Critical Perspectives on Work in the 21st Century

Most of us spend a substantial portion of our lives working or searching for work. The jobs we hold shape almost every aspect of our lives including our daily activities, social interactions, and personal identities. In the past four decades, however, there have been massive shifts in the employment landscape that require us to rethink what work is and how we should manage it. In this course, we specifically explore how social statuses such as gender, race, class, age, disability, and social class impact different groups of workers who find themselves also challenged by work overload, new technologies, downsizing, and an unstable economy that mandates a reconsideration of retirement goals.

This course is designed with several goals in mind. First, by studying the Sociology of Work, you’ll learn about sociology in general. Specifically, you’ll become more familiar with the critical mindset that sociologists adopt, the types of questions sociologists ask, the research methods they use, and the evidence that informs sociological arguments. Additionally, by studying some insights sociological investigations of work uncover, you’ll become better equipped to interpret your previous, current, and future employment experiences while also becoming more familiar with a career path that interests you.

Critical Perspectives on Work in the 21st Century is a course that satisfies several graduation requirements: Social Inquiry, Intercultural Domestic Studies, and Writing Rich 2. The course is also tagged as American Studies. As a SOAN course, we will aim to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- Articulate the complexity of contemporary socio-cultural phenomena in their many dimensions
- Formulate appropriate sociological research questions about socio-cultural phenomena
- Apply sociological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena

OFFICE HOURS

I love seeing students during my office hours. A one-on-one visit can clarify course material; provide answers to questions students may have; and assist with understanding, on a deeper level, my expectations for the work students complete in this course.

Please visit this link to schedule an appointment on one of the following days and times:

• Mondays 9-10:00am
• Tuesdays 6:15-7:15pm
• Thursdays 4:30-5:30pm
• Fridays 9:15-10:00am

Additional times are available by appointment so please do not hesitate to contact me. I will look forward to hearing from you.

COURSE MATERIAL

Four books are required reading for this class. Links to additional readings are provided on our course Moodle:

• *Work: A Very Short Introduction* by Stephen Fineman (available both online and in the Carleton College bookstore)

• *Dying to Work: Death and Injury in the American Workplace* by Jonathan D. Karmel (available on JSTOR)

• *On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South* by Vanessa Ribas (available both on JSTOR and in the Carleton College bookstore)

• *Down and Out in the New Economy* by Ilana Gershon (available in the Carleton College bookstore)

You will also be tasked with presenting one of the following books:

• *Just One of the Guys? Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality* by Kristen Schilt

• *Opting Back In: What Really Happens When Mothers Go Back to Work* by Meg Lovejoy and Pamela Stone (available on JSTOR)

• *Buttoned Up: Clothing, Conformity, and White-Collar Masculinity* by Erynn Masi de Cassanova (available on JSTOR)

READING REQUIREMENTS

To perform well in this course and to create a rewarding class discussion, you must commit to several hours of active, focused reading prior to each class meeting. The readings represent a mix of classic and contemporary works in the field. Four types of readings are assigned: news articles, journal articles, and scholarly books. I have also assigned several short videos; please give this material your undivided attention.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance on several small assignments, class participation, and two discussion periods that will be held in lieu of a mid-term and final exam. When completing this work, you are required to abide by Carleton’s standards for academic integrity. Please click on this link to learn more about these standards, particularly as they relate to plagiarism. This course requires you to complete lots of writing and thus, it is essential that you know what plagiarism is and the different forms it can take.

A document titled, “class assignment schedule,” is posted to our course Moodle page. This schedule briefly describes each assignment, its distribution and submission date, and the number of points awarded. I also provide an estimate of the time required to complete each assignment.

Finally, 10 points are devoted to class participation. Please review the “grading rubric for class participation” posted to our course Moodle.

MOODLE AND ZOOM

All course readings, recordings, documents, assignments, are centrally located on Moodle (either directly or via links contained there). Synchronous classes are held via Zoom, which should be accessed through Moodle. Turning your camera on during class is encouraged. When you must turn your camera off, please upload a photo or avatar as a profile picture. You are welcome to use a virtual background on Zoom if you want to maintain privacy in your virtual workspace while your camera is on. Your microphone should be muted by default, and questions should generally be asked in the chat. In the event that you have difficulties accessing Zoom, please contact ITS. Please be aware that it is necessary update Zoom on a frequent basis.

E-MAIL AND MOBILE DEVICE POLICIES

Please use your Carleton account to send e-mail to me at anierobisz@carleton.edu. You can call me Dr. Nierobisz, Professor Nierobisz, or Annette – which is what I prefer. I will make every effort to respond to e-mail in a timely manner: within 24-48 hours on weekdays. If you have not heard back from me within a couple of business days, please feel welcome to resend your message. To facilitate your attention and engagement during our synchronous class meetings, please keep any electronic device not necessary for class participation on silent mode and out of sight.

RECORDING AND DISSEMINATION OF COURSE MATERIAL

The materials developed for this course, including, but not limited to, lecture notes and slides, handout, assignments, and emails are the intellectual property of the course instructor. These materials have been developed for student use only and they are not intended for wider dissemination and/or communication outside of this course. Posting or providing unauthorized audio, video, textual material of lecture content, and emails to third-party websites violates faculty intellectual property rights.
ACCESSIBILITY

Please note that I am striving to make sure that this course is accessible to all students in a variety of living situations and with various abilities. If you have any concerns about or difficulties with course materials or requirements, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can work with you to rectify the situation.

COURSE OUTLINE

THE AMERICAN EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE

3/29  Introduction to the Course


3/31, 4/2  The American Employment Landscape

3/31


4/2


Kelsky, Karen. 2021. Academia is a Cult. TEDxUAMonticello March 25, 2021
Max Weber and the Protestant Work Ethic


Popular Sociology. In Praise of Billionaires. February 5, 2019 (watch the video at the end of this short post).

AGE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORKPLACE

Can Different Generations Work Together?


Popular Sociology. Fox News and False Consciousness. April 4, 2019 (watch the video at the end of this short post).

Late-Career Workers in the Neoliberal Workplace


The Oldest Workers


4/14

Emile Durkheim and the Division of Labor in Modern Society


SOCIAL CLASS AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

4/16-21 Occupational Health and Safety

4/16


• You will be assigned two stories to present from Chapter 5 of Dying to Work: Death and Injury in the American Workplace. These presentations are brief and informal; PowerPoint slides are not necessary.

4/19


**RACE AND CITIZENSHIP STATUS IN A BLUE-COLLAR WORKPLACE**

4/26-30  
*On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South*

4/26  
Preface, Chapters 1 and 2

4/28  
Chapters 4, 5 and 6

4/30  
Chapters 7 and 8

5/3  
MID-TERM BREAK

5/5  
Taking Stock of Lessons Learned So Far
Group conversation in lieu of a mid-term test. Come prepared with insights, and a minimum of three discussion prompts or questions. Prompts and questions must be emailed to me by Noon on 5/4.

GENDER AT WORK

5/7
Introducing Gender at Work


Popular Sociology. “Sexual Double Standards & Employment.” April 16, 2019 (watch the video at the end of this short post).

5/10
Book Presentation: *Just One of the Guys? Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality*

Reading for the audience


5/12

Reading for the audience


5/14
Book Presentation: *Buttoned Up: Clothing, Conformity, and White-Collar Masculinity* (book available on JSTOR)

Reading for the audience

THE JOB SEARCH

5/17
Sociological Perspectives on the Job Search


5/19-31
*Down and Out in the New Economy*

5/19
Just read Preface, Introduction and Chapter 1

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRlvfDOhh3M&list=PLBp5uUHy9Af_Zz-UWFAN45RPFI5ATVD- &index=1

5/21
Just read chapters 2 and 3

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9J-3BbwQDqY&list=PLBp5uUHy9Af_Zz-UWFAN45RPFI5ATVD- &index=2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRidSdymFC4&feature=youtu.be

5/24
Just read chapters 4 and 5


Carleton College Career Center. 2020. LinkedIn Lesson. 
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBp5uUHy9Af-cMW8_kT8wZTc4VZ1tV2sd (please watch all five short videos)

5/26
Just read chapter 6

5/28
Guest speaker: Rachel Leatham, Associate Director of the Carleton College Career Center

5/31
Just read chapters 7 and conclusion

6/2
Taking Stock of Lessons Learned in the Second-Half of Term
Group conversation in lieu of a final test. Come prepared with insights, and a minimum of three discussion prompts or questions. Prompts and questions must be emailed to me by Noon on 5/29.