

# Introduction to Economic Sociology

Soc 590, Spring 2016 – Thursdays, 1:30 – 3:20 in Savery 409



Office Hours: by appointment via [meetme.so/SarahQuinn](https://meetme.so/SarahQuinn)  
Professor Sarah Quinn, [slquinn@uw.edu](mailto:slquinn@uw.edu)

This course provides an introduction to economic sociology for graduate students, focusing on central questions and debates in the field. When sociologists analyze markets, what phenomena are elevated to privileged objects of analysis? How do broader sociological understandings of states, identities, power relations and expertise inform the sociological study of economic life? And how does the study of economic life transform our understanding of social dynamics in turn? Class time will be run as a seminar with students leading discussion. I will step in as needed to provide background information, direction, and clarifications. But I will lecture only periodically, and will try to mostly listen.

Substantively, we will begin with a review of some founding insights in sociological theory, and an overview of the genesis of the subfield. From there, we will dive into theories of action in economic life, which will lead us from a focus on people and objects to the insight that much action in economic life happens at the level of the firm. We'll spend a week on organizations and organizational theory before discussing the state not just as a condition of possibility for advanced capitalist markets, but a creative market participant in its own right. At that point, the course will move into readings on boundaries, bodies and relational work; knowledge and technology; finance and credit. The last weeks of the course will focus on political economy, considering new work that analyses a social world transformed by neoliberalism and financialization.

## REQUIREMENTS

Each of the above is worth the following percentage of your grade

Participation	20%
Memos	40%
Presentation	20%
Additional Writing	30%

**Participation.** Course members should be prepared to actively participate. As with any seminar, you should show up to each class with the readings completed, and with reading notes in-hand. This means that before we meet you should have already spent some time considering (i) the strengths and weaknesses of each piece, (ii) how the current reading relates to other course materials, and (iii) implications for research. You should also have at least one or two questions prepared to share with the class. I may sometimes start class by asking students to share these questions.

**Presentations.** Starting in about the third week, students will work in pairs to present an additional reading that informs the day's theme. These are 10-15 minute presentations at the start of class on foundational texts. They will be accompanied by 2-3 page summaries of the work and its importance. The timing and frequencies of these will depend on class enrollment, and so will be determined after the class first meets.

**Response Memos.** You will turn in response memos (about 3 double-spaced pages) on four separate weeks of your choosing. Responses memos are due on paper in class. On the first day of class we will discuss how to approach them.

**Additional Writing.** In addition to the above, you will also do either:

- 1) **A research project**, 15 pages or so, due on the last day of class.
  - a. If you would like to develop a new project, you may use this final paper to write a **proposal** that builds on questions, methods, and/or topics discussed in this course.
  - b. You may pilot a project and write it up for your final paper. To select this option you must meet with me to discuss your plans *by the end of week four*.
  - c. You may **analyze existing research** in terms of the course materials. If you have an article in progress you may rewrite it in view of the

course readings, or else you may submit an analysis of how the course readings informs your earlier/ongoing research.

- 2) **More memos.** For this option, you will submit reading responses on four additional weeks, for a total of eight memos. One of these must be an extended memo (5 - 7 pages long).

**Accommodations.** I want every student to learn as much as possible from this course, and understand that different students have different needs. Please come see me if you would like to discuss accommodations.

**Readings.** Journal articles are available through Jstor.org Books can be purchased through online booksellers or, where indicated, are available for free online through the library's webpage.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Required texts are listed below.

A list of supplemental and recommended readings is available on Canvas.

### WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION & FOUNDATIONS

- Bernard Convert, and Johan Heilbron. 2007. "Where Did the New Economic Sociology Come From?" *Theory and Society* 36(1):31-54.
- Marx & Engels (available at Marxists.org): Speech at the Anniversary of the People's Paper. German Ideology
- Randall Collins. 1980. "Weber's Last Theory of Capitalism: A Systematization" *American Sociological Review* 45.6: 925–942.

### WEEK 2: THE PERSON

- Gary Becker, 1993. "Nobel Lecture: The Economic Way of Looking at Behavior." *Journal of Political Economy*, 101(3), 385–409. Available from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2138769>
- Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. 1981. "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice" *Science*, 30: 453-458
- Amartya Sen, 1990[1977]. "Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory." In: Jane J. Mansbridge (ed.), *Beyond Self-Interest*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 25-43.
- Mark Granovetter, 1985. "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness." *AJS* 91(3), 481–510.
- Pierre Bourdieu. "Making the Economic Habitus: Algerian Workers Revisited." *Ethnography* 2000. 1(1): 17-41.
- Alex Preda, 1999. "The Turn to Things: Arguments for a Sociological Theory of Things." *The Sociological Quarterly*, 40(2), 347–366.

### WEEK 3: THE FIRM

Student presentation: Chandler's *Visible Hand*

- Richard Swedberg. 2013. "Economic versus Sociological Approaches to Organization Theory." In *The Oxford Handbook of Organization Theory*.
- Caitlin Rosenthal. 2018. "Chapter 1: Hierarchies of Life and Death" in *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Paul DiMaggio & Woody Powell. 1983. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–60.

- David Ciepley. 2013. "Beyond Public and Private: Toward a Political Theory of the Corporation." *American Political Science Review* 107: 139-158
- Andrew Schrank and Josh Whitford. "Industrial Policy in the United States: A Neo-Polanyian Interpretation." *Politics & Society* 37.4 (2009): 521-553.

#### **WEEK 4: THE STATE**

Presentation: Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*

- Jens Beckert. 2009. "The Social Order of Markets." *Theory and Society* 38.3: 245-269
- Pierre Bourdieu. 2014. *On the State: Lectures at the College De France, 1989-1992*. Malden, MA: Polity Press. Selected pages.
- Bruce G. Carruthers and Arthur L. Stinchcombe. "The Social Structure of Liquidity: Flexibility, Markets, and States." *Theory and Society* 28.3 (1999): 353-382.
- Frank Dobbin. 2001. "Why the Economy Reflects the Polity: Early Rail Policy in Britain, France, and the United States." From Mark Granovetter and Richard Swedberg (eds.). *The Sociology of Economic Life*. New York: Westview, pp. 397-418.
- Fred Block. 2008 "Swimming Against the Current: The Rise of a Hidden Developmental State in the United States." *Politics & society* 36.2 (2008): 169-206.

#### **WEEK 5: BOUNDARIES AND BODIES**

Student Presentation: *The Gift, Marcel Mauss*

- Viviana Zelizer. 2012. "How I Became a Relational Economic Sociologist and What Does that Mean?" *Politics & Society* 40(2): 145-174.
- Gabriel Rossman. 2014. "Obfuscatory Relational Work and Disreputable Exchange." *Sociological Theory* 32(1):43-63
- Ashley Mears. 2015. "Girls as Elite Distinction: The Appropriation of Bodily Capital." *Poetics* 53: 22-37.
- Kimberly Hoang. 2014. Competing Technologies of Embodiment: Pan-Asian Modernity and Third World Dependency in Vietnam's Contemporary Sex Industry. *Gender & Society*, 28(4), 513–536.
- Jordanna Matlon. 2016. "Racial Capitalism and the Crisis of Black Masculinity." *American Sociological Review* 81(5): 1014-1038.

## **WEEK 6: ECONOMIC KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGIES**

- Timothy Mitchell. 2005. "The Work of Economics: How a Discipline Makes its World." *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 46.2: 297-320.
- Marion Fourcade. 2011. "Cents and Sensibility: Economic Valuation and the Nature of "Nature" AJS 116, no. 6. 1721-77.
- Daniel Hirschman and Elizabeth Popp Berman. 2014. "Do Economists Make Policies? On the Political Effects of Economics." *Socio-Economic Review* 12.4: 779-811
- Virginia Eubanks. *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*. St. Martin's Press, 2018. Selected pages.
- Daina Ramey Berry. 2017. *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of The Enslaved from Womb to Grave in The Building of a Nation*. Boston: Beacon Press Selected Pages

## **WEEK 7: CREDIT AND FINANCE**

- Marion Fourcade and Kieran Healy. 2013. "Classification Situations: Life-Chances in the Neoliberal Era." *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 38(8): 559-72.
- Sarah Quinn, *American Bonds*, Chapters 1, 4
- Greta R. Krippner. 2017. "Democracy of Credit: Ownership and the Politics of Credit Access in late Twentieth-Century America." *American Journal of Sociology* 123, no. 1 (2017): 1-47.
- Frederick F. Wherry, Kristin S. Seefeldt, Jose Quinonez, and Anthony S. Alvarez. 2019. *Credit Where It's Due: Rethinking Financial Citizenship*. Russell Sage Foundation. Selected pages.

## **WEEK 8: NEOLIBERALISM**

- Stephanie L. Mudge. 2018. *Leftism Reinvented: Western Parties from Socialism to Neoliberalism*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, (Available as Ebook via UW library)

## **WEEK 9: POLITICAL ECONOMY I: CAPITALISM EATS DEMOCRACY?**

- Wolfgang Streeck. 2014. *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso

## **WEEK 10: POLITICAL ECONOMY II: SMALL TOWNS, BIG PROBLEMS**

- Josh Pacewicz. 2016. *Partisans and Partners: The Politics of the Post-Keynesian Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.