

# Sociology of Work and Industry (SOCI 3750) / Fall 2009

Instructor: Jim Coverdill / Baldwin 214-B / 542-3169 (leave message at 542-2421) / [jimcov@uga.edu](mailto:jimcov@uga.edu)

Office Hours: 2-3 on Tu/Th (and by appointment) / Class Room: Baldwin 322

Class Schedule: Tu/Th 3:30 - 4:45 p.m. / Web Page: <http://jimcov.myweb.uga.edu/3600.htm>

## Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to familiarize you with a wide range of substantive issues, theories, and current topical concerns in the sociological study of work. Topics covered include the meaning of work, adolescent work, occupational choice, social aspects of finding jobs, workplace discrimination, manufacturing work, sales and service work, professions, and contingent, stigmatized, and deviant work. By the end of the course, you should be familiar with many of the ideas and approaches used by sociologists who study work. My hope is that the material in this course will have both intellectual and practical value for you.

## Reading Materials

There is no textbook for the course. You need to buy or borrow Christine Williams's *Inside Toyland: Working, Shopping, and Social Inequality*, as we will read five of the six chapters in that text. Other readings are available through the main library's reserve collection under my name and the course name and number. To get to the electronic reserve material, use your internet browser and go to <http://gil.uga.edu>, the main library page. Double click on the "course reserves" button, go to the "instructor" field, pull up my name, and then choose "SOCI3750: Sociology of Work and Industry" from the course field. The electronic reserve readings are arranged by the last name of the author. You'll need to use the password \_\_\_\_\_ to access and print the selections. The files are in Adobe Acrobat format. In order to view and print the reserve room readings, you will thus need to already have (or install) the basic version of Adobe Acrobat on your computer. This software is free and easy to download and install. Go to and follow the directions at: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. Most of the labs on campus have already installed Adobe; ask the lab assistants for help if you experience problems reading or printing the notes. It is important to realize that while the average weekly reading load is not particularly heavy, it's not even from week to week. Plan your time. Previous students claim that the reading load is manageable and that it brings sustained joy and inner peace. Believe them.

## Administrative Matters

**Exams, Participation, and Grades.** There will be three in-class exams worth 60 points each. Participation will count for 20 points. The official point total for the class is thus 200 points. Grades will be based on these point intervals: 186 - 200 points = A ; 180 - 185 points = A-; 174 - 179 points = B+; 166 - 173 = B; 160 - 165 = B-; 154 - 159 = C+; 140 - 153 = C; 120 - 139 = D; <120 points = F. Exams will be a mix of multiple-choice and essay questions. Exams focus upon material presented in the readings and lectures; no exam is cumulative in the traditional sense. It is impossible, however, to avoid concepts and material presented in earlier units as the semester unfolds. Participation grades are based on a combination of attendance and participation. What I am looking for is regular attendance (absence = no participation) and an effort to contribute in a meaningful way during class sessions (sitting silently ≠ contributing).

**Take-Home Projects.** I will offer three take-home writing projects, one for each of the three exam units. The projects will consist of five-page (or so) responses to one or more questions. *Everyone must do one project.* The one required project will be graded pass/fail. A passing grade on that project will not add to your point total; a failure to submit a pass-worthy project before the end of the term will result in a five point deduction from your final grade. You are welcome to submit responses to all three projects. Projects in excess of the one required project will be assessed on a 5-point scale, with 5 representing a "high pass -- your parents would be proud" and 0 representing "it's a hopeless stinker that would make your parents disown you." *Note that these are bonus points added to your point total.* Each project will

have a deadline by which it must be submitted. Projects can only be submitted in person and in class; no email attachments, friend-delivered papers, and the like will be accepted. There will be no time extensions for the projects.

**Make-Up Exams and Time Extensions.** Make-ups will be allowed only under circumstances of serious illness or emergency; written proof may be required before a request for a make-up is granted. *You must contact me in advance of the test time or you will receive a score of zero on the exam.* I reserve the right to (1) refuse to offer a make-up exam and (2) use a different exam than that offered during the normal test-taking period. Makeups will be administered on the last day of class (December 3), when final project papers will also be due.

**Academic Honesty.** All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. A few examples of academic dishonesty are copying answers from another student during an exam (or on a paper), giving a false excuse for failing to show up for an exam or asking for a make-up, and obtaining advance exam copies by unauthorized means. Students who assist other students in academically dishonest acts are in violation of the policy of academic honesty. A full version of the UGA policy regarding academic honesty, "A Culture of Honesty," can be found at [http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic\\_honesty/culture\\_honesty.htm](http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_honesty/culture_honesty.htm). The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense. *I take this seriously; please be honest.*

**Withdrawals.** Students are now limited to four withdrawals during their undergraduate careers. Students who withdraw from the class *on or before the midpoint of the semester* (10/22) will be assigned a grade of "W". While grades of "W" do not influence the GPA, they can be consequential for financial aid, athletic eligibility, and veteran's benefits (to name just a few). You should contact the appropriate office (Student Financial Aid, Athletic Department, and so on) if you have questions concerning the possible impact of withdrawing from the course. Students who withdraw after the midpoint can avoid a grade of "WF" (which counts as an F for purposes of grade-point averages) only if the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs (542-3564) grants what is called a Hardship Withdrawal (this requires dropping all of your courses, not just this one). Contact that office for information on details and procedures. After the midpoint, I do not have the authority to grant a W without intervention and support from those higher up the administrative food chain.

**Classroom Etiquette.** The success of a class depends on consideration and cooperation. I expect you to arrive and be seated by the time class is set to begin. Class will end no later than 4:45. I expect everyone to remain in class for the duration of the class – it is distracting to me and disruptive to other students if you leave early. Two behaviors which are discourteous to me and your fellow students are reading the newspaper in class and talking in class. *I reserve the right to (a) withdraw students from the class (with either a grade of W or WF) who I determine to be disruptive, (b) limit or prohibit laptop use (using laptops in class is a privilege, not a right), and (c) record you as absent for the day if you are late or if you leave early.* Trust that I want you to have a good experience in this class. If there is something on your mind that you would like me to address, then let me know about it in person, via e-mail, or even through the old-fashioned form of a note. Remember that I can only respond to the information and feedback that you provide.

### Course Schedule

The topics, relevant readings, and test dates are as follows. I'll let you know in class when you should read the particular selections so that you are prepared for class discussions.

#### Topic 1. An Introduction to the Sociological Study of Work

- Why Study Work? Is Work Important? Basic Assumptions in the Study of Work
- Work Values and Ethics: What are They? Have They Changed? Are Americans Lazy?
- Workplace Alienation

**Readings:** Newman, Katherine S. "No Shame in My Game"; Rubin, Lillian B. "Families on the Fault Line"; Eisenberger, Robert. "Americans Used to Try Harder"; Erikson, Kai. "On Work and Alienation"; Tausky, Curt. "Work is Desirable/Loathsome: Marx Versus Freud"

**Topic 2. Getting Started and Situated: An Overview of Adolescent Work, Occupational Choice, and Ways People Find Work**

- Child and Adolescent Work: Should We Care? Is it Consequential?
- Choosing and, um, Stumbling Into Work: An Overview of Research on Occupational Choice
- Finding and Landing a Job: Search and Selection Practices

**Readings:** Mortimer, Jeylan T. "Should Adolescents Work?"; Lortie, Dan C. "Recruitment and Reaffirmation"; Biggart, Nicole Woolsey. "Changing Conditions of Work and the Growth of DSOs"; Finlay, William, and James E. Coverdill. "Finding the Right Person for the Job"

**Topic 3. Workplace Discrimination**

- What is Workplace Discrimination? Concepts, Approaches, and Case Studies
- Some Specific Varieties of Discrimination: Age, Gender, Beauty, Race, and Ethnicity

**Readings:** Munk, Nina. "Finished at Forty"; Bielby, Denise D., and William T. Bielby. "Hollywood Dreams, Harsh Realities: Writing for Film and Television"; Greenhouse, Steven. "Going for the Look, but Risking Discrimination"; Dobbin, Frank, et al. "Diversity Management in Corporate America"

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**Exam # 1: Tuesday, September 15. The exam covers material in readings and lectures for topics 1 - 3.**

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**Topic 4. Manufacturing Work: The Legacy and Current Issues in Automobile Production**

- Factories in America / The Emergence of Scientific Management
- Life on the Line / Games and Interaction in the Workplace
- New Forms of Managing Manufacturing: Is Lean Production a Humanistic Alternative to Taylorism?

**Readings:** Jacoby, Sanford M. "The Way it Was: Factory Labor Before 1915"; Chinoy, Ely. "On the Line"; Molstad, Clark. "Choosing and Coping with Boring Work"; Rinehart, James, Christopher Huxley, and David Robertson. "The Kaizen Agenda" and "Kaizen: Shop Floor Responses and Outcomes"

**Topic 5. Food Production**

- A Brief Portrait of Agricultural Work in the U.S.
- Factory Meat Production: Tofu Anyone?
- Film and Discussion: *Modern Meat*

**Readings:** Thompson, William E. "Hanging Tongues: A Sociological Encounter with the Assembly Line"; Schlosser, Eric. Selections from *Fast Food Nation*

**Topic 6. Unions in America**

- An Overview of Unions and Unionization in America
- Current Controversies and Developments

**Readings:** Freeman, Richard, and James Medoff. "A New Portrait of U.S. Unionism" and "Conclusion and Implications"; Greenhouse, Steven. "At a Small Shop in Colorado...", "Group Starts Anti-Union Campaign," "Local 226...", and "How Costco Became the Anti-Wal-Mart." Leonhardt, David. "\$73 an Hour for Autoworkers and How it Really Adds Up."

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**Exam # 2: Thursday, October 15. The exam covers material in readings and lectures for topics 4 - 6.**

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### **Topic 7. Non-Standard Forms of Work: Contingent, Stigmatized, and Deviant Work**

- Contingent Work: Patterns, Growth, and Meaning
- An Overview of Stigmatized Work
- Deviant Work and Careers

**Readings:** Henson, Kevin D. "Just a Temp"; Rogers, Jackie Krasas. "Lawyers for Rent"; Thompson, William E. "Handling the Stigma of Handling the Dead: Morticians and Funeral Directors"; Adler, Patricia. "Dealing Careers"; Adler, Patricia. "Deviant Careers and Reintegration;" Weitzer, Ronald. "Prostitution: Facts and Fictions"

### **Topic 8. Professions: Key Concepts and the Case of Medical Doctors**

- An Overview of Professions
- Sociological Explorations of Medical Doctors

**Readings:** Ritzer, George, and David Walczak. "Rationalization and the Deprofessionalization of Physicians"; Smith, Allen C., and Sherryl Kleinman. "Managing Emotions in Medical School: Students' Contacts with the Living and the Dead"; Haas, Jack, and William Shaffir. "Becoming Professional: Learning and Adopting a Cloak of Competence"; Cassell, Joan. "It's No Fun Anymore"; Zetka, James R. "Skill Disruption in the Surgical Craft"

### **Topic 9. Service Work and Workplaces**

- An Overview of Service Work and Main Research Issues
- Case Studies: Insurance Sales, Toy Stores, and Wal-Mart
- Film and Discussion: *Is Wal-Mart Good for America?*

**Readings:** Leidner, Robin. "Working on People" and "Orchestrating Optimism: Combined Insurance"; Williams, Christine. Chapters 1-3 and 5-6 in her book *Inside Toyland: Working, Shopping, and Social Inequality*; Greenhouse, Steven. "Wal-Mart, a Nation unto Itself."

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**Exam # 3: Tuesday, 12/1. The exam covers material in readings and lectures for topics 7 - 9.**

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### **Human Rights Statement**

All students should know that the Department of Sociology has a Human Rights Committee for the resolution of student grievances. Any student registered for a sociology course at the University of Georgia who feels that he or she has not been treated in a fair or professional manner by an instructor is advised to follow these procedures:

- (1) The student should discuss his or her problems with the instructor of the course, unless extenuating circumstances prohibit this.
- (2) If that discussion does not resolve the grievance, the student should then discuss the problem with the Head of the Department of Sociology.
- (3) If that discussion does not resolve the grievance to the satisfaction of the student, the student may request the activation of the Human Rights Committee by submitting a letter to the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee, Department of Sociology, University of Georgia.

The Human Rights Committee will have the responsibility of investigating all charges in accordance with procedures on file in the Sociology office, copies of which are available to students. The Committee will also have the responsibility of making recommendations in writing to the Head, copies of which will be made available to the student complainant and the instructor involved. The Department Head will review the recommendations and make a decision in writing, with copies to the students complainant and the instructor or staff member involved. Any appeal of that decision must be to the Dean of the college of Arts and Sciences.