

## **Sociology 647: Sociology of Work Spring 2006**

Professor: Dana Britton

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is an upper division undergraduate/graduate course in the study of work. We will examine three broad topics: the social organization of work, current work trends, and inequalities at work.

Prerequisites: The formal prerequisites for the course are completion of Sociology 211 or 214 (General or Honors Introduction to Sociology) and Junior standing. Sociology 511: Comparative Social Theory is recommended, as well as some coursework in inequalities of race, gender, and class (e.g., Sociology 541, 545, or 570, or Women's Studies or American Ethnic Studies courses).

Please note: The fact that this course is being taught at the 600 level is significant. It is available for graduate and undergraduate credit and will require a very high level of engagement in terms of reading, writing, exercises, and class discussion. I do not recommend that it be taken on an overload basis.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course is designed to:

- 1) Give students an overview of the sociological perspective on work, paid, unpaid, and marginal. Students will get some background in classical theories of work, but the focus will be on current trends in the organization of work.
- 2) Make students more aware of the influence of gender, race, class, and sexuality in the in structuring opportunities to work and the rewards of work.
- 3) Develop your abilities to be critical consumers of popular and academic information about work, and allow you to apply these abilities in written assignments.
- 4) Develop students' abilities to carry out and present research on issues relevant to the sociology of work.

### **REQUIRED READINGS**

Wharton, Amy S. (ed.). 2002. *Working in America: Continuity, Conflict and Change*. New York: McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 0767420772.

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*. New York: Owl Books. ISBN: 0805063897.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1997. *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*. New York: Owl Books. ISBN: 080504471X

Royster, Deirdre A. 2003. *Race and the Invisible Hand: How White Networks Exclude Black Men from Blue-Collar Jobs*. Berkeley: University Press. ISBN: 052023951.

There will be additional assigned articles made available through K-State Online.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### Readings:

Tentative reading assignments are listed below. Due to length of discussions and other factors beyond my control, this schedule will undoubtedly change. I'm comfortable with that, as you should be - the point in a course like this one (or any course, actually) should be the quality of the learning experience not the quantity of material consumed. Reading assignments will therefore also be made at the beginning of each class period. You are expected to complete all readings on time and be prepared to discuss them in class. There is a quite a lot of reading in this course, none of which is optional. Needless to say, if you should get behind, it will be incredibly difficult to catch up. It is imperative that you complete these readings PRIOR TO the class session in which they will be discussed. Class attendance is mandatory because lectures will cover material not included in the readings.

### Class Participation:

I teach all of my classes in the form of an ongoing dialogue with my students, rather than in a traditional lecture format. For this reason, discussion of the readings and lecture materials in class is both encouraged and expected. In my view, strenuous debate and discussion facilitate the learning process - some of the most important insights are often gleaned in the heat of an argument. If you don't agree with a point that is being made (either in a reading or in a class discussion) speak up and we'll address your issue. The class will be more interesting for all of us if you talk to each other, rather than allow yourselves to become passive recipients of the lecture material. Your spontaneous participation is welcome; your participation through presentations is required. See below.

### Assignments:

There will be no formal examinations in this course. Instead, your grade will be made up of four components - projects and their presentations, critical analyses of the readings, and assignments keyed to videos.

Projects: There will be five of these. The first is a work autobiography. This is now available on KSOL and is due in class to be discussed on Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>. The second and third projects require that you collect data about work from sources available on the Internet. Data analysis project one will require you to collect numerical data on an occupation of your choice (with my approval). Data analysis project two will require you to analyze survey data on attitudes about work or on social attitudes as affected by work status. The fourth project will involve an analysis of media portrayals

of work. The final project involves conducting interviews with two individuals about work. Projects two through five will be formally presented in class. Each student will be responsible for presenting two projects – distribution to be determined at the second class meeting.

Critical analyses of the readings: There are eleven reading “sets” below. For each of the three monographs (Ehrenreich, Hochschild, Royster) plus any three other sets you are to write a short (two to three pages, maximum length) paper in which you pose a question raised by the readings and then formulate an answer to that question drawing on the readings for that set. The purpose of this assignment is to get you to work on drawing out the essential points in a group of readings and to integrate them in a coherent way to address an issue. More complete instructions are posted on KSOL.

Assignments keyed to videos: We will likely view three or four videos this semester. For each, I will distribute a few questions aimed at getting you to think analytically about issues raised in the videos in connection to material we are studying in the course.

Final grade:

Your final grade for this course will be calculated as follows:

Project one – work autobiography:	50 points possible
Project two – data analysis I:	75 points possible
Project three – data analysis II:	75 points possible
Project four – media analysis	100 points possible
Project five – worker interviews	150 points possible
Video assignments	50 points possible
Papers on readings	150 points possible
Presentations	50 points possible
Total points possible	700

A standard scale will be used, i.e., 90 – 100% of 700 equals an A, etc.

**POLICIES**

Scholastic Dishonesty

For the purposes of this course, scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to the submission of assignments that are plagiarized or written in collusion with another or the falsification of any records connected with this course or any examination. Plagiarism includes quoting or closely paraphrasing a printed source without giving appropriate credit (i.e. Gould, 1981:123). It is acceptable to talk with classmates about homework assignments, projects and papers. Handing in substantially the same assignment constitutes plagiarism, however. I will give a grade of 0 to any written assignment that appears to be substantially similar to that of another class member or that uses others’ material without proper citation;

further charges may follow at my discretion. If you have any doubts at all about what constitutes plagiarism check with me before you turn in any assignment.

All students, upon registration, agree to be bound by the University Honor Code. This code stipulates that a student has neither given nor received unauthorized aid on any academic work. The full text of the policy is available on the honor code website: <http://www.ksu.edu/honor/>. Students who violate the honor code are subject to university disciplinary procedures, and can receive a grade of AXF@ for a course, which denotes a failing grade due to academic dishonesty.

Borderline Grades, Curves, and Other Grade Inflators:

Grades for this course will not be "curved."

I do not grade on the basis of need. If you need an A in this course, figure out the total number of points necessary to earn an A. Do not come to me and ask me to change your final grade unless a mathematical error has been made. Results of individual exams and assignments may be discussed during office hours.

A grade of "incomplete" will not be assigned except in extraordinary circumstances, and will in no case be given to a student who simply fails to attend class and complete assignments.

Extra credit work will not be given in this course.

Assignment Policies:

Late assignments will be graded down one letter grade for each class day that they are late. Presentations must be made on the assigned dates.

All graded assignments are to be picked up in class. I do not generally return final projects. If you want yours back let me know during the last week of the course.

Office hours:

My office hours are Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30 to 2:00. This is a time when you can drop in to talk about whatever you want - questions you have about the material, how you're doing in the course, things that you find particularly striking (or irritating) about the course or the readings. Please do not hesitate to use this time. If you are having trouble it is better for both of us if I know this early in the semester. I (like most instructors) have little patience for last minute pleas for mercy. I am also available at other times, either by appointment (call or e-mail me) or on a drop in basis. If I'm in the office (and I usually am, particularly on Tuesday and Thursday), feel free to knock; I'll either see you or set something up so that we can meet at a later time.

Two requests:

If you miss a class, please do not ask me what happened in it or whether you missed anything important. It may surprise you how many students actually ask me these questions. Find someone in the class from whom you can get the notes and learn about other important information. If there's a handout you did not get in a missed class, get it from a classmate.

If you need to give me any materials outside of class and I am not in my office, please leave them in my department mailbox (Waters 204) if at all possible. I hate stepping on assignments that have been slipped under my door.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Unit 1: The Social Organization of Work

12 January – Syllabus out, work autobiography assignment out, due in class Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>.

17 January – The meaning and history of work

Reading assignment: Wharton 1 – Jacoby, “The Way it Was: Factory Labor before 1915,” and 2 – Crittenden, “How Mothers’ Work Was “Disappeared,” and 3 – Meyer – “The Evolution of the New Industrial Technology”

19-24 January – Studying work, approaches and concepts

Reading assignment: SET ONE: ADDITIONAL: Mayo, Acker and VanHouten, Williams

Work autobiographies due, discussed (24<sup>th</sup>)

26 January – Class is cancelled for the winter meetings of the Sociologists for Women in Society

31 January through 2 February – Classical theories of work

Reading assignments: SET TWO: Wharton 4 – Marx, “Alienated Labor,” 5 – Weber, “Bureaucracy,” 6 – Taylor, Fundamentals of Scientific Management, 7 – Braverman: The Division of Labor and ADDITIONAL, Weber, selection from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

### Unit 2. The Post Industrial Economy: Current Work Trends

7 February through 9 February – The Post Industrial economy

Reading assignment: SET FOUR: KSOL reading, Wharton 9 – Powell, “The Capitalist Firm in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” and 10 – Smith, “Structural Unemployment and the Reconstruction of the Self”

Video: Roger and Me

14 February – Service work as emotional labor

Reading assignment: SET FIVE: Wharton 8 – Hochschild, “The Managed Heart,” 27- Leidner “Over the Counter: McDonald’s,” 28 – Buchanan – “Lives on the Line,” 29 – Sallaz “The House Rules”

Video: Smile Safeway

16 February – Studying work

Data assignment one due, presented

21 February through 28 February – Studying service work

Reading assignment: SET SIX (required paper): Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, parts 1, Introduction and “Serving in Florida” (pp. 1-49), 2, “Scrubbing in

Maine" (pp. 52-119) and 3, "Selling in Minnesota" and "Evaluation" (pp. 121-221).

Video: A&E "Wage Slaves"

### Unit 3. Challenges for work and society in the Twenty-First Century

2 March through 14 March – Gender and work

Reading assignment: SET SEVEN: Wharton 18 – Henson and Rogers, "Why Marcia You've Changed!" 21 – Pierce, "Rambo Litigators," 25 Juravich "Women on the Line"

ADDITIONAL: Britton, selection from *At Work in the Iron Cage*

7 March – Class Cancelled

9 March – Studying work

Data collection assignment two due, presented

16 March – Sexuality at work

Reading assignment: SET EIGHT: Wharton 19 – Dellinger and Williams, "The Locker Room and the Dorm Room," ADDITIONAL: Britton and Williams

20 March through 24 March – Spring Break

28 March through 30 March – Work/Family balance

Reading assignment: SET NINE (required paper): Hochschild, *The Time Bind*, part 1, chapters 1-4 (pp. 3-52), part 2, chapters 5-13 (pp. 53-193), and part 3, chapters 14-16 (pp. 197-259).

4 April through 6 April – Studying work

Media analysis assignment due/presented

11 April – Studying work

Work on interview schedule

13 April though 20 April – Race at work

Reading assignments: SET TEN (required paper): Wharton 20 - Moss and Tilly, "Stories Employers Tell" and Royster, part 1, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-60), part 2, chapters 4-6 (pp. 60-143) and part 3, chapters 7-8 (pp. 144-194)

25 April – Marginal work

Reading assignment: SET ELEVEN: Wharton 33 – Rogers, "Are We Not Temps?" 34 – Gowan, "American Untouchables"

27 April – Professional work

Reading assignment: SET TWELVE: Wharton 31 – Jackall, “The Social Structure of Managerial Work,” 32 – Collins “Blacks on the Bubble”

2 May through 4 May

Worker interview presentations