

SOCIOLOGY OF WORK AND INEQUALITY

Designed as an introduction to the sociological debates on work and inequality, this seminar engages exemplary recent studies of that topic. We begin, however, with an exploration of the historical development of work and labor in the course of capitalist development in the United States, and then will consider some canonical texts in the sociological literature. That will provide a grounding for the main subject of the course: the causes and consequences of growing precarity and labor market polarization since the neoliberal turn of the mid-1970s, and the accompanying widening of inequality in that period. With particular emphasis on the employment situation of non-college educated workers, and with attention to race, ethnicity, nativity, and gender as well as class, we will read a series of monographs of the experience of workers in particular occupations and industries – from trucking and firefighting, to health care and home care, to retail – as well as studies of such broader phenomena as hiring practices, the rise of “gig” work in the 21st century, and the social and health effects of skyrocketing inequality.

This is a reading course with a seminar format. Requirements include:

- Faithful class attendance and active participation in discussion.
- Weekly written reactions to the assigned texts (maximum of 250 words), due 24 hours before each class meeting.
- A research paper on a topic related to the course content and approved in advance by the instructor. This can be an empirically grounded research paper, a literature review, or a research proposal. The instructor will schedule meetings to discuss paper topics with each student individually.
- Oral presentations on the course readings, starting February 22.

The books by Viscelli, Desmond, Pedulla, Wingfield, Stacey, Krinsky and Simonet, Wood, Schor, and Case and Deaton, should be obtained directly by students and are available at <https://gc.textbookx.com/institutional/index.php>. Other readings can be found either through links listed below or in the class Dropbox, at this link: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/og9003s7yj00qr8/AAASP6RjD0IfQ0Tm4Qnq1jjca?dl=0>

Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings

Week 1 (February 1) *Introduction* (Overview of key questions the seminar will cover as well as discussion of course requirements and logistics.)

Week 2 (February 8) *Agricultural Capitalism and Proletarianization*

Readings: Gavin Wright, "American Agriculture and the Labor Market: What Happened to Proletarianization," *Agricultural History* 62:3 (Summer 1988): 182-209.

Alex Lichtenstein, "Proletarians or Peasant? Sharecroppers and the Politics of Protest in the Rural South, 1880-1940," *Plantation Society in the Americas*, vol. V, nos. 2 & 3 (Fall 1998): 297-331.

Robert J. Thomas, "The Social Organization of Industrial Agriculture," *The Insurgent Sociologist*, vol. X, no. 3 (Winter 1981): 5-20.

NO CLASS Feb. 15 (President's Day)

Week 3 (February 22) *Historical Perspectives on Manufacturing and Construction*

Readings:

Herbert G. Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (June 1973), pp. 531-88.

Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "Bureaucratic and Craft Administration of Production: A Comparative Study," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Sept. 1959): 168-87.

Week 4 (March 1) *The Labor Process Debate*

Readings: Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), Introduction and Chapters 1-9 (pp. 3-162). <http://digamo.free.fr/braverman.pdf>

Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), Chapters 2, 4 and 5 (pp. 13-30, 46-94). <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/books.htm>

Week 5 (March 8) *After the Neoliberal Turn*

Readings: Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury), Chapters 1, 2, and 5 (pp. 1-58, 115-31)
[https://www.hse.ru/data/2013/01/28/1304836059/Standing.%20The Precariat The New Dangerous Class -Bloomsbury USA\(2011\).pdf](https://www.hse.ru/data/2013/01/28/1304836059/Standing.%20The%20Precariat%20The%20New%20Dangerous%20Class%20-Bloomsbury%20USA(2011).pdf)

(readings for March 8 continue on p. 3)

Arne Kalleberg, "Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in Transition," *American Sociological Review*, vol. 74 no. 1 (Feb. 2009): 1-22.

Michael Burawoy, "Manufacturing Consent Revisited," *La Nouvelle Revue du Travail*, no. 1 (2012): 1-15.

Week 6 (March 15) *The Demise of "Good Jobs"*

Reading: Steve Viscelli, *The Big Rig: Trucking and the Decline of the American Dream* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016) – entire book

Week 7 (March 22) *The Culture of Dangerous Work*

Reading: Matthew Desmond, *On the Fireline: Living and Dying with Wildland Firefighters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) – entire book

NO CLASS MARCH 29 (Spring Break)

Week 8 (April 5) *Getting a Job in the "New" Economy*

Reading: David Pedulla, *Making the Cut: Hiring Decisions, Bias, and the Consequences of Nonstandard, Mismatched and Precarious Employment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020) – entire book

Week 9 (April 12) *Intersectionality, Micro-aggressions and Tokenism*

Reading: Adia Harvey Wingfield, *No More Invisible Man: Race and Gender in Men's Work* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013) – entire book

Louwanda Evans and Wendy Leo Moore, "Impossible Burdens: White Institutions, Emotional Labor and Micro-Resistance," *Social Problems* vol. 62, no. 3 (2015): 439-54.

Week 10 (April 19) *Gendered Carework and Emotional Labor*

Reading: Clare L. Stacey, *The Caring Self: The Work Experience of Home Care Aides* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011) – entire book

Cinzia Solari, “Professionals and Saints: How Immigrant Careworkers Negotiate Gender Identities at Work,” *Gender & Society*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2006): 301-331

Week 11 (April 26) *Low-Wage Work in the Public Sector*

Reading: John Krinsky and Maud Simonet, *Who Cleans the Park? Public Work and Urban Governance in New York City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017) – entire book

Week 12 (May 3) *Retail Work and “Flexibility”*

Reading: Alex J. Wood, *Despotism on Demand: How Power Operates in the Flexible Workplace* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020) – entire book

Week 13 (May 10) *The Gig Economy and the Future of Work*

Reading: Juliet B. Schor, *After the Gig: How the Sharing Economy Got Hijacked and How to Win It Back* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020) – entire book

Week 14 (May 17) *The New Inequality*

Reading: Anne Case and Angus Deaton, *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020) – entire book

FINAL PAPERS DUE by 12 noon on May 25