

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

SOC 312: Sociology of Work and Industry Fall Semester 2017

Meeting Times:
Tue.-Thu.-Fri., 3:35-4:25
Location: ENGMC 11

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

Working is one of the most fundamental social activities of all. Most of us will end up spending most of our waking hours at work. Work ensures our survival as a species—while potentially contributing to our destruction. It defines who we are, both as individuals and as societies. It can be a source of validation and happiness, while also being a catalyst for violence, pain, and suffering. And yet, the world of work remains a mystery to most of us, what Karl Marx referred to as a “hidden abode.”

In this course, we will delve into that hidden abode and uncover the world of work. We will start by asking fundamental questions such as: Why do we work? What counts as work? How has work changed over time, and why? We will then explore the modern world of work, focusing in particular on polarized nature of today’s workforce, with a large number of people clustered into low-paid service work, and a small number reaping outsized rewards at elite jobs. In the final weeks we will look towards the future of work.

CLASS CULTURE AND STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

Readings offer you the chance to grapple with some of the fundamental questions and challenges surrounding the world of work. **You are expected to do assigned reading before class.** You will be tested on the readings in quizzes at some point during every lecture.

I have put copies of the book on reserve in the Humanities and Social Sciences Library.

Additional Readings are available on the class MyCourses website, and in a course pack available for purchase at the McGill bookstore. These are mandatory readings, not optional. While you can certainly read them electronically on your laptop, tablet, or smartphone, you should be sure to bring a hard copy to class, so that you can reference it in discussions.

Lectures will explore the core theoretical and empirical problems at the heart of the study of work. You are responsible for all material discussed in lectures, as well as any announcements made there.

No laptops are allowed in class unless you have a legitimate, OSD-documented reason and have received explicit permission from me. (I know I couldn't resist surfing the web, emailing my friends, *etc.*, during class, so I'm removing the temptation!) Plus, recent research shows that taking notes on laptops is detrimental to learning because it results in shallower information processing (Mueller and Oppenheimer, *Psychological Science* 2014 – see article abstract at <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/25/6/1159>). You can also read a summary of other research on classroom electronics in this piece by a professor of Media Studies (i.e. someone whose job it is to study the internet and electronic communication), explaining why he does not allow electronics in class: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/09/25/why-a-leading-professor-of-new-media-just-banned-technology-use-in-class/>.

Cell phones must be switched off (not just set to vibrate) unless you have a legitimate need (*e.g.*, your spouse is about to have a baby or a liver transplant) that you have told me about.

In-class quizzes will be drawn from the readings, section discussions, and/or lectures. They will be held at a random point during every lecture, beginning with our September 19th class. They will usually consist of 3 or 4 multiple-choice questions. Your scores on these quizzes constitute 10% of your grade. The grade itself will simply be for participation (i.e. you will not be penalized for wrong answers), although you will be able to know if you got the answer right or not.

You will take these quizzes using TurningPoint online polling technology, which you can access through your phone, tablet, or laptop. For information on how to use the technology, and to register your student account, go to <http://www.mcgill.ca/polling>.

I adopted this technology for several reasons. Research by cognitive psychologists (*e.g.*, Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel 2014 *Make It Stick*) indicates that students should be graded frequently throughout the semester rather than at only a few points in time. Clickers make this possible in large classes. Clickers also make it possible for me to determine how well you grasp the material so I can spend less time on the concepts you understand well and more time on the challenging ones. This, in turn, leads to more interesting discussions. Finally, using clickers makes it easier for your reactions and opinions to serve as launching point for in-class discussion and debate.

Using your phone/tablet/laptop for quizzes is the only acceptable use of electronics in this class. That means that you need to bring one of these devices to class every day, but it can only come out during the quiz. The care and keeping of your device is your responsibility. If you forget it, if it runs out of batteries, if it fails to communicate with the receiver, or if it experiences any other kind of technical difficulty, you will get 0 on that day's quiz (equivalent to being marked absent). I will not change any quiz grade based on a report of a technical malfunction. I understand, however, that freak accidents happen and that even the most conscientious person can forget something occasionally. To allow for that possibility, I will drop your 3 lowest quiz scores. If you do not have a phone, tablet, or laptop to use to respond to polling questions, please contact the instructor immediately in order for appropriate arrangements to be made.

Conferences are an indispensable part of the course. There will be four of them in the last half of the semester. They will be places to engage with real-world sociological research, to allow you “get your hands dirty,” so to speak. They will also provide you with opportunities to ask questions about the readings or lectures, and otherwise engage the material actively, which is hard to carry off in a large lecture.

Exams and Assignments

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

In addition to regular participation in class and conferences, there will be assignments over the course of the semester that will test your knowledge of the course materials, and your ability to assimilate them and apply them to real-world situations. They will include:

1. A first in-class exam, taken on **OCTOBER 6**
2. A second in-class exam, taken on **DECEMBER 1**
3. An 8-10-page policy proposal, which will be accomplished in three steps:
 - a. A preliminary proposal, due on MyCourses on **OCTOBER 13**
 - b. A first draft, due on MyCourses on **NOVEMBER 10**
 - c. A final draft, due on MyCourses on **DECEMBER 5**

Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following:

Item	Percentage	Due Date
Participation (Clicker quizzes)	10%	Throughout semester
Conferences (Attendance 5%, Preparation 5%, Engagement 5%, Activities 5%)	20%	Throughout semester
Exams (two total, 10% each)	20%	October 6, December 1
Policy Proposal (preliminary)	10%	October 13
Policy Proposal (draft)	10%	November 10
Policy Proposal (final)	30%	December 5

IMPORTANT NOTE ON GRADING: Your preliminary policy proposal and first complete draft of your research proposal will be graded by double-blind peer review, using an online software package called Peerceptiv (www.peerceptiv.com). Peer-review is the main form of evaluation in the real world of scholarly research, not to mention grant proposals, business plans, and more. This will give you an introduction to how that process works.

That means that, in addition to submitting your own work, you will be responsible for evaluating and providing *constructive criticism* on three of your classmates' work. "Double-blind" means that you will not know the identity of the students whose work you will be evaluating, and the students whose work you will be evaluating will not know your identity. It also means that for the preliminary and first draft of your policy proposal, your grade will consist of three components: 1) the quality of your assignment, as judged by **THREE** of your peers (50%); 2) the quality of the peer evaluations you provide for **THREE** of your classmates (40%); and 3) whether you complete all three parts of the assignment (submitting your own work, evaluating the work of three of your classmates, and evaluating the quality of the three reviews of your work that you receive from your classmates) on time (10%).

For the preliminary proposal and first draft, you will have **ONE WEEK** to read and evaluate three of your classmates' assignments, using the Peerceptiv software. **IF YOU DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR PEER REVIEWS, YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE A GRADE FOR THAT ASSIGNMENT.**

Your final policy proposals will be graded by me and your TAs, with the full grade consisting of our evaluation of the quality of your research and writing.

I will provide more details on the peer review process and the overall assignment in class.

*** If you experience a significant situation that affects your ability to complete the work in this class in a timely fashion **DO NOT DELAY IN DISCUSSING THE PROBLEM WITH ME.**

Procedure for appealing grades. To appeal a grade on the research project or the exams please follow this procedure:

- 1) Within **10 working days** after the project or exam is handed back to you, write a note explaining why you think your grade should be changed. One or two paragraphs should be sufficient to argue the merits of your case.
- 2) Make an appointment to meet with the TA during office hours, during which time your TA will explain her decision about your appeal. If you cannot meet your TA during office hours, your TA will respond to you via email.
- 3) If you are not satisfied with your TA's decision and reasoning, within **10 working days** of receiving your TA's decision, make an appointment to meet the professor, who will evaluate the TA's decision. After that, students are entitled to a re-read or re-assessment by a professor not teaching the course should they request it.

Academic honesty. McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles

actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

According to a recent national survey (the National Study of Youth and Religion Wave 2), 50% of college students reported cheating at least once in the previous year and 18% reported more frequent cheating. It is a mathematical certainty that some members of our class will try to cheat at some point during the semester. In fairness to students who are honest, those who are detected cheating will be dealt with as severely as University policy allows. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, using notes or written or electronic materials during an exam or quiz; copying another person's exam, quiz or research project; allowing someone to copy your exam, quiz, or research project; having someone take an exam or quiz for you; or plagiarizing any written assignment. Any suspected cheating will be immediately reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.

The use of online software in lectures will allow us to have more enjoyable, more interactive discussions and to conduct daily quizzes quickly. It also creates opportunities for academic dishonesty. Using someone else's polling login for them is the same as cheating on an exam. Students caught engaging in such activity will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Accommodations

If you require special accommodations for this class, please let me know as soon as possible. You are never required to tell me personal information; however, if you are having problems that affect your ability to attend, participate, or keep up with the workload in this class, please don't wait until right before the exams to ask for help, and don't just disappear. I may be able to help you or direct you to someone else who can help you.

The McGill Office for Students With Disabilities (514-398-6009, <https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/office-students-disabilities>) provides resources for students with disabilities. You will need to provide documentation of disability to them in order to receive official university services and accommodations.

Absences

If you are absent, you are still responsible for the course materials you missed. You should get the notes from someone in the class, review those notes, and come see me in office hours if you have any questions. I do not deviate from the syllabus, and if I do, I will email the class, so you can assume that what is on the syllabus is what we covered in class. Please do not email me to ask if you "missed anything important," as that implies that every class is not important.

Respect

Please be respectful of yourself, your peers, and me. This means raising your hand before speaking, keeping an open mind, and never chatting while someone else is speaking. Making excessive noise during class (such as by chatting or packing up before class is over) is rude to everyone in the room, as it denies the people around you (and yourself) a chance to learn. If

you have a question, please ask me (not your neighbor). Finally, if you make an office hours appointment with me, show up. If you cannot come, send me an email letting me know ASAP.

Email

I will be communicating with you via email a lot. Please check your McGill email regularly.

I am not always available via email. I will usually be able answer your email within 24 hours (except on weekends). Please do not expect an immediate response to your emails.

Please write your emails to me like you would write an email to your boss or fellow work colleague. Emails should have a proper greeting (Hi, Hello, Dear, Greetings, etc.) followed by my name (you may call me Dr. Eidlin, Professor Eidlin, or Barry). The body of your email should be written in complete sentences, using standard English grammar and spelling (not in “text speak”), and should use a respectful, professional tone. Please be sure to sign your emails with at least your first name. It can be hard to tell who the email is from if you do not sign it.

Questions

You can approach me with questions at any time. My preference is to answer questions in class or in office hours – this format is best for avoiding misunderstandings (which are common via email or when conversations are rushed). I am also available to answer quick questions via email (allow up to 24 hours to respond, longer if on the weekend) and right after or before class. If at any time you feel that what I am doing is not advancing your learning, please let me know (in a respectful manner) – I want each and every one of you to feel safe and to learn, so please let me know if that is not happening.

(COURSE SCHEDULE STARTS ON NEXT PAGE)

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART 1: THE PROBLEM AND THE PAST OF WORK

WEEK 1

September 5: Course introduction: Logistics, syllabus, overview

September 7: The current scenario for young workers

Reading: Purdon, Nick and Leonardo Palleja. 2017. "‘The Millennial Side Hustle,’ Not Stable Job, Is the New Reality for University Grads." *CBC News*. March 12. (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/millennial-jobs-education-1.4009295>).

September 8: The bigger picture in Canada

Reading: Jackson, Andrew and Mark Thomas. 2017. "Work, Wages, and Living Standards in Canada." Pp. 21-43 in *Work and Labour in Canada: Critical Issues*. 3rd ed. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

WEEK 2

September 12: Why work?

Reading: Heilbroner, Robert. 2011. *The Making of Economic Society*, Chapter 1: "The Economic Problem"

September 14: What is work?

Reading: Padavic, Irene and Barbara Reskin. 2002. *Women and Men at Work*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press. Chapter 1: Work and Gender

September 15: Pre-capitalist forms of work

Reading: Heilbroner, *The Making of Economic Society*, Chapter 2: The Premarket Economy

WEEK 3

September 19: The transition to capitalism (**First day of in-class quizzes**)

Reading: Heilbroner, *The Making of Economic Society*, Chapter 3: The Emergence of Market Society

September 21: Work and the Industrial Revolution

Reading: Heilbroner, *The Making of Economic Society*, Chapter 4: The Industrial Revolution

September 22: Gender and work under capitalism

Reading: Padavic and Resnick, *Women and Men at Work*, 2nd ed., Chapter 2: Gendered Work in Time and Place

WEEK 4

September 26: The labor problem under capitalism

Reading: Braverman, Harry. 1998 (1974). *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. New York: Monthly Review Press, Chapter 1: Labor and Labor Power, and Chapter 2: The Origins of Management.

September 28: Solving the labor problem—I

Reading: Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, Chapter 3: The Division of Labor.

September 29: Solving the labor problem—II

Reading: Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, Chapter 4: Scientific Management.

WEEK 5

October 3: Solving the labor problem—III

Reading: Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, Chapter 5: Effects of Scientific Management, and Chapter 6: The Habituation of the Worker to the Capitalist Mode of Production.

October 5: In-class midterm exam review

October 6: **IN-CLASS EXAM 1**

PART II: THE PRESENT OF WORK

WEEK 6

October 10: The “Golden Age” of work and its decline

Reading: Kalleberg, Arne L. 2011. “Economic Transformation and the Decline of Institutional Protections.” Pp. 21–39 in *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

October 12: The question of democracy

Reading: Anderson, Elizabeth. 2017. *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don't Talk About It)*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2: Private Government, and Chapter 6: Work Isn't So Bad After All.

October 13: Film, “The Last Truck: Closing of a GM Plant”

PRELIMINARY POLICY PROPOSAL DUE ON MYCOURSES OCTOBER 13, 11:59 P.M.

WEEK 7

October 17: Inside the service economy—I

Reading: Sherman, Rachel. 2007. *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, Introduction and Chapter 1.

October 19: Inside the service economy—II
Reading: Sherman, *Class Acts*, Chapters 2-3

October 20: Film, “Dish: Women, Waitressing, and the Art of Service”

PEER EVALUATIONS OF PRELIMINARY POLICY PROPOSAL DUE OCTOBER 20, 11:59 PM

WEEK 8

October 24: Inside the service economy—III
Reading: Sherman, *Class Acts*, Chapters 4-5.

October 26: Inside the service economy—IV
Reading: Sherman, *Class Acts*, Chapter 6 and Conclusion.

October 27: CONFERENCE 1

BACKEVALUATIONS OF PRELIMINARY POLICY PROPOSAL DUE OCTOBER 27, 11:59 PM

WEEK 9

October 31: Elite labour markets—I
Reading: Rivera, Lauren A. 2016. *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, Chapters 1-3.

November 2: Elite labour markets—II
Reading: Rivera, *Pedigree*, Chapters 4-6.

November 3: Film, “Hospital City”

WEEK 10

November 7: Elite labour markets—III
Reading: Rivera, *Pedigree*, Chapters 7-9.

November 9: Elite labour markets—IV
Reading: Rivera, *Pedigree*, Chapters 10-Afterword.

November 10: CONFERENCE 2

FIRST DRAFT OF POLICY PROPOSAL DUE ON MYCOURSES NOVEMBER 10, 11:59 P.M.

PART III: THE FUTURE OF WORK

WEEK 11

November 14: The “gig economy”

Reading: Heller, Nathan. 2017. “Is the Gig Economy Working?” *The New Yorker*, May 15.
Konczal, Mike. 2014. “Socialize Uber.” *The Nation*, December 10.
<https://www.thenation.com/article/socialize-uber/>

November 16: Work and life

Reading: Tokumitsu, Miya. 2014. “In the Name of Love.” *Jacobin*.
(<http://jacobinmag.com/2014/01/in-the-name-of-love/>).

November 17: CONFERENCE 3

PEER EVALUATIONS OF DRAFT POLICY PROPOSALS DUE NOVEMBER 17, 11:59 PM

WEEK 12

November 21: The coming robot apocalypse?

Readings: Acemoglu, Daron and Pascual Restrepo. 2017. “Robots and Jobs: Evidence From the US.” *voxeu.org*. Retrieved August 26, 2017 (<http://voxeu.org/article/robots-and-jobs-evidence-us>).
Rotman, David. 2013. “How Technology Is Destroying Jobs.” *MIT Technology Review*. Retrieved (<https://www.technologyreview.com/s/515926/how-technology-is-destroying-jobs/>).

November 23: The robot apocalypse: not so much

Reading: Mishel, Lawrence and Josh Bivens. 2017. *The Zombie Robot Argument Lurches on: There Is No Evidence That Automation Leads to Joblessness or Inequality*. Washington, D.C.

November 24: CONFERENCE 4

BACKEVALUATIONS OF DRAFT POLICY PROPOSAL DUE NOVEMBER 24, 11:59 PM

WEEK 13

November 28: Concluding thoughts

Reading: Frase, Peter. 2012. “Four Futures.” *Jacobin*, Issue 5 (November 1), 26–34.

November 30: In-class exam 2 review

December 1: **IN-CLASS EXAM 2**

FINAL POLICY PROPOSAL DUE ON MYCOURSES DECEMBER 5, 11:59 P.M.