

Sociology 054

GOOD JOBS, BAD JOBS, NO JOB:

WORK AND WORKERS IN 21st CENTURY AMERICA

Spring 2009, Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-4:45

Classroom: 3024 Global Education Center

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-3:00 (in 4116 GEC)

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Goals of the Seminar

Work is a core activity in society. It is a central life interest for many individuals, links persons to each other, and locates them within the stratification system. Work reveals much about the social order, how it is changing, and the kinds of problems and issues that people (and their governments) must address. Social, economic and political forces are transforming work in American society; these changes have produced major consequences for social institutions and individuals.

To understand better these changes, we will examine the nature and meaning of work in the contemporary United States. We will seek to answer questions such as: What are the main changes that are currently taking place in work and jobs in the United States? Why are some jobs "good" and others "bad"? Why are some people able to get jobs that "fit" their needs and expectations while others are mismatched to their jobs? What explains the growth of temporary work and why do so many people work as temps? Why are so many companies downsizing their workforces? What is the relationship between immigration and work? We will address these questions by reading books and articles, by class discussions and debates, by collecting information using the internet, and by interviewing workers and studying different kinds of jobs.

Goals of First-Year Seminars

When the College of Arts and Sciences created these seminars, 7 goals were outlined. You can expect to work toward the following goals:

1. To formulate meaningful questions raised by the topic of the seminar.
2. To appreciate the views of others as well as understand the merits and limitations of one's own perspective.

3. To use written, oral, or other forms of communication as tools for exploring intellectual problems, synthesizing material from various sources, and formulating effective arguments.
4. To read a variety of texts with understanding and critical judgment.
5. To understand how to acquire and use appropriately different kinds of evidence.
6. To gain an appreciation for collaborative inquiry.
7. To integrate learning inside and outside the classroom.

Ultimately, this seminar will be judged by how well it achieves these 7 goals.

Rules of the Class

1. We start and end class on time.
2. Turn off cell phones, pagers, and beepers.
3. No surfing the web or checking email on your laptops.
4. No drinking or eating in class (a GEC rule).
5. Check your email account and the course Web page (Blackboard) in preparation for each class. Some parts of the assignment are ONLY listed on the Blackboard Web page for Daily Assignments.
6. Read the assigned materials before each class, and come prepared to discuss and answer questions (orally and in writing) about it.

Contacts

You can reach me by email at Arne_Kalleberg@unc.edu. For simple questions, that is the fastest and quickest way to reach me. For more difficult questions, please come see me during my office hours or see me after class. You can read more about my research interests on my Home Page (www.unc.edu/~arnekal).

Course information is available on the Blackboard Web Page (Blackboard.unc.edu; Sociology 054). A copy of the course syllabus and assignments is posted and updated frequently, and you should check the Blackboard Web Page in preparation for each class.

Office Hours

My office hours are Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-3:00 in 4116 GEC. (*Any changes to these office hours will be posted as “announcements” on Blackboard.*) To make the best use of our time, you should come prepared with some fairly specific questions. For example, you might have a question about a reading you don't understand, a concept we've covered in class, or something you've seen on CNN News or the Web. Try to be specific about how I can help you. You don't have to have a problem to come to office hours—you may just want to chat about something, and that's OK, too.

Honor Code

The University Honor Code will be in effect through all assignments. Please read carefully the provisions of the Honor Code, make certain you understand and adhere to them, and ask me to clarify any questions you have regarding the Code. The Code is a long and valuable tradition at UNC—protect it!

Texts and Readings

We will read three paperback books, which are available in the Student Bookstore:

John Bowe, Marisa Bowe and Sabin Streeter (editors). 2000. *Gig: Americans Talk About Their Jobs*. (New York: Three Rivers Press.) (ISBN 0-609-80707-2)

Barbara Ehrenreich. 2002. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. (NY: Owl Books.) (ISBN 0805063897)

Richard Sennett. 1998. *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (NY: W.W. Norton.) (ISBN 0-393-31987-3)

In addition, I will ask you to read a number of articles, which can be accessed through the Blackboard Course Web Page.

Attendance

It is important that you come to class regularly. If you know you'll be out of town and have to miss a class, please let me know ahead of time if possible.

Evaluation

Your course grade is based upon five in-class written assignments, five short papers, a research paper, group presentations, and contributions in the classroom. Due to the writing intensive nature of the course, there will be no final exam.

1. In class written assignments: In five classes, you will be asked to write a short essay in answer to a question related to the day's assignment. The study question(s) listed for each day is a good guideline to use in preparing for the writing we will do.
2. Five short papers (2 of which are based on books we will read) and a longer research/policy paper will be required. Details about these papers, and criteria for how I will evaluate them, will be given on the Blackboard Course Web Page.

3. Because this is a special first-year seminar, part of the focus of the course will be on how to make positive classroom contributions. A big part of this will be via teamwork. I will assign each of you to a team, and the team will be asked to make several presentations to the class during the semester.

Components of your Grade

Short papers:	40 %
1. Movie Review	10
2. Collect information on and rank 2 occupations	10
3. Op-Ed/Research Memo	10
4. Book-related writing assignments (2 x 5)	10
Team work	20 %
1. Two Team presentations of class material	10
2. Team Research presentation	10
In-class writing assignments (5 x 2)	10
Class Contributions	10
Op-Ed/Research Paper	<u>20</u>
Total	100%

Grading Scale

At the end of the term, you will receive a letter grade, based on the following performance levels:

A	=	90-100
B	=	80-89
C	=	70-79
D	=	60-69
F	=	BELOW 60

****Any changes to these dates/topics/readings/etc. will be posted as “announcements” on the Blackboard Course Web Page****

I. Introduction: What are Jobs and how do sociologists study them?

January 13 (Tuesday)

Introduction to each other and the course

Question: What are the course goals and requirements?

January 15 (Thursday)

TOPIC: What is work? What is a job?

Questions: What do we mean by “work” and “jobs”? How do sociologists study work and jobs? In what sense can these examples from *GIG* be considered to be “work?”

Readings:

Keith Grint, “Problems of Definition: What is Work?” Pp. 8-12 in *The Sociology of Work* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991).

Ronald M. Pavalko, “An Introduction to the Study of Work,” Pp. 1-5 in *Sociology of Occupations and Professions*, Second Edition (Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1988)

GIG: Drug Dealer (Pp. 134-138), Mother (Pp. 469-475), Palm Reader (Pp. 655-659), Prisoner (Pp. 552-557).

January 20 (Tuesday)

TOPIC: Types of Occupations and Industries

Questions: What are occupations? What are industries? What is the difference between occupations and industries? How do occupations in service industries differ from occupations in goods manufacturing industries?

Readings:

Curt Tausky, “Occupations,” Pp. 46-48 and “Service-Producing and Goods-Producing Industries,” Pp. 52-53 in *Work and Society: An Introduction to Industrial Sociology*, Second Edition (Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc. 1996.

GIG: Tofu Manufacturer (Pp. 107-112), Poultry Factory Worker (Pp. 227-231), Waitress (Pp. 232-236), Comedian (Pp. 379-384).

II. The Organization of Work

January 22 (*Thursday*)

TOPIC: Social Division of Labor

Questions: What do we mean by the social division of labor? What is the function of the social division of labor?

Readings:

Keith Grint, "Durkheim and Industrial Society," Pp. 100-104 in *The Sociology of Work* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991).

Donald J. Treiman., "The Division of Labor and Occupational Specialization," Pp. 6-12 in *Occupational Prestige in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Academic Press, 1977).

January 27 (*Tuesday*)

TOPIC: Organizational Division of Labor

Questions: What do we mean by the organizational division of labor? How does it differ from the social division of labor?

Readings:

Harry Braverman, "The Division of Labor," Pp. 70-84 in *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

GIG: Ford Auto Worker (Pp. 43-48), Slaughterhouse Human Resources Director (Pp. 48-54)

January 29 (*Thursday*)

TOPIC: Autonomy and Control Over Work

Questions: What is meant by "autonomy and control" in the workplace? How and why do these jobs from *GIG* (see below) differ in their degree of autonomy and control over work?

Readings:

Richard Edwards, "Conflict and Control in the Workplace," Pp. 11-22 in *Contested Terrain* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

GIG: Chief Executive Officer (Pp. 54-58), Bar Owner (Pp. 116-120), Stripper (Pp. 449-454)

February 3 (Tuesday)

TOPIC: Employment Relations and Psychological Contracts

Questions: What do we mean by the “standard” employment relationship? What explains the growth of “nonstandard” employment relationships, such as temporary and part-time work?

Readings:

Peter Cappelli, “The Psychological Contract” and “The New Deal” (pp. 18-37) in *The New Deal at Work* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999)

GIG: Temp (Pp. 58-62)

III. Work and Individuals

February 5 (Thursday) and February 10 (Tuesday)

TOPIC: Meaning of Work

Questions: What motivates people to work? How have the changes in the organization of work affected the meaning of work for individuals? How does the meaning of work differ for different groups of people, and at different stages of one’s life?

Reading:

Richard Sennett. 1998. *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*: **Read pp. 15-97 for February 5, and pp. 98-148 for February 10.**

**** Writing Assignment on Sennett book is due on February 10 ****

February 12 (Thursday)

TOPIC: Gender and Work

Questions: What are the differences between “men’s” jobs and “women’s” jobs? Why do men and women have different kinds of jobs? Are gender differences in work inevitable?

Readings:

“Women and Work: Visual Essay,” *Monthly Labor Review*, October 2003: 46-50.

GIG: Highway Flagger (Pp. 169-172), Flight Attendant (Pp. 193-199), FBI Agent (Pp. 517-523), Nurse (Pp. 613-617)

February 17 (Tuesday)

TOPIC: Mismatching Persons and Jobs

Questions: What do we mean by saying that persons and jobs are “mismatched”? What causes mismatches? What can be done to reduce mismatches? Can you give an example of a mismatch that is *not* discussed in the reading?

Reading:

Arne Kalleberg. 2008. “The Mismatched Worker: When People Don’t Fit Their Jobs.” *Academy of Management Perspectives* 22 (February): 24-40.

February 19 (Thursday)

TOPIC: How do movies illustrate issues we have discussed so far?

Each student should view a movie from a list that I will provide (feel free to view and discuss the movie with others in the class). Each person should then write a short review of the movie, showing how it addresses a theme we have discussed in class.

****Movie reviews due****

IV. Dimensions of Job Quality

February 24 (Tuesday)

TOPIC: “Good” and “Bad” Jobs

Questions: What are the characteristics of “good” and “bad” jobs? What job characteristics differentiate good and bad jobs?

Readings:

Les Krantz, *Jobs Rated Almanac*, Sixth Edition (2002), pp. 15-16, 84-85, 130-131, 185-186, 231-232, 273-274, 322-323, 328-329

GIG: Kinko’s Co-Worker (Pp. 71-79), Merchandise Handler (Pp. 84-87), Minister (Pp. 652-655)

February 26 (Thursday)

TOPIC: Ranking Jobs

Questions: How does Tilly rank jobs? How does the *Jobs Rated Almanac* rank jobs? How do these two ranking systems differ?

Readings:

Chris Tilly, "Arresting the decline of good jobs in the USA?" *Industrial Relations Journal* 28 (4): 269-274.

Les Krantz 2002. *Jobs Rated Almanac 2002* (Sixth Edition). (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books) (Pp. 1-2, Skim pp. 3-14).

March 3 (Tuesday)

TOPIC: What is a Good Job?

Questions: What are the characteristics of a good job? To what extent do individuals differ in what they consider to be a "good" job?

Reading:

Chris Tilly, 1997. "Arresting the decline of good jobs in the USA?" *Industrial Relations Journal* 28 (4): 269-274. (Pay most attention to pp. 269-271).

March 5 (Thursday)

TOPIC: What are Bad Jobs and Who Has Them?

Questions: What makes a job "bad"? Are the jobs described by Barbara Ehrenreich bad?

Readings:

Barbara Ehrenreich. 2001. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. New York: Metropolitan Books, pp. 1-49.

GIG: UPS Driver (Pp. 5-9)

****Ranking Jobs Paper Due****

March 10 and March 12 (SPRING BREAK--NO CLASS)

V. Work Problems and Policy Topics

March 17 (Tuesday)

TOPIC: The Problem of Bad Jobs

Questions: Are the bad jobs described by Barbara Ehrenreich “unskilled” jobs? How does management control workers in these jobs? Why do the jobs described by Barbara Ehrenreich pay low wages? What should the government do to eliminate “bad” jobs? What are the responsibilities of business in alleviating “bad” jobs?

Reading:

Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, pp. 51-191.

March 19 (Thursday): NO CLASS

Reading:

Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, pp. 193-221

March 24 (Tuesday)

TOPIC: No Jobs vs. Bad Jobs: Unemployment and Workfare

Questions: Is a bad job worse than no job at all? What is workfare? What are the consequences of workfare? Is it a good idea? What is meant by "Unemployment"? How does the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics calculate the Unemployment Rate? How does the Unemployment Rate differ for different groups of labor force participants?

Readings:

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS): *The Employment Situation, TBA*

Robert Moffitt, “From Welfare to Work: What the Evidence Shows.” *The Brookings Institution Policy Brief No. 13* (January 2002): p. 1-7.

GIG: Workfare Street Cleaner (Pp. 28-31)

**** Writing Assignment on Ehrenreich book due ****

March 26 (Thursday)

TOPIC: Globalization and Work

Questions: What is Globalization and how does it affect work and workers? Does globalization help or harm American workers?

Readings:

Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat* (pp. 3-36; 103-141).

March 31 (Tuesday)

TOPIC: Immigration and Work

Questions: How does immigration affect work and workers in America?

Readings:

1) Roger Lowenstein. 2006. "The Immigration Equation." *New York Times Magazine*, July 9.

2) David Brooks, "Immigrants to be proud of" *New York Times*

3) News and Observer article 09-06, "Illegal Worker Prevails in Court"
<http://www.newsobserver.com/102/v-print/story/488882.html>

4) News and Observer 9-06, Letters to the Editor

April 2 (Thursday): NO CLASS

Teams Meet to Discuss Research Projects

April 7 (Tuesday)

TOPIC: Unions and Worker Power

Questions: What do unions do? Why have unions declined in the United States? What are the prospects for revitalizing the union movement? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Employee Free Choice Act?

Readings:

Richard Freeman and James Medoff, *What Do Unions Do?* (pp. 3-19, 246-251)

Ross Eisenbrey and David Kusnet, "The Employee Free Choice Act: Questions and Answers" (Economic Policy Institute)

VI. Research and Policy Projects

April 9 (Thursday) **TEAMS DISCUSS RESEARCH PROJECTS**

April 14 (Tuesday) **TEAMS DISCUSS RESEARCH PROJECTS**

**** *Memo on Research paper topic due* ****

April 16 (Thursday) **CLASS DISCUSSES RESEARCH PROJECTS**

April 21 (Tuesday) **TEAMS PRESENT RESEARCH PROJECTS**

April 23 (Thursday) **TEAMS PRESENT RESEARCH PROJECTS
(LAST DAY OF CLASS)**

**** *Op-Ed/Research papers due* ****