

Sociology of Work
SOC 3800-001 (16427) | Spring 2019
T/Th 12:30 p.m. - 1:50 p.m.
Chemistry Building 372

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Course Description and Goals

How is work changing in the 21st century? Sensationalist accounts of the future of work abound in the popular media. Headlines predict a “jobless future” and the “end of work” as we know it. Indeed, social, economic and technological trends like crowdsourcing, on-demand work and automation are transforming work and workplaces around the globe. This course takes a first step at understanding how work and the workplace have evolved to the present. In the context of rapid social and technological change, students in this class will develop an understanding of not only how work was done in the past and how it is done today, but also what the future may hold as they prepare to enter the labor market.

As a primer in the sociology of work, this course will: (1) provide students with a historical and theoretical understanding of the emergence and nature of work under capitalism; (2) consider the problems associated with work; and (3) critically explore proposals for the future of work. The class is organized in three parts and guided by the learning objectives stated above. The first part of the course examines main concepts needed to understand work under capitalism, the emergence and evolution of relations of production, and organizations into the 21st century. We will then explore problems with work, learning about inequality, precarity and overwork from a sociological perspective. The final part of the course will introduce students to a series of proposals for the future of work, including those that call for redesigning the workplace, reducing the workday and changing the system.

Readings

The required book is available at the UNT Bookstore and from various online retailers. Please make sure to acquire the correct edition.

Wharton, Amy S. 2015. *Working in America: Continuity, Conflict, and Change in a New Economic Era*. 4 edition. New York: Routledge.

Additional required readings will be posted on Canvas. Readings must be completed *before* class so that we can have lively and informed discussions. Please engage in active reading by taking notes and compiling questions you may have.

Course Requirements and Grading

The final grade in the course is made up of a score for two exams (50%), a group project (30%), and your regular attendance and participation (20%). There is no final exam for this course.

Exams (50%): There will be two exams worth 25% each that will cover both the readings and material presented in class. Exams will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. More details will be distributed the week before the exam. Please mark your calendars for February 21 and April 4 as exam dates will not change.

Participation & Attendance (20%): Your engagement will be measured by weekly participation exercises and regular attendance. There are twelve short weekly exercises that will provide students the opportunity to reflect on the readings and lectures, practice multiple choice questions, and check comprehension of main concepts. If students have completed all readings and attended class, these exercises should take no more than thirty minutes. Assignments will be available on Canvas after the end of class on Thursday and due before the beginning of class the following Tuesday. The lowest two grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class. Students are allowed two (2) unexcused absences during the semester. These absences are intended to cover unexpected events such as illnesses or family emergencies and must be approved by the professor *before* class. If a student misses class without approval, their grade will be reduced by 1 percentage point for each absence. This score can be negative.

Group project (30%): Students will work in teams to co-write a report that analyzes their work experiences using key concepts from this course. This final grade for project will include 1) the submission and approval of a proposal, 2) the submission of peer-edited drafts, 3) the production of a final written report, and 4) team reviews to discourage free riding. There will be three project workdays throughout the semester: Tuesday, February 19, April 2, and April 30. A detailed assignment will be distributed during the first project workday.

Policy for Examinations and Graded Materials

Under ordinary circumstances, no makeup exams will be given and no late work will be accepted. You are expected to be present for exams. Exams may be rescheduled only under exceptional circumstances (written verification of disability, illness, or emergency) or with *prior* instructor consent. Please let me know as soon as possible if you need to reschedule an exam. The dates for all exams listed here will not change. Students requiring accommodations for exams should speak with me after obtaining an accommodation form from the Office of Disability Access.

I do not curve or scale quizzes, assignments, or final grades. You earn the grade you receive in this class. If at any point in the course you become concerned about your grades, please meet with me immediately. Except in extreme circumstances, I do not give incompletes.

Class Environment

Class time will include a combination of lectures, discussions, and individual and group exercises. I strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and civility in the classroom. I encourage students to participate by expressing your opinions, asking questions, and presenting outside information to deepen your engagement with course material.

Please do your part to facilitate a stimulating and rewarding learning environment. This involves being respectful of one another, having an open mind, and being willing to have your ideas challenged. Demonstrate respect by listening to others, refraining from interrupting, and giving your undivided attention. Harmful words and actions will not be tolerated: This includes racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, or ableist language.

Research suggests that students retain information better by taking notes by hand. I encourage you all to do this. Please do not let technology distract you from class. Do not use your cell phones or the Internet during class. If laptops become an issue, I will ban them. In the event of a distraction, I have the authority to change a student's seat or to request a student exit the classroom. One-day suspensions will be reported to appropriate departmental and collegiate personnel.

Communication Policy

I reply to emails within 24 hours and within the time frame of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please plan accordingly before exams and due dates. Before emailing, please 1) check the syllabus; 2) refer to your class notes; and/or 3) ask a classmate. Students are expected to regularly check Canvas. Please set your communication preferences so that you are notified of announcements and grade submissions.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor and then the departmental chair. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident.

Accommodations

Students with Disabilities: It is my goal to foster an inclusive learning environment in this class. UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each instructor prior to implementation in class. For additional information, please review the UNT Policy 16.001 or contact Office of Disability Access at 940-565-4323 (voice) or <http://disability.unt.edu>.

Student Athletes: Provide me with a game schedule for the semester, signed by the coach, in the first week of class in order to be eligible for an excused absence.

Religious Holy Days: If you plan to miss class to observe a religious holiday, UNT policy states that you must notify the instructor with as much advanced notice as possible. If, with proper notice, you miss a class, assignment, or exam, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable timeframe. For more information, see: <https://edo.unt.edu/religious-observances>

Understanding Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UNT community have a responsibility to uphold this mission of the university and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. For more information, see the policy: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/16-005>. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, please refer to the appropriate resources: <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/sexual-misconduct>

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to abide by the UNT Code of Student Conduct: “As a student-centered public research university, the University of North Texas has established standards of conduct to foster a safe environment conducive to learning and development. Students and university student groups are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates respect for the rights and property of others and upholds the integrity of the university community.” You are responsible for understanding the Code of Student Conduct: <http://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>.

All work you produce on assignments, papers, and exams must be your own work. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in different class), you must cite your sources otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. All written assignments will be evaluated with Turnitin (<https://www.turnitin.com>), which sends both the student and instructor an originality report.

You are responsible for understanding what constitutes such violation, according to UNT Policy 6.003, available here: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>. If you are not familiar with a citation method, seek assistance from the instructor or the free University writing lab: <http://www.unt.edu/writinglab/>.

Please maintain a high standard of individual honor and integrity. Collaboration of any kind on exams will result in a failing grade for the exam. Cheating of any kind of assignments will also result in a failing grade. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on an exam or assignment, and submitting a written assignment from a previous course without prior permission of both instructors. Scholastic dishonesty will be reported to the appropriate administrators in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

Course Schedule

All readings will be updated on the Calendar page of Canvas. The instructor reserves the right to make changes at any time to this course schedule during the semester. Any changes will be announced via Canvas and by email with advanced notice.

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2-3: Work under capitalism

Week 4-5: Organizations

Week 6: Exam 1 & group project

February 19: Project workday

February 21: Exam 1

Week 7: Post-Fordism, neoliberalism and globalization

February 28: Project proposal due

Week 8: Precarious, contingent, and flexible work

Week 9: Spring break

Week 10-11: Inequality

March 21: Peer reviews due

Week 12: Exam 2 & group project

April 2: Project workday

April 4: Exam 2

Week 13-15: Future of work

Week 16: Conclusions

April 30: Project workday

May 2: Written report and peer evaluations due