time discovered, and without notice.

Class Format, Requirements, and Grading

1. One in-class term test, February 14: 30%
2. One in-class term test, April 4: 25%
3. One-page description of paper topic, due February 28 at 2 p.m.: 1.5%
4. Term paper, due March 14 at 2 p.m.: 35%
5. Participation (including submission of discussion questions, in-class activities): 8.5%

Attendance and Participation

Course tests and assignments will cover required readings and material presented in class. While PowerPoint slides and lecture recording are posted to the course web page, lecture notes are not. Students are responsible for all material presented in class.

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to the class for which they are assigned, and to come to class prepared to discuss and write about the readings. Class

participation, contribution to class discussions, and in-class group work participation are expected.

Most, though not all, class sessions will feature an in-class participation exercise. Your participation grade is calculated primarily based on your submission of weekly discussion questions and your participation in the in-class participation exercises. To account for life circumstances, each student can use one “free pass” for participation per semester: one opportunity to not submit discussion questions OR participate in the in-class exercise without penalty. In other words, even if you miss one participation opportunity in this course, you can still achieve a perfect participation mark.

Weekly Discussion Questions

Students are asked to submit two discussion questions about that week’s course readings to the course website each week by **noon on the Sunday before that week’s class** (e.g. students should submit two discussion questions about the Week 2 readings before noon on Sunday, January 16). I incorporate these questions into the weekly lecture.

Late discussion questions will not be accepted for any reason – please make sure to submit the questions before noon on Sunday. Please see the note about accessibility accommodations below.

If you are having trouble coming up with questions, consider the following:

- What did you see as the most important insights or ideas from the assigned readings?
- What are your critical reactions to the readings (strengths and weaknesses)?
- What issues or concepts did you find confusing?
- What issues would you particularly like to discuss in class?

Tests (30%, 25%)

There will be two in-class tests (February 14 and April 4), which will cover material from lecture and the readings up to the date administered. **Please note that these tests will occur in-person, in our regular classroom.**

A make-up test or missed submission/s, will be granted only for students with valid reasons (see next section).

If you are unable to turn in an assignment/or miss the test for medical reasons, you will need to **email me** the instructor, not the TA, **and also** declare your absence on ACORN.

If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must ask your college registrar to contact me (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). I must receive an email from your registrar before you write the make-up test or submit the missed assignment.

If you miss a test for **accessibility reasons** (e.g. you miss the test for disability-related reasons and you are registered with accessibility services), you must contact your

accessibility advisor about the circumstances and ask them to contact me. I must receive an email from your accessibility advisor before you write the make-up test.

Analytic Research Paper (35%)

Students will write an analytic research paper for this course. This assignment asks you to demonstrate understanding of the theoretical framework of economic sociology by applying it to a new case in an independent research project. In 8-10 pages (double-spaced), you will be asked to select and analyze an economic phenomenon of your choice. The paper should draw from lecture material, course readings, and at least five additional academic sources to support your analysis. A more detailed assignment prompt will be distributed in class.

The paper is due before 2:10 p.m. on March 14 and will count for 35 percent of your final grade. Students should submit one copy of the paper to the **assignment link on the course website**.

Please make sure to leave ample time to upload your papers. Papers submitted after 2:10 p.m. for any reason (including technical difficulties) will receive a 5-point deduction. See late paper penalty below.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Assignments not submitted to the plagiarism detection tool will receive a grade of zero unless a student instead provides, along with their assignment, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting to the plagiarism detection tool) is in place because, strictly speaking, using the plagiarism detection tool is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

One Page Description of Paper Topic (1.5%)

Students are also asked to submit a one-page description/outline of their analytic research paper, along with a list of at least five references (can be a mixture of course readings and outside academic sources). Please submit the assignment to the course website by 2:10 p.m. on February 28. **Late descriptions of paper topics will not be accepted.** Please note that the TA will offer community feedback on this assignment (description of common errors observed across all assignments). If you would like to discuss your outline in greater depth, please arrange to see the TA or instructor during office hours.

Late Paper Penalty

Late papers will incur an initial 5-point penalty (e.g. the highest possible grade a student can receive on a paper submitted after 2:10 p.m. on the due date will be 95 points). Five additional points will be deducted at 2:10 p.m. for each additional day that the paper is late (e.g. the highest possible grade drops to 90 after two days, 85 after three days, etc.)

Regrading Policy

If you feel your grade on a test or assignment is unjustified, you must present your argument in writing to your TA within **one week** after the assignment is returned. This argument should respond substantively to feedback provided on the assignment: where and why you think that feedback is misjudged. The TA will respond with either a written response or an opportunity to meet to discuss the issue further. If you are not satisfied with the response or the outcome of your meeting, you may then contact the professor.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense with serious penalties. Plagiarism means presenting work done by another person or source as your own or using the work of others without acknowledgment. If you are in doubt as to whether you are plagiarizing, please consult the following tips on using sources from the University of Toronto webpage on writing:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Office Hours

My office hours are by appointment. This is to ensure students registered for this class get the opportunity for one-on-one consultations. You may use office hours as an opportunity to explore ideas and experiences related to the course material, discuss plans for a career in Sociology, or discuss other course and career-related matters. If you wish to schedule an appointment with me, **please use the appointment slots made available weekly on Quercus**. Click on the “Calendar” in the menu on the left-hand side, then go to “Find Appointments” on the right-hand side. If you find you need to cancel your appointment, please do so at least 24 hours in advance, to allow other students to take your slot.

I will hold office hours in person or over Zoom (student’s choice). I will assume that you plan to attend over Zoom unless you tell me otherwise (please let me know in advance if you plan to attend in person). Please attend your scheduled appointment by clicking the Zoom meeting link posted to the course Quercus site. I will admit you to the meeting room after your scheduled appointment time starts.

Email

My goal is to answer emails from students within 48 hours, with the exception of those received on Fridays (these will be answered on Mondays or the next business day if the Monday is a holiday). If I have not responded to you within 48 hours, please do not hesitate to follow up. Please include “SOC306” in the subject line of the email.

Readings

All course readings will be available through the course website. Students are solely responsible for obtaining and reading all required materials before class. Please give

yourself enough time to deal with any problems or delays accessing the readings that may arise so you come to class prepared to discuss the materials. Problems accessing readings will not excuse failure to demonstrate having done the required readings.

Accessibility Needs

I am committed to an accessible classroom. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible:

_disability.services@utoronto.ca or http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility_.

If you plan to use academic accommodations in this course, please send me your letter of accommodation as soon as possible so that I can accommodate your needs.

The one potential complication for accessibility students in this course is that **no late discussion questions** can be accepted (e.g. late = after lecture) since the pedagogical purpose of this assignment is to prepare you for lecture. If a firm weekly deadline is not compatible with your accessibility needs, I am happy to have a conversation (with you and your accessibility advisor) about alternative assignments. If this is an opportunity you wish to take, you must let me know within the **first two weeks** of the course.

WEEK 1: January 10 Economics and Sociology

Hirsch, Paul, Stuart Michaels, and Ray Friedman. 1990. "Clean Models versus Dirty Hands: Why Economics is Different from Sociology." Pp. 39-56 in *Structures of Capital: The Social Organization of the Economy*, Sharon Zukin and Paul DiMaggio (eds.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*** No discussion questions submitted today ***

WEEK 2: January 17 Competing Analyses of Economic Life

Becker, Gary S. 1978. "Introduction." Pp. 3-17 in *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior*. University of Chicago Press.

Dobbin, Frank. 2004. "The Sociological View of the Economy." Pp. 1-7 in *The New Economic Sociology: A Reader*, edited by Frank Dobbin. Princeton University Press: Princeton.

Granovetter, Mark. 1985. "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness." *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(3): 481-510

WEEK 3: January 24 Money

Zelizer, Viviana. 2017. "The Marking of Money" Pp. 1-35 in *The Social Meaning of*

Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief and Other Currencies. Princeton University Press.

Bearman, Peter. 2005. "The Bonus" Pp. ix-xii; 171-205 in *Doormen*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

WEEK 4: January 31
Firms and Corporations

Khurana, Rakesh. 2002. "The Curse of the Superstar CEO," *Harvard Business Review*, September 2002, pp. 3-8.

Biggart, Nicole Woolsey. 1989. "Introduction" Pp. 1-19; 70-97 in *Charismatic Capitalism: Direct Selling Organizations in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Saxenian, Annalee. 1994. "Introduction and Silicon Valley: Competition and Community" Pp. 1-9; 29-57 in *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

WEEK 5: February 7
Are Markets Natural?

Smith, Charles W. 1993. "Auctions: From Walras to the Real World," pp. 176-192 in *Explorations in Economic Sociology*, edited by Richard Swedberg.

Abolafia, Mitchel Y. 1996. "Homo Economicus Unbound: Bond Traders on Wall Street." Pp. 1-13; 14-37 in *Making Markets*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

WEEK 6: February 14
In-Class Test

WEEK 7: February 21
Family Day (University Holiday, No Class)

WEEK 8: February 28
Corporate Scandals and Financial Crises

Dobbin, Frank and Dirk Zorn. 2005. "Corporate Malfeasance and the Myth of Shareholder Value" *Political Power and Social Theory* 17:179-98.

Freeland, Chrystia. 2010. "What Toronto Can Teach New York and London" *Financial Times*. January 29.

Gelles, David and David Yaffe-Bellany. 2019. "Shareholder Value is No Longer Everything, Top C.E.O.s Say" *The New York Times*. August 19.

*** One-page description of final paper topic due ***

WEEK 9: March 7

Consumption

Barber, Benjamin. 2007. "Chapter 1." Pp. 3-37 in *Consumed*. New York: Norton.

Williams, Christine. 2006. "Chapter 5: "Kids In Toyland." Pp. 137-84 in *Inside Toyland*. Berkeley: University of California Press

WEEK 10: March 14

Labour Markets and Inequality

Rivera, Lauren A. 2015. *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*. Princeton University Press. Pp. 134 - 145.

Pedulla, David S. and Devah Pager. 2019. "Race and Networks in the Job Search Process." *American Sociological Review* 84(6): 983–1012.

*** Term Paper Due to Quercus***

WEEK 11: March 21

Markets for Human Goods

Healey, Kieran. 2006. "Chapter 1: Exchange in Human Goods and Chapter 2: Making a Gift" pp. 1-42 in *Last Best Gifts. Altruism and the Market for Human Blood and Organs* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Rothman, S.M. and D. J. Rothman. 2006. "The Hidden Cost of Organ Sale," *American Journal of Transplantation* 6: 1524-28.

Friedman, E.A. and A.L. Friedman. 2006. "Payment for donor kidneys: Pros and cons," *Kidney International* 69: 960-962.

WEEK 12: March 28

Intimate Economies

Posner, Richard A. 1992. "Chapter 5: Sex and Rationality" Pp. 111-145 in *Sex and Reason*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Zelizer, Viviana. 2005. "Prologue and Chapter 3: Coupling," pp. 1-6; 94-157 in *The Purchase of Intimacy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

WEEK 13: April 4

Test 2