This course introduces students to sociological approaches to understanding work, employment and unemployment in the US. The course will offer a broad overview of the role work has played in society historically, and how work has been studied from a sociological perspective. We will cover sociological analyses of work and employment grounded in classical and contemporary social theories. And we will consider how the nature of work has changed in the twenty-first century, the impact of employment policy on work, and the implications of these forces for society as a whole.

Students will be expected to keep up with the readings and demonstrate understanding of the concepts through regular class participation and posts to the course forum.

**Learning Objectives:** Students in the course will gain an understanding of the changing nature of work throughout time, considering both sociological interpretations and implications of these changes. And students will have the opportunity to analyze and critique current employment-related policies, and to propose policy solutions that they think will effectively address some of the issues in the labor market, such as unemployment and discrimination. By the end of the course, students should have an in-depth understanding of the central importance of work in society both currently and historically, of how we think about ourselves and others in relation to work, and of how work can impact every part of our individual and social lives.

**Course Requirements:**

- Readings listed for each class are due that day. Keeping up with the readings is very important.
- Class participation: Regular class participation is expected. Students should come to class prepared to make thoughtful comments on the readings voluntarily, engage deeply with the week’s key concepts in discussion, and participate in small-group activities. (15%)
- Forum posts: Questions on the readings are listed for each class. You will answer ten questions total throughout the semester before the class in which we discuss these readings, and post your answer to the course forum. Other students’ responses will not be visible until you post your response. You are responsible for distributing these as you wish throughout the twelve weeks, but may do no more than two in one week. For each question, write a response of between 50 and 150 words that engages at least one of the readings for the week. Posts are due by 12pm the day of class (we will use the forum responses in class discussion that day.) No late submissions will be accepted. (10%)
- Essays: The course will require three 5-6 page essays, each of which must make use of at least two course readings plus an additional two or more external sources. Essay questions for the first two essays will be distributed two weeks before the due dates. The third essay is on a topic of your choosing and will be explained in class. (75% total, or 25% each)
• Opportunities for experiential learning and extra credit will be discussed in class

**Required Books:**


All other readings are posted on LATTE.

**Academic integrity:** You may only submit your own original work in this course. Please be careful to cite precisely and properly the sources of all authors and persons you have drawn upon in your written work. Please take special care to indicate the precise source of all materials found on the web, indicating the correct URL address of any material you have quoted or in any way drawn upon. Plagiarism (from published or internet sources, or from another student) is a serious violation of academic integrity. *Remember, you must indicate through quotations and citation when quoting from any outside source (internet or print).*


**Accommodations:** If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please contact me as soon as possible.
**Week 1: Introduction**  
**Thursday January 14: Introduction to the Course**

Readings:
   [We will be watching an episode of *The Office* in class.]

**Week 2: Industrialization**

**Tuesday January 19: Pre-Industrial Work**

Readings:
1. Volti Ch 1: Work Before Industrialization
2. Volti Ch 2: The Organization of Work in Pre-Industrial Times (skip pp. 23-29)

*1/19 Key Concepts:*
- Hunting & gathering
- Agriculture
- Protestant revolution
- Time
- Guilds
- Ascriptive status

*1/19 Reading Response Questions (choose one or two for a forum post):*
1. What is work and why do we work?
2. What are the benefits of work? What are the costs?
3. What are some key differences between pre-industrial work and work today?
4. What is the significance of time in the organization of work?
5. What is the significance of the Protestant Revolution to work?

**Thursday January 21: The Industrial Revolution**

Readings:
1. Volti Ch 3: Industrialization and its Consequences

*1/21/Key Concepts*
- Market economy
• Industrial revolution
• Division of labor
• Drive system

1/21 Reading Response Questions (choose one per forum post):
1. What were some of the benefits of industrialization, and who benefitted? What were some of the downsides, and who suffered?
2. How could factory workers challenge managerial authority in the early 20th century? Give a few examples.

Week 3: Taylorism & Marxism

Tuesday January 26: Scientific Management and Assembly Lines

Readings:

1/26 Key Concepts:
• Scientific management
• Efficiency
• Soldiering

1/26 Reading Response Questions:
1. What is scientific management? What is the principal assumption behind it?
2. What does "soldiering" mean? Why do people soldier?

Thursday January 28: Marx & Alienated Labor

Readings:

1/28 Key Concepts:
• Labor, capital, capitalist
• Political economy
• Bourgeoisie & proletariat
• Alienation
• Ideology

1/28 Reading Response Questions
1. What is “alienated labor”?
2. Do you agree that all industrial work leads to alienation?

Week 4: The Labor Process

Tuesday February 2: Labor Process Theory

Readings:
2. Volti pp. 83-86 “Technology and Managerial Authority”

2/2 Key Concepts
• Labor process
• Managerial authority

2/2 Reading Response Questions:
1. Why is it important to study the labor process?
2. Braverman says that the division of labor "dismembers the worker" (p. 54.) What do you think he means by this? Do you agree with him?

Thursday February 4: Manufacturing Consent


2/2 Key Concepts:
• Shop floor, shop culture

2/2 Reading Response Questions:
1. What does Burawoy mean by “making out”?
2. What is the relationship between culture and control in the factory, according to Burawoy?

Week 5: Organizations, Bureaucracy & Professions

Tuesday February 9: Bureaucracy

Readings:
1. Volti Ch 4: Bureaucratic Organization
4. OPTIONAL: Seidman, Steven. Contested Knowledge: Social Theory Today Ch 4 “The Ironic Social Theory of Max Weber” esp. pp. 49-51

2/9 Key Concepts:
- Bureaucracy
- Management
- Simple, Technical, Bureaucratic Control

2/9 Reading Response Questions:
1. Briefly describe an experience you have had with a bureaucratic organization. Did it feel efficient? Were there any negative aspects?
2. What is another example of a bureaucratic organization (besides the ones discussed in the readings), according to Weber’s definition of bureaucracy? Why would Weber consider it a bureaucracy?

Thursday February 11: The Teamwork Model

Readings:
1. This American Life: NUMMI Auto Manufacturing

2/11 Key Concepts
- The Toyota way
- Normative control

2/11 Reading Response Questions
1. How do the American workers resist managerial control prior to the use of Toyota labor processes at the NUMMI plant?
2. What would Marx say about the differences between the Toyota and GM labor processes? What would Taylor say about these differences?
3. How was bureaucracy involved in GM's failure to fully implement the successes of NUMMI at other GM plants? (Bonus: Was NUMMI a success? And for whom?)

MIDTERM RECESS FEBRUARY 15-19
--- ESSAY 1 DUE MONDAY FEBRUARY 22, 5PM ---
Week 6: Symbolic Interactionism & Emotional Labor

Tuesday February 23: Symbolic Interactionism

Readings:

2/23 Key Concepts:
- Symbolic interactionism
- Emotional labor
- Transmutation

2/23 Reading Response Questions:
1. According to Hochschild, what are some of the important differences between producing a material good and producing a service?
2. What is "emotional labor"? When have you performed emotional labor in your life?

Thursday February 25: Emotional Labor

Readings:

2/25 Key Concepts:

2/25 Reading Response Questions:
1. What does Hochschild mean by “transmutation”?
2. What are some gendered and/or raced forms of emotional labor?

Week 7: Service Work & Workplace Culture

Tuesday March 1: Routinized Service Work

Readings:

3/1 Key Concepts
- Routinization

3/1 Reading Response Questions
1. Is working at McDonald's skilled work? Why or why not?
2. Burawoy discussed managers' manufacturing their employees' consent as a mechanism of managerial control over workers. Do you see examples of manufacturing consent in the
McDonald's settings that Leidner describes? What are they? Are there other mechanisms of managerial control at work?

Thursday March 3: Workplace Culture

Readings:
1. Volti Ch 8: Workplace Culture and Socialization

3/3 Key Concepts
- Idioculture

3/3 Reading Response Questions
1. Have you ever experienced or noticed an organizational culture? Please describe it.
2. What does Fine mean by the term “idioculture”?

Week 8: Culture, Control & Getting a Job

Tuesday March 8: Culture and Control

Readings:
1. Inglis, David. An Invitation to Social Theory Ch 3 “Marxist and Critical Theory Paradigms”

3/8 Key Concepts:
- Culture, organizational culture
- Subculture
- Critical theory
- Ideology
- Cultural hegemony

3/8 Reading Response Questions:
1. What are potential benefits of organizational culture?
2. What are potential drawbacks of organizational culture?

Thursday March 10: Getting a Job

Readings:
1. Volti Ch 7: Getting a Job
3/10 Key Concepts:
- Human capital
- Strong ties, weak ties

3/10 Reading Response Questions:
1. What is human capital?
2. What are weak ties? Why are they more useful than strong ties?

Week 9: Work & Inequality I

Tuesday March 15: Occupational Segregation

Readings:

3/15 Key Concepts:
- Dual labor market
- Occupational Segregation

3/15 Reading Response Questions:
1. What is occupational segregation?
2. How is it related to the gender pay gap or the racial pay gap?

Thursday March 17: Gender Discrimination

Readings:
1. Volti Ch 13 Diversity in the Workplace

3/17 Key Concepts:
- Valuative discrimination
- Comparable worth

3/17 Reading Response Questions:
1. What is Title VII?
2. What is comparable worth?
3. How can public policy address occupational gender discrimination?
Week 10: Work & Inequality II

Tuesday March 22: Racial Discrimination

Readings:

3/22 Key Concepts:
- Race
- Skill
- Soft Skills

3/22 Reading Response Questions:
1. What is the relationship between human capital theory (see Volti Ch 7) and the Moss & Tilly reading?
2. What are soft skills? Why are they important? (Note: There is not one clear definition of soft skills, so use what is available in the readings for your definition)

Thursday March 24: Intersections of Race and Gender

Readings:

3/24 Key Concepts:
- Intersectionality

3/24 Reading Response Questions:
1. What is intersectionality, or an intersectional lens? (Note: Again, there is not one clear definition of intersectionality, so use what is available in the readings for your definition)
2. Bertrand & Mullainathan and Pager show clear evidence of discrimination in hiring. How can public policy address this practice?
Week 11: Twenty-First Century Work

Tuesday March 29: Flexibility and Precarity

Readings:

3/29 Key Concepts:
- New economy
- De-industrialization
- Flexibility
- Precarity

3/29 Reading Response Questions:
1. According to Powell, what are some of the characteristics of the "new economy" or "decentralized capitalism"?
2. What is precarity/precarious work?

Thursday March 31: Working in the Gig Economy

Readings:
4. OPTIONAL: Chapter 1 and Conclusion from The Fissured Workplace

3/31 Key Concepts:
- Fissure
- Gig economy

3/31 Reading Response Questions:
1. Should we encourage growth of the gig economy? Why or why not?
2. How can a company participating in/perpetuating the gig economy improve the work experience for their service providers/employees?
Week 12: Workforce Development Policy & Globalization

Tuesday April 5: Workforce Development Policy
Readings:

4/5 Key Concepts:
- Labor market
- Employment policy
- Skills and skills gap

4/5 Reading Response Questions:
1. What is a "skills mismatch"?
2. Workforce development is the primary policy solution to unemployment. Can you suggest an alternate policy solution to unemployment?

Thursday April 7: Employability and Job Readiness Training

Readings:

Week 13: Globalization and the Future of Work

Tuesday April 12: Globalization

Readings:
1. Volti Ch 6: Globalization

4/7 Key Concepts:
- Global labor market
• Income inequality

4/7 Reading Response Questions:
1. What are some of the negative effects of globalization for the US? Are there ways that policy can mitigate these effects?
2. According to Firebaugh, when and why did massive global income inequality arise?

Thursday April 14: Immigration and Work

Readings:
1. Choose one of the following:

4/12 Key Concepts:
• Globalization, Global corporation
• Immigration
• Inequality

4/12 Reading Response Questions:
1. According to Bonacich and Appelbaum, what are some of the reasons that sweatshops have returned to the US?
2. What two reasons does Hondagneu-Sotelo give for the shift in domestic workers from African-American to Latina?

Week 14: Wrapping Up

Tuesday April 19: Wrap Up

Readings:
1. Volti Ch 15: Conclusion: Work Today and Tomorrow

No Key Concepts or Reading Responses today

Thursday April 21: BRANDEIS FRIDAY

PASSOVER AND SPRING RECESS APRIL 25-29

--- ESSAY 3 ON TOPIC OF YOUR CHOOSING DUE FRIDAY MAY 6 BY 5:00PM ---