

SOC497H1S: New Topics in Sociology: The Sociology of Markets
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto

Instructor: James Braun
Term: Winter 2019
Seminars: Fridays 12 – 2 p.m.
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Course Website: on Quercus
Office Hours: TBD

PREREQUISITE

The prerequisite for taking this course is 1.0 FCE at the SOC 300+ level. Students without this prerequisite will be removed from the course without notice by the department.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the role of markets in society by engaging key debates in the sociology of markets: What is a market? How do social forces construct markets and market behaviour? What are the consequences of living in a society organized primarily through markets?

Markets pervade many aspects of our lives. We compete for jobs in labour markets, and buy things as trivial as gum and as important as homes in markets for different goods. We rely on investment plans such as RRSPs and RESPs for our retirement and education, and borrow in credit markets through student loans and credit cards. Governments have created markets to solve a growing range of policy problems, such as “cap and trade” markets for CO₂ emissions to combat climate change, or privatized services in hopes that market competition will lower costs or increase availability.

Economists assume that markets are efficient, apolitical mechanisms for allocating resources. But sociologists theorize markets as social arenas in which transactions are embedded within social networks and cultural or institutional logics; in other words, markets are constructed through social relations rather than existing independently of them. These contrasting understandings of markets have important implications for explaining how markets form and evolve, the way actors behave in markets, and the consequences of living in a market society.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This is a seminar-based class that emphasizes effective writing, critical thinking and constructive discussion. You should think of yourselves as co-learners/teachers with the instructor acting as a facilitator and mentor.

Upon completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Identify and distinguish key sociological theories of markets
- Explain markets and market society from different sociological perspectives
- Lead and contribute constructively to topic-oriented group discussions
- Critically evaluate social science research by assessing the relationship between argument, theory and evidence
- Design and propose independent research, including how to identify gaps in literature calling for sociological investigation.
- Present and discuss a scholarly analysis in a collegial setting

COURSE MATERIALS

Weekly assigned readings are detailed in the course schedule below. All required materials will be made available through Quercus.

Required Readings:

1. January 11- Introduction: Getting to know each other and the course

Syllabus

2. January 18- What is a Market? Three sociological theories of markets

Uzzi, B. 1996. "The Sources and Consequences of Embeddedness For the Economic Performance of Organizations: The Network Effect" *American Sociological Review* 61(4): 674-698.

Fligstein, N. 1996. "Markets as Politics: A Political-Cultural Approach to Market Institutions" *American Sociological Review* 61(4): 656-73.

Callon, M. 1999. "Actor-Network Theory: The Market Test" *The Sociological Review* 47(1): 181-195.

3. January 25- Research Methodologies

Alford, R. 1998. "Designing a Research Project" (Chapter 2) and "The Construction of Arguments" (Chapter 3) in *The Craft of Inquiry*. New York: Oxford University Press. 21-50.

Small, M. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need? On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research" *Ethnography* 10(1): 5 – 38.

4. February 1- Constructing Markets I: Who is included and excluded?

Bandelj, N. 2002. "Embedded Economies: Social Relations as Determinants of Foreign Direct Investment in Central and Eastern Europe" *Social Forces* 81, 2: 411-444

De Goede, M. 2003. "Hawala discourses and the war on terrorist finance" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21: 513-32.

5. February 8- Constructing Markets II: Defining goods/products

Granovetter, M. and McGuire, P. 1998. "The Making of An Industry: Electricity in the United States" *The Sociological Review* 46, S1: 146-173.

Lawrence, T and Phillips, N. 2004. "From *Moby Dick* to *Free Willy*: Macro-Cultural Discourse and Institutional Entrepreneurship in Emerging Institutional Fields" *Organizations* 11(5): 689-711.

Callon, Michel, Cécile Méadel and Vololona Rabeharisoa. 2002. "The Economy of Qualities" *Economy and Society* 31(2): 194-217.

6. February 15 - Constructing Markets III: Systems of value

****research critique due Feb 14****

Powell, H. and Prasad, S. 2010. "'As Seen on TV.' The Celebrity Expert: How Taste is Shaped by Lifestyle Media" *Cultural Politics* 6(1) : 111-124.

Zelizer, Viviana. 1985. "From Baby Farms to Black-Market Babies: The Changing Market for Children" (Chapter 6) in *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. New York: Basic Books. 169-207.

**** Reading week February 18 – 22, no class ****

7. March 1 - Market Actors I: “Rational” Market Behaviour

Graham, B. 2014. “Diaspora-Owned Firms and Social Responsibility” *Review of International Political Economy* 21(2): 432-466.

Levin, Peter. 2001. “Gendering the Market: Temporality, Work and Gender on a National Futures Exchange” *Work and Occupations* 28(1): 112-130. (CW: Sexual harassment)

Zaloom, C. 2006. “The Discipline of the Speculator” (Chapter 6) in *Out of the Pits: Traders and Technology From Chicago to London*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 127-140.

8. March 8 - Market Actors II: Is *Homo Economicus* Real?

Abolafia, M. 1996. “Homo Economicus Unbound” (Chapter 1) in *Making Markets: Opportunism and Restraint on Wall Street*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 14-37.

Hardie, I. and Mackenzie, D. 2007. “Assembling an Economic Actor: The Agencement of a Hedge Fund” *The Sociological Review* 55: 57-80.

9. March 15 – Life in a Market Society I: Cultural Conflicts over Commodification **proposal outline due March 18**

Block, F. 2001. “Introduction” in Polanyi, K. 2001 [1944]. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*.

Gombay, N. 2009. “Sharing or Commoditising? A discussion of some of the socio-economic implications of Nunavik’s Hunter Support Program” *Polar Record* 45 (233): 119-32.

Kirtsoglu, E. and Theodossopoulos, D. 2004. “They are taking our culture away: Tourism and culture commodification in the Garifuna community of Roatan” *Critique of Anthropology* 24(2): 135-157.

10. March 22– Life in a Market Society II: Credit and Inequality

Fourcade, M. and Healy, K. 2013. “Classification situations: Life-chances in the neoliberal era” *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 38: 559-72.

Kear, M. 2017. “Playing the credit score game: algorithms, ‘positive’ data and the personification of financial objects” *Economy and Society* 46(3-4): 346-368.

11. March 29 – Student presentations

12. April 5 - Student presentations

****Research proposals due April 8****

HELP AND RESOURCES

There are proactive steps you can take early in the course to make sure you start and finish strong in this class:

1) Scheduling: Set aside a regular, predictable time to review assigned readings and complete assignments. Plan to attend seminars regularly. Look ahead and if there are classes you might miss, plan accordingly. If there are significant issues in your schedule please contact me as soon as possible

2) Make friends: Learning is a social process. Attending seminar and participating actively is important to learning and understanding the material, but having someone to discuss ideas and problems outside of class time can be invaluable. Form independent study groups to help each other explain and apply course materials to your own research ideas.

If you feel lost or overwhelmed there are supports available to help you succeed in the course:

1) Come and see me: Visit me in office hours to discuss questions you have about the material or the assignments. The class will schedule a regular office hour in our first seminar to make it accessible to as many students as possible. If you can't meet during regular office hours, we can schedule an appointment or resolve questions via email.

2) Use the Writing Centre: The UC Writing Centre exists to provide extra support and guidance to students that want to improve their writing and research skills. You will find links to specific resources in the assignment guidelines, but the centre also offers skills workshops and one-on-one consultations. <https://www.uc.utoronto.ca/writing-centre>

3) Visit Health & Wellness: It's hard to perform your best in class if you don't take care of your mind and body. The health and wellness centre has a wide range of supports to help you manage stress, stay organized during a demanding school year, and keep physically and mentally healthy. <https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc/contact-us>

4) Consult your registrar: The Registrar's Office is here to help if difficult or unexpected situations are getting in the way of your academic success. <https://www.future.utoronto.ca/current-students/registrars>

EVALUATION:

Evaluation Format	Due Date	Weight
Participation	Weekly	10%
Seminar presentation	TBD	10%
Research design critique	February 14	25%
Proposal outline	March 18	5%
Presentation of Research Proposal	March 29/April 5	10%
Peer discussant feedback	March 29/April 5	10%
Research Proposal	April 8	30%

Participation (10%) This is a seminar class where you are expected to collaborate in each other's learning. This means coming to lectures having done the readings and prepared to discuss them. *This does not mean you need to understand all the readings perfectly; coming to class confused or with questions about what you have read is an excellent starting point for co-learning.* Rather, you should be aware of arguments and key themes of the readings and be ready to talk about how they contribute to the topic of the week and the core questions of the course.

The classroom is a learning community where we will develop ideas in an environment of mutual respect. Your participation grade is a reflection of your ability to listen to your colleagues and contribute constructively to a group conversation.

Severe social anxiety or other factors can make verbal participation difficult or unduly stressful to some students. If this applies to you, please speak with me during the first few sessions (preferably the first week) so that we can arrange alternate ways for you to participate in the class.

Effective participation requires regular attendance. If you regularly miss class, your attendance record will likely result in a low participation mark. **There are no make-up participation exercises.**

Seminar Presentation (10%): You and one or two colleagues (depending on enrolment) will co-lead one of our class discussions by presenting on the readings for the week. Seminar presentations begin January 25.

You can divide the work among yourselves however you choose: you might each discuss a reading separately, or talk about different themes across the readings. You should expect that each of you will speak for approximately 10 minutes.

Your presentation should involve: a summary of the readings' main arguments, an explanation of how they contribute to the course, and points of theoretical tension between them. As a fourth year student, you are expected to draw on your training to date to identify sociological interpretations of the readings' themes, as well as alternative or additional considerations. You should conclude the presentation by posing 2-3 questions to the class that we will consider for discussion.

All presentation notes must be turned in. Your presentation will be evaluated for clarity, your comprehension of the readings and ability to synthesize them, and the quality of your discussion questions.

10=excellent 8=good 6=adequate 4=marginal 2=poor 0=unacceptable

Research design critique (25%): You will submit a critique on the research design of two of the studies covered by the syllabus (5 double-spaced pages, not including references). I will provide detailed guidelines for drafting research design critiques and discuss these items in class. Research design critiques are due on February 14 by 11:59 pm, to be submitted via Quercus.

Research Proposal (30%) and Outline (5%): You will submit an outline (2 double-spaced pages, not including references) as well as a short research proposal (15 double-spaced pages, not including references) that expands on one of the topics covered by the syllabus (see Reading List), or otherwise addresses one of the central questions of the course. Research proposals are critical thought pieces that should synthesize and analyze the current literature on a subject area (a literature review), identify a question either emerging from the literature or not addressed by current research, and offer an intended method for data collection to answer the research question. I will provide detailed guidelines for drafting research proposals and discuss these items in class. Outlines are due on March 18 by 11:59 pm, to be submitted via Quercus.

All Final Research Proposals are due on April 8 by 11:59 pm, to be submitted via Quercus.

Please note that, due to FAS deadlines for the submission of final grades, I am unable to accept late research proposals.

Your outline will be made available to the discussant for your presentation, to help them provide constructive feedback on your project.

Project presentation (10%): The last two sessions are devoted to student presentations on your proposals in progress. You will explain your research problem and question, offer an hypothesis and briefly outline your method for testing it.

This presentation should include some kind of visual component, such as a Powerpoint or Prezi presentation.

Discussant feedback (10%): In the session that you do not present, you will be asked to serve as a discussant to someone else's presentation.

Your feedback should be about 2 minutes long, and should include three things:

- 1) One strength of their project
- 2) One question or something you'd like clarification on
- 3) Something you think would be exciting to add to the project

This feedback should be delivered both orally after the presentation and in writing both to the presenter and to me.

Peer feedback will be assessed for its clarity, constructive advice and appropriateness to the paper:

10=excellent 8=good 6=adequate 4=marginal 2=poor 0=unacceptable

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments (except presentation notes and participation exercises) should be uploaded to Quercus. Assignments submitted by email will not be accepted.

Assignments submitted to Quercus will automatically be screened for originality through Turnitin.com **unless a student provides, along with their assignment**, sufficient secondary material (i.e.: reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The University of Toronto is dedicated to fostering an academic community in which the learning and scholarship of every member may flourish, with vigilant protection for individual human rights, and a resolute commitment to the principles of equal opportunity, equity and justice.

1. Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. I will work with you and AccessAbility Services to ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course. Enquiries are confidential.

AccessAbility Services is located at Suite 400, 455 Spadina Avenue (Phone: 416-978-8060; email accessibility.services@utoronto.ca) . Please consult <https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as> for more information.

2. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from

other institutional resources (see <http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html>).

3. Turnitin

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

4. Email policy

In most cases, I will respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving them. Please note that I do not check email after 7 pm, so emails sent in the evening will be considered received the following morning. I will not respond to emails that can be answered by reading the syllabus.

Do not submit assignments via email. Email submissions will be ignored and will not count against deadlines.

It is important that any email you send complies with the following standards:

- You must use a valid "utoronto" email address. If you do not have a valid "utoronto" email address, you will not receive email correspondence sent from Quercus. (Instructions for getting an address are available on ACORN).
- Please include the course code (Sociology 497) in the subject line.

5. Laptop Policy

Cellphones should be turned off or to vibrate. Laptops or tablet devices are acceptable for notetaking but should not be used in ways that may distract your classmates. You are reminded that this is a seminar class that requires your full attention and engaged participation in discussion.

6. Quercus

The course website is a Quercus site. Visit the site frequently to check announcements, to download the course materials, and to submit written assignments.

7. Assignments/late penalties

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be subject to a 5% penalty per day. Late assignments will not be accepted more than 7 days after the deadline.

If you miss a test or a paper deadline, do not contact me unless you have followed the steps described here. Telling the professor why you missed a deadline or a test will not be considered.

· In case of illness, you must supply a duly completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca). A doctor's note is acceptable, but **MUST** indicate start and anticipated end of the illness. The form or note must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work at class or to me during office hours.

· If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). The letter must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work at class or to me during office hours.