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SOC207H1S: Work and Occupations Winter 2025 University of Toronto

Tues. 3:10-5 p.m.

Location: See ACORN

Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/373916>



Course Descriptions and Objectives

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to Sociology 207, Work and Occupations. Work is one of the most fundamental aspects of human life. How a society organizes and divides its labor is critical to its character. In this class, we will consider how work structures social life, how work and social inequality are related, how work shapes and is shaped by our social identities, and how work has changed and will likely continue to change in the coming decades. We will focus mostly on work in the 20th and 21st centuries.

It is my goal that by the end of this semester you will more sophisticated consumers of information than you started, able to discern reliable from unreliable sources, evidence from opinion, and good data from bad, that you will be able to gather information, analyze it, and use it to make informed arguments and decisions. In short, I intend that you will finish the semester with more analytic, communication, and technical sophistication than you began.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Identify recent shifts to the labor market and their consequences for opportunity and inequality
- Students will be able to describe race and gender related workplace inequalities.
- Students will use sociological methods to collect data and build arguments based on their original data.
- 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

SOC100H1. Students without the prerequisite will be removed from the course and 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 30 pages of material per week (sometimes less, sometimes more). The lectures build on the readings, and I will expect that you have read the assigned texts ahead of class. Please bring a copy of the assigned readings with you to class. It is critical that you keep up with these readings.

WORK CONCEPTS ESSAY

Students will write a short (500-750 word) essay applying foundational concepts about work and occupations.

WORK IN THE NEW ECONOMY ESSAY

Students will write a short (500-750 word) essay applying class concepts about work in the new economy.

BLOG PROJECT

Students will be grouped into teams for this assignment. At 3 intervals throughout the semester, students will write an Op/Ed blog style post of 450-550 words reacting to a reading for the week

of their blog (readings for blog responses are marked with * in the reading list). Each student will a blog entry for one of the three rounds of the Op/Ed project, and they may choose which round to write their blog post (please be kind to your teammates and consider writing it earlier in the term. Students may wish to coordinate with their teams about who will write blogs in each round). Each round you will also write at least 2 comments, they may be in response to the blog post for the week, to another team member's comment, or directly to the reading prompt for the week (only if there are no on-time blog posts). This means that, in total, students will write one blog and at least 6 comments throughout the semester. All entries will be made on Quercus.

The blog should make an argument in response to the prompt that reflects the students experience or observation of the subject and demonstrates engagement with the other readings for the week. In other words, the response should include your perspective on the topic, based on your experience, supported with evidence (from the readings).

MIDTERM TEST

The midterm test will include questions about the readings and material from the first part of the semester.

FINAL TEST

The final test will include questions about the readings from the second part of the semester. Students should build an understanding of course material throughout the semester with ideas building on each other as the semester progresses. The test will not be "cumulative" per se, but is inevitable that students will need to draw on their understanding of ideas from the first part of the semester to demonstrate knowledge of material that came later.

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE AND GRADING

Assignment	Due Date	Contribution to Grade
Work Concepts Essay	Jan 31	24%
Mid-Term Test	Feb 11	21%
Work in the New Economy Essay	March 14	24%
Blog Post:	Round 1: Feb 23 Round 2: March 2 Round 3: March 23	7% (each student writes only 1 post)
Blog comments:	Round 1: Feb 28 Round 2: March 7 Round 3: March 28	3% (all students write 2 comments each round, 1% per round*3 rounds)
Final Test	April 1	21%

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

<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Grade Point Value</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Grade Point Value</i>
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 Policies

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).

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.

READINGS

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

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 take handwritten rather than type-written notes.

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.

Assignment Submission and Deadlines

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.

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 Feb 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

Please notify me promptly if you must miss a deadline and provide official documentation as soon as possible.

Missed deadlines and tests: Students who miss a paper deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that paper or test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control.

Within three days of missing a paper deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration.

Students must document their request with **one of the following:**

- Absence declaration via ACORN (**can only be used once during the semester**)
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

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.

Plagiarism Detection

Turnitin plagiarism detection software is integrated within Quercus. It uses text matching technology as a method to uphold the University's high academic integrity standards to detect any potential plagiarism.

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>).

If you object to your work being subject to review by Turnitin, add a comment when you submit your assignment. If we do find that we need to review your assignment for plagiarism and you have asked that we not use Turnitin, we will ask that you provide sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper you submit is truly yours. If you cannot or decline to provide the requested documentation and do not consent to us using Turnitin for review, we will decline to mark the assignment.

Use of Generative AI

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), and specifically foundational models that can create content, including writing, are becoming ubiquitous. This includes not only GPT4 (and its siblings ChatGPT and Bing), but many writing assistants that are built on this or similar AI technologies. Microsoft and Google have already integrated some of these technologies into widely used software that students will inevitably need for this class. These technologies reside in a boundary area between making users more productive, modelling valuable skills about writing and critical thinking, and replacing human intelligence in completing some class-relevant tasks. I hope to have an ongoing critical dialogue about how these tools work, why they work the way they do, and where they may be helpful or harmful in the context of academic work.

Some of these tools are more useful than others in the context of sociology classes. Tools like Research Rabbit can enhance and speed up a literature search, Grammarly might help copy edit writing, and ChatGPT might help outline a paper or better understand the current state of the field around a particular idea. None of these tools are replacements for the depth of skills that university training provides. At best these tools contain a reflection of human intelligence and fully rely on human intelligence and creativity to work at all effectively. They are primarily predictive—creating sentences by replicating which words follow each other most often in past writing. Because of the way they work they are often wrong and prone to hallucination. Sometimes this is obvious and even entertaining but often it's not clear without extensive domain area expertise. Using them to draft text is certain to result in vague language derivative of the prompt, likely to reproduce biases from the underlying training data, and may be simply incorrect. Please also consider that part of the reason these tools are getting so much attention is because powerful corporate interests are deeply invested in their widespread adoption—not because they are so effective but because they are so profitable.

To complete your degree in sociology you will need to be more persuasive and creative at building arguments, thinking critically, and making connections between ideas than any of these tools. Importantly, you will need to learn to do all of this in a voice that is uniquely and genuinely your own. These tools may help you in that process, but over-reliance on them will prevent you from learning the skills necessary to complete work at the level expected for this class. Put bluntly, ChatGPT can provide text that is a vague derivative of the average of the internet, and my expectations for you are considerably higher than that.

I encourage you to limit your use to collecting ideas, searching for literature, grammar/copy editing, and maybe outlining. In my experience with ChatGPT, I find it is often wrong, overly generic, and lacking in critical nuance. It might be helpful in gathering ideas when you are getting started, but you will likely find that your own writing is far more dynamic and sophisticated and that consulting it slows you down and dampens your creativity.

Given these considerations, Students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids or to help produce assignments. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit. Expect that creativity, nuance, and sophistication will be considered in how your work is marked.

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.

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Communication and 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 “SOC207” and a brief description in the subject line. We will typically answer emails within 24 hours during the workweek (i.e. Monday through Friday, between 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.). 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 **Tuesdays 1-2pm**. 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>

Course Schedule and Due Dates

All assigned readings are available on Quercus.

**Indicates readings for response in Op/Ed Blogs*

	Class Meeting Date	Lecture Topic and Assigned Readings	Assignments and Events
1	Jan 7	Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Kaufman, "The Social Nature of Personal Choices." <i>Everyday Sociology</i> http://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2014/12/the-social-nature-of-personal-choices.html 	
2	Jan 14	What is work and why do we do so much of it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selections from Weber, Max. 2007(1930). <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>. Routledge: London. (pg 13-20, and 122 (bottom)-124 (last full paragraph). • Karl Marx. Alienated Labor (In Wharton, Amy S. 2014. <i>Working in America: Continuity, Conflict, and Change in a New Economic Era</i> (4th ed.). Paradigm Publishers Boulder, CO.) • Evan Stewart. "Alienation and Orange Juice: The Invisibility of 	

	Class Meeting Date	Lecture Topic and Assigned Readings	Assignments and Events
		Labor” https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2013/10/06/fresh-squeezed-orange-juice-and-the-invisibility-of-workers/	
3	Jan 21	Scientific Management, or why a McDonald’s burger is the same everywhere you go. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frederick Taylor. “Fundamentals of Scientific Management” (In Wharton, Amy S. 2014. <i>Working in America: Continuity, Conflict, and Change in a New Economic Era</i> (4th ed.). Paradigm Publishers Boulder, CO.) Braverman, Harry. 1998. <i>Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century</i>. NYU Press. Chapter 3, pgs 49-58 	
4	Jan 28	Emotional Labor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arlie Hochschild. The Managed Heart (In Wharton, Amy S. 2014. <i>Working in America: Continuity, Conflict, and Change in a New Economic Era</i> (4th ed.). Paradigm Publishers Boulder, CO.) Leidner, Robin. 1993. <i>Fast Food, Fast Talk: Service Work and the Routinization of Everyday Life</i>. University of California Press. (In Wharton, Amy S. 2014. <i>Working in America: Continuity, Conflict, and Change in a New Economic Era</i> (4th ed.). Paradigm Publishers Boulder, CO.) Optional (but awesome): Listen to <i>The Dig</i> “Work Won’t Love You Back” with Sarah Jaffe https://www.thedigradio.com/podcast/work-wont-love-you-back-with-sarah-jaffe/ 	Work Concepts Essay Due Jan 31st (by 11:59pm)
5	Feb 4	Work in the New Economy <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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ALTERNATIVE: There is only limited access to 	

	Class Meeting Date	Lecture Topic and Assigned Readings	Assignments and Events
		<p>the Clement et al chapter through the UofT library. If you are unable to access it, this alternative will provide much of the same content, but from a US perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cappelli, Peter. 1999. "Career Jobs Are Dead." <i>California Management Review</i> 42(1):146–67. doi: 10.2307/41166023. • *Introduction to Misra, Joya, and Kyla Walters. 2022. <i>Walking Mannequins : How Race and Gender Inequalities Shape Retail Clothing Work</i>. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press. 	
6	Feb 11	Midterm Test: No Class Meeting	
	Feb 18	Reading Week: No Class Meeting	
7	Feb 25 Op/Ed Project Round 1	<p>Responding to Precarity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pugh, Allison J. 2015. <i>The Tumbleweed Society: Working and Caring in an Age of Insecurity</i>. Oxford University Press. Introduction and Chapter 3 • *Peters, Tom. 1997. "The Brand Called You." <i>Fast Company</i>. (https://www.fastcompany.com/28905/brand-called-you). 	<p>Op/Ed Project:</p> <p>-Blogs Due Feb 23 -Comments due Feb 28 (all by 11:59pm)</p>
8	March 4 Op/Ed Project Round 2	<p>Gender Inequality at Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haveman, Heather A. and Lauren S. Beresford. 2012. "If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You the Boss? Explaining the Persistent Vertical Gender Gap in Management." <i>The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i> 639(1):114–30 • Paula England, Jonathan Bearak, Michelle Budig, and Melissa Hodges. 2017. "Which Women Pay a Higher Price for Motherhood?" <i>Work in Progress</i> https://workinprogress.oowsection.org/2017/03/09/which-women-pay-a-higher-price-for-motherhood/ 	<p>Op/Ed Project:</p> <p>-Blogs Due March 2 -Comments Due March 7 (all by 11:59pm)</p>
9	March 11	<p>Racial and Ethnic Inequalities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wingfield, Adia Harvey. 2010. "Are Some Emotions Marked Whites Only? Racialized Feeling Rules in Professional Workplaces." <i>Social Problems</i> 57(2):251–68. doi: 10.1525/sp.2010.57.2.251. 	<p>Work in the New Economy Essay Due March 14</p>

	Class Meeting Date	Lecture Topic and Assigned Readings	Assignments and Events
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oreopoulos, Philip. 2011. "Why Do Skilled Immigrants Struggle in the Labor Market? A Field Experiment with Thirteen Thousand Resumes." <i>American Economic Journal: Economic Policy</i> 3(4):148–71. doi: 10.1257/pol.3.4.148. 	
10	March 18	<p>How long till the robots take over?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Ben Shestakofsky, "Automation and the Future of Work: A View from Inside a Tech Start-up" <i>Work in Progress</i> http://www.wipsociology.org/2018/11/13/automation-and-the-future-of-work-a-view-from-inside-a-tech-startup/#more-901 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. 	
11	March 25 Op/Ed Project Round 3	<p>But what about where the robots have already taken over?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rahman, Hatim. 2024. <i>Inside the Invisible Cage: How Algorithms Control Workers</i>. Univ of California Press. Introduction Gray, Mary L., and Siddharth Suri. 2019. <i>Ghost Work: How to Stop Silicon Valley from Building a New Global Underclass</i>. HarperCollins. Introduction Alex Rosenblat. 2018. <i>Fast Company</i> "If Your Boss is an App, What, Exactly, Are You?" https://www.fastcompany.com/90264519/if-an-app-is-your-boss-what-exactly-are-you 	<p>Op/Ed Project: -Blogs Due March 23 -Comment Responses Due March 28 (all by 11:59pm)</p>
12	April 1	Final Test: No Class Meeting	