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SOC495H1S: Work in the Digital Age

Winter 2023

University of Toronto

[FE 41](#) Mon. 6:10-8 p.m.
Quercus:

Course Description & Objectives

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Over the last half century the workforce has shifted toward more professional and service jobs as more women entered the paid labor force. Along with these changes have come increasing polarization and inequality. This class will examine how technological and social changes have changed how workers understand their work and themselves. We will examine platform and gig based work, algorithmic control, and related emerging inequalities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify defining qualities of the “new” or “knowledge” economy.
- Student will identify inequalities related to and cutting across gender, race, and class in the new economy.
- Students will be able to summarize, critique, and synthesize abstract arguments.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to apply sociological theory and methods to critically analyze their own lived experience.

Prerequisite

1.0 SOC FCE at the 300+ level. Students without this requirement will be removed by the department without notice.

Learning Components and Course Requirements

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to attend every class meeting. Lectures will cover material not included in the readings and expand on the assigned texts. Class meetings will provide an important opportunity to expand, connect, process, and discuss material that will only be fully available to those who attend class

READINGS

We will typically read about 75 pages of material per week (sometimes less, sometimes more). Class will be primarily discussion based and your participation will require that you have completed the readings before coming to class. Please bring a copy of the assigned readings with you to class. It is critical that you keep up with these readings.

Reading Reflections

Over the course of the semester students should submit **SIX** reading reflections. Each week (unless otherwise noted) students will submit a 2-page reflection paper in which they 1) summarize the key arguments of the readings 2) describe their reflections/thoughts on the readings and 3) provide at least 3 discussion questions they would like the class to address. Summaries must be submitted before class (by 2pm on class meeting days).

Critical Literature Review Research Paper

Students will write a critical literature review on a topic of their choice related to work in the knowledge economy. Literature reviews must make an original argument and should be supported by Sociological and/or related research. This assignment will be scaffolded by smaller assignments over the course of the semester.

TOPIC OUTLINE

Students will propose a topic for study in a 1-page document. This proposal need not include specific research questions as it will serve as the basis to direct reading and research in the literature.

PARTIAL ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Students will submit an early version of their annotated bibliography. The goal of this assignment is to ensure that students are reading the relevant literature so they are prepared to decide on their specific research question. This early version should contain references and notes for at least 7 sources.

ARGUMENT AND REASONING STATEMENT

Following submission of their partial annotated bibliography students will submit a 1-2-page statement describing the argument they intend to make in their literature review and the reasoning for their argument based on the literature they have read so far.

Full Annotated Bibliography

Students will provide a complete annotated bibliography for their final literature review paper. The annotated bibliography should contain references in ASA style and summary reading notes of material students intend to use for their critical literature review papers. The references should be organized alphabetically by theme. Ideally, the themes will reflect the sub-headings students will use in their papers. The annotated bibliography should contain at least 5 course readings and must contain at least 10 additional sources not covered in the class, except with permission from the instructor,

CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW OUTLINE

Students will provide an outline of their final paper identifying at least their key argument, the subheadings they intend to use (these may change in the final version), and a brief description (one sentence is enough) of the contents of each section.

Overview of grade components

Assignment Schedule and Grading

Assignment	Due Date	Contribution to Grade
Reading Reflection Papers	Varies (Must submit at least 2 by February 13 th)	36% (6% each for 6 papers)
Research Paper Topic	Feb 3	1%
Partial Annotated Bibliography	Feb. 27	2%
Argument and Reasoning Statement	March 13	3%
Full Annotated Bibliography	March 27	7%
Research Paper Outline	March 28	2%
Critical Literature Review Research Paper	April 7	39%
Attendance and Participation	NA	10%

Percentage grades will translate to letter grades as follows (standard university grade scale):

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value
90-100	A+	4.0	67-69	C+	2.3
85-89	A	4.0	63-66	C	2.0
80-84	A-	3.7	60-62	C-	1.7
77-79	B+	3.3	57-59	D+	1.3
73-76	B	3.0	53-56	D	1.0
70-72	B-	2.7	50-52	D-	0.7
			0-49	F	0.0

Course Material

READINGS

All required readings will be available electronically on the course website on Quercus.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

You are expected to know the contents of the syllabus. You are also responsible for all the material covered in class, as well as announcements posted on the course website (make sure to turn on the notifications of your choice on Quercus).

Assignment Submission, Extensions & Late Policies

All written work must be typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins using 12 point Times New Roman or 11pt Calibri font. When you submit files, they should be in PDF or .doc(x) format unless otherwise specified. Written work must be submitted via Quercus. No work will be accepted over e-mail.

Students can typically expect work to be returned within two weeks unless extenuating circumstances dictate otherwise.

PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Ouriginal software is embedded within Quercus and therefore all assignments submitted through Quercus may be subject to Ouriginal review. If students prefer their work not be subject to Ouriginal review, they must notify the instructor at least 48 hours **before** the assignment deadline to arrange an alternative submission through Quercus **AND** provide, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the work they submit is truly their own. The alternative is in place because, strictly speaking, using Ouriginal is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Plagiarism: Be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see the "Code of Behavior on Academic Matters"). If you are using someone else's ideas, do not present them as your own. Give proper references if you are using somebody else's ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, it is always safer to over-reference --you are not going to be punished for that. Please also be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred off to the Office of Academic Integrity.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION AND DEADLINES

Assignments are due at the time indicated for each assignment. All written work must be submitted online through the course Quercus website. No assignments should ever be sent via e-mail. Only written work submitted to the correct assignment via the course website will be accepted.

LATE/MISSING WORK

The late deduction is 5% for each 24-hour period the assignment is late starting with the day the assignment is due. For example, an assignment submitted 12 hours late would receive a 5% late penalty, an assignment submitted 25 hours would receive a 10% late deduction. No work will be accepted more than 2 weeks past the original due date.

Please be aware that assignment closing dates and deadlines are automated within Quercus. For example, If something is due at 11:59pm on Feb 1st, it will be marked late if it is submitted at 12:00am on Feb 2nd, and if an assignment is set to close at 11:59pm on Oct 1st Quercus will not accept submissions at 12:00am on Feb 2nd. I will not provide extensions due to slow internet, connectivity issues, or other technical

delays that result in submission after the deadline. Start the submission process well enough in advance to ensure that your paper will be fully submitted before the deadline.

EXTENSIONS

If you require an extension for a documented reason (see below), please let me know ahead of the due date and provide the necessary documentation.

DOCUMENTATION

Medical notes will not be required; instead, students will need to declare their absence on ACORN on the day of the missed test or due date of assignment, and email the instructor (not the TA), directly. Students missing these for personal reasons are to contact their College registrar and have the college registrar email the instructor directly.

- In case of **illness**, students will need to declare their absence on ACORN on the day of the missed test or due date of assignment, and email the instructor (not the TA), directly.
- If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from meeting a deadline, you are to contact your College registrar and have the college registrar email the instructor directly. It is a good idea to proactively contact your college registrar if you are dealing with crisis that is interfering with your studies. College registrars can help you negotiate solutions with the instructors of all the classes you are taking in a given semester. The letter must be sent from either the registrar or the student's university of Toronto e-mail address directly to the instructor's university of Toronto e-mail address.
- **Letter from Accessibility Services.** This documentation is useful for ongoing medical issues that require special accommodation.

Course Policies

Students are expected to attend class, arrive on time, leave as scheduled, keep up with the course readings, and communicate regularly and respectfully with the instructors and each other. You are encouraged to consult me early and often if you need special accommodations or encounter any kind of obstacle. I understand that you are adults with lives that will conflict with your schoolwork. Part of the work of being a university student is learning how to balance your personal life and your academic/professional responsibilities. It is my job to help you navigate this balancing act. This means holding you accountable for showing face in class, performing the part of earnest student, meeting deadlines, working effectively with others, completing your work to high standards, and communicating professionally when you struggle with any aspect of these responsibilities.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS

Everybody in this class brings different life experiences and prior knowledge. This is an opportunity for us to learn from each other. If you never disagreed with me or with each other I would worry that you were not reading or paying attention in class. Respecting each other's points of view is crucial for the participation in this course. I hope we can have a class filled with the lively debate that comes with sharing and developing ideas. If at any point debate becomes disrespectful you will be asked to leave the class. I insist on civility, respect, and an atmosphere of collegiality.

ACCESSIBILITY

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as> as soon as possible. If you

are registered with Accessibility Services, please forward your accommodations paperwork to the instructor within the first two weeks of the course so that arrangements can be made.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

I understand that you are in possession of internet enabled, digital devices and that you are likely to bring them to class with you. These devices are often useful for notetaking, accessing readings, and working with data in class. Please turn your mobile phone on silent before class. If your digital device becomes a distraction, I will ask you to put it away. If the problem persists or becomes widespread, I will ask that students do not have digital devices visible during class except when necessary for in-class activities. Research shows that students learn better when they take notes by hand, so I encourage you to rely on a pen/pencil and paper for notetaking.

RECORDING OF LECTURES

If you wish to record the lecture for your own personal use, please get in touch with the instructor first. Students who are entitled to record the lectures because of accessibility accommodations are required to sign a form stating that the recording is made for personal use only. Out of fairness to everybody (and because it is unlawful to record somebody without their consent in Ontario), this will be required of all students who wish to make a recording of the lectures.

The instructor may decide, with student input, to audio record lectures and make those audio recordings available for all students. We will make this together. If we do decide to audio record lectures these recordings will be considered course material. All course materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation and are protected by copyright. Do not download, copy, or share any course or student materials or videos without the explicit permission of the instructor.

For questions about recording and use of videos in which you appear please contact your instructor.

PLAGIARISM

Cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offence face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices acceptable in high school may prove unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the “Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters” in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Communication & Office Hours

EMAIL

Please use your **University of Toronto email** to communicate with me with regard to **personal matters**. Please feel free and encouraged to contact the teaching team using the contact information provided on the syllabus. Please include “SOC498” and a brief description in the subject line. I will typically answer emails within 24 hours during the workweek (i.e. Monday through Friday, between 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.), and I may be unavailable on weekends. Keep in mind that for simple questions, email is the preferred method of communication. However, for longer questions students should come to office hours and we may request a conversation rather than answering long or complex questions over email.

OFFICE HOURS

My office hours are **Mondays from 2-3 pm or by appointment**. Please make an appointment to secure your preferred meeting time. You are welcome to use office hours as an opportunity to ask questions, explore ideas and experiences related to the course material, discuss your plans for future studies in Sociology, or other course or career-related matters. It's a great way for us to get to know each other so I hope to see everyone in office hours at least once.

Office hours will be held on Zoom and in person—please use the comment space on the appointment tool to let me know how you plan to attend. Office hours appointments can be reserved using the calendar tool in Quercus: Click on the “Calendar” in the menu on the left-hand side, then go to “Find Appointments” on the right-hand side. By default, appointments are 10 minutes. You are welcome to reserve more than one appointment if you expect to require more time. You can also leave a note about what you would like to talk about in the “comments” box.

Should all the slots for a given week be taken, please email me (sharla.alegria@utoronto.ca) to inquire about an alternative meeting time. Please include details about the nature of your meeting request and a list of dates/times when you are available in your message.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. This is the rule book for academic behaviour at the U of T, and it is your responsibility to read this material and comply fully with it: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>

The University of Toronto treats academic integrity and academic misconduct very seriously. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Sharing answers to assignments, including on social media, email, or in person
- Copying material word-for-word from a source (including, but not limited to the textbook, lectures, or study group notes), not placing the words within quotation marks and citing the source
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor
- Making up sources or facts
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including having someone re/write or add material to your work
- Lending your work to another student who submits it as his/her own
- Letting someone else look at your answers on a test
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including doctor’s notes
- Submitting an altered assignment/test for re-grading

Students who commit an academic offense face serious penalties. University policy requires cases of academic dishonesty to be reported to the department chair and the university.

You find additional information on the university's rules and expectations about academic integrity here: <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students>

Grade Appeals

We do our very best to grade work fairly, consistently, and accurately. Nevertheless, one of us may unintentionally err in our grading duties. If you believe that your assignment or test has been mismarked, please adhere to the following rules:

- For simple mathematical errors, simply alert your TA of the mistake.
- All requests for re-grading tests or course assignments should be made to the person who graded your work. Please **wait for 24 hours** after the assignment has been returned to the class and submit your request **within two weeks of that date**. Requests submitted at a later date will not be considered.
- A **short memo** that clearly states specific reasons to justify the request and backs up these reasons with evidence from your assignment must be submitted to the person who graded your work.

If your appeal is deemed appropriate, the entirety of your test/assignment will be re-graded. Please note that upon re-grade your mark may go down, stay the same, or go up.

Course Schedule & Due Dates

All assigned readings are available on Quercus.

	Date	Lecture Topic and Assigned Readings	Assignments and Events
1	Jan. 9	Welcome and Intro	
2	Jan 16	<p>What's new about the new economy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clement, Wallace, Sophie Mathieu, Steven Prus, and Emre Uckardesler. 2010. "Restructuring Work and Labour Markets in the New Economy: Four Processes." Pp. 43–64 in <i>Interrogating the New Economy: Restructuring Work in the 21st Century</i>, edited by P. Norene and M. P. Thomas. University of Toronto Press. • Cappelli, Peter. 1999. "Career Jobs Are Dead." <i>California Management Review</i> 42(1):146–67. doi: 10.2307/41166023. • Peters, Tom, and Tom Peters. 1997. "The Brand Called You." <i>Fast Company</i>. Retrieved January 10, 2020 (https://www.fastcompany.com/28905/brand-called-you). 	
3	Jan 23	<p>Is Technology the End of Work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shestakofsky, Benjamin. 2017. "Working Algorithms: Software Automation and the Future of Work." <i>Work</i> 	

	Date	Lecture Topic and Assigned Readings	Assignments and Events
		<p>and Occupations 44(4):376–423. doi: 10.1177/0730888417726119.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autor, David H. 2015. “Why Are There Still So Many Jobs? The History and Future of Workplace Automation.” <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> 29(3):3–30. doi: 10.1257/jep.29.3.3. 	
4	Jan 30	<p>Education in the Knowledge Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autor, David H. 2014. “Skills, Education, and the Rise of Earnings Inequality among the ‘Other 99 Percent.’” <i>Science</i> 344(6186):843–51. doi: 10.1126/science.1251868. • Horowitz, Jonathan. 2018. “Relative Education and the Advantage of a College Degree.” <i>American Sociological Review</i> 83(4):771–801. doi: 10.1177/0003122418785371. • Cottom, Tressie McMillan. 2017. <i>Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of for-Profit Colleges in the New Economy</i>. New York: The New Press. 	Research Paper Topic Proposals due (11:59pm Feb 3)
5	Feb 6	<p>Becoming a new professional worker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gershon, Ilana. 2017. <i>Down and Out in the New Economy</i>. Chicago: IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1 pg 23-60 • Kunda, Gideon. 2006. <i>Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation</i>. Philadelphia:PA: Temple University Press. Introduction pg 1-25 	
6	Feb 13	<p>Passion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cech, Erin A. 2021. <i>The Trouble with Passion: How Searching for Fulfillment at Work Fosters Inequality</i>. Oakland, California: University of California Press. Chapter 1. • Sheehan, Patrick. 2022. “The Paradox of Self-Help Expertise: How Unemployed Workers Become Professional Career Coaches.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 127(4):1151–82. doi: 10.1086/718471. 	At least two reflection papers must be submitted by this date
	Feb 20	Reading Week: No Class	
7	Feb 27	<p>The week we read all the Foucault</p> <p><i>Foucault is hard but exciting. Unfortunately, his writing doesn't lend itself to excerpts so there is more reading than usual this week. Do your best with this—focus on reading the words on the page so we can make sense of it together in class.</i></p>	Partial Annotated Bibliography due (11:59pm Feb 27)

	Date	Lecture Topic and Assigned Readings	Assignments and Events
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foucault, Michel. 2008. "14 March 1979." Pp. 215–37 in <i>The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979</i>, Michel Foucault, edited by M. Senellart, A. Fontana, F. Ewald, and A. Fontana. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. • Foucault, Michel. 1995. <i>Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison</i>. Second. New York: NY: Random House. <p>Part III (this is almost 100 pages)</p>	
8	March 6	<p>Platform Capitalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Srnicek, Nick. 2017. <i>Platform Capitalism</i>. John Wiley & Sons. (Probably not the whole book, but it is really short) • Burrell, Jenna, and Marion Fourcade. 2021. "The Society of Algorithms." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 47(1):213–37. doi: 10.1146/annurev-soc-090820-020800. 	
9	March 13	<p>Gigging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosenblat, Alex. 2019. <i>Uberland</i>. University of California Press. Chapters 1 and 3 • Vallas, Steven, and Juliet B. Schor. 2020. "What Do Platforms Do? Understanding the Gig Economy." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 46(1):273–94. doi: 10.1146/annurev-soc-121919-054857. • Gray, Mary L., and Siddharth Suri. 2019. <i>Ghost Work: How to Stop Silicon Valley from Building a New Global Underclass</i>. HarperCollins. Selections 	<p>Argument and Reasoning Statement Due (11:59pm March 13)</p>
10	March 20	<p>No New Readings: Research Project Lab</p>	
11	March 27	<p>We Can't Not Talk About Race, Gender, And Immigration Anymore!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McMillan Cottom, Tressie. 2020. "Where Platform Capitalism and Racial Capitalism Meet: The Sociology of Race and Racism in the Digital Society." <i>Sociology of Race and Ethnicity</i> 6(4):441–49. doi: 10.1177/2332649220949473. • Fuller, Sylvia. 2011. "Up and on or down and out? Gender, Immigration and the Consequences of Temporary Employment in Canada." <i>Research in Social Stratification and Mobility</i> 29(2):155–80. doi: 10.1016/j.rssm.2010.09.001 	<p>Full Annotated Bibliography Due 11:59pm, March 27</p> <p>Research Paper Outline due March 28 by 11:59pm</p>

	Date	Lecture Topic and Assigned Readings	Assignments and Events
12	April 3	No New Readings. Wrap up, Review, and Share Our Projects	Critical Literature Review Research paper due April 7nd, 11:59pm.

Academic Integrity Checklist

Students are strongly encouraged to review the following academic integrity checklist for each assignment before submission.

I confirm that:

- I have acknowledged the use of another's ideas with accurate citations.
- If I used the words of another (e.g., author, instructor, information source), I have acknowledged this with quotation marks (or appropriate indentation) and proper citation.
- When paraphrasing the work of others, I put the idea into my own words and did not just change a few words or rearrange the sentence structure
- I have checked my work against my notes to be sure I have correctly referenced all direct quotes or borrowed ideas.
- My bibliography includes only the sources used to complete this assignment.
- This is the first time I have submitted this assignment (in whole or in part) for credit.
- Any proofreading by another was limited to indicating areas of concern which I then corrected myself.
- This is the final version of my assignment and not a draft.
- I have kept my work to myself and did not share answers/content with others, unless otherwise directed by my instructor.
- I understand the consequences of violating the University's academic integrity policies as outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*.