Course Description

This course will guide you through the process of writing your senior project paper, a graduation requirement for all Sociology majors. The class will structure your work as you select your topic, write draft segments, and polish your paper.

Your major project should be the capstone expression of your “sociological imagination.” You have spent a great deal of time and energy in the last few years developing knowledge, skills and ethics that are central to the practice of Sociology. The senior project class is the final step in your undergraduate experience. It will encourage you to engage deeply in a writing project.

Classes will include lecture, guest visitors, “work in the media” student presentations, and discussions of the required readings. When there are reading assignments, students should come to class prepared to discuss them. We will discuss the issues and challenges that students encounter as their work progresses. In conjunction with Career Services in CLA, the class will help students to prepare for the job market—thinking through your career goals and work values, developing resumes, getting ready for job interviews, etc. Students will write short papers that will be put together in the final senior project paper.

Paper options

1) **A Reflective Work-related Autobiography.** This option will follow the class lectures and discussions closely as we examine the changing U.S. occupational structure, work experiences, career development, post-graduate educational options (including graduate and professional school or technical training), occupational choice, and the ways sociological knowledge, skills, and perspectives can be used in your future work career. Students will write about their work-related experiences, including both paid and unpaid work (work in the family, schoolwork, internships, and volunteering), and how they influenced their career interests and decision-making. They will also reflect on the prospects, benefits, rewards, and drawbacks of the occupations they are considering, drawing on the assigned books and other relevant literature.
**Important Note:** Students who choose Option 2 will work more independently but will have the same schedule of assignments as those who select the first option. This syllabus describes topics and assignments for those choosing the first, “work autobiography” option. Assignments will be individually tailored by the professor for students choosing the 2nd option.

**2) A Reflective Essay on the Uses of Sociology in Public Life.** Students will write an essay on some aspect of sociology and its relevance for contemporary society and social life, focusing on how sociological research and insight can be applied to real world organizations, social issues, or social problems. Examples of topics: the status of social scientific research and writing in politics and public policy implementation; the ways sociological thinking and research inform movements for social change; the presence (or absence) of sociological research and thought in popular culture and the mainstream media.

**Length of Senior Project Papers**
For both options, final papers will be 12-18 pages---double spaced, Times New Roman 12 font, with one inch margins at the top, bottom and sides.

**Note:** If you would prefer to complete the Major Project requirement by conducting an original research project, you can take Directed Research (Soc 4094W). For more information on these options please contact Bobby Bryant Sociology Advisor. The vast majority of Sociology students complete the Major Project via Soc 4966W.

**Class Texts:**


**Requirements**

1) Class Attendance - coming to class prepared to discuss your project and the readings;
2) Participation in a “Work in the Media” presentation
3) Completion of 7 assignments described below
4) Final Senior Project Paper
Grading

10% Class attendance (Based on % of classes attended; e.g., if 90%, 9 points)
10% “Work in the Media” Presentation
55% Completion of 7 assignments, on time
   Assignment 1  5% Option 1 or 2, with short description
   2  5% Ehrenreich
   3  10% My career pathway
   4  5% Jauhar
   5  20% My occupational choice
   6  5% First Draft Final Paper
   7  5% Career Experience Report
25% Final paper

“Work in the Media” Presentation

The media (considered broadly to include TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, the internet, movies, etc.) is a powerful source of information about work and molds public opinion about work-related issues and occupations. Stories about work and workers are of broad public interest. Stories may feature changes in work in general (e.g., increasing precarity of work, rising or falling unemployment rates), positive aspects and accomplishments of visible occupational members (e.g., prize winners, those accomplishing heroic deeds), problems of an occupation, work-family conflict and other issues of work-life balance, scandals and breaches of ethics and public trust. Occupations may have positive or negative public images depending on such coverage.

To fulfill this assignment, students will work in groups of three or four to 1) select a news clip or other feature about work that can be shared with the class (about 5-10 minutes long); 2) pose 2 or 3 questions or issues about it for the class to discuss; 3) show it to the class; and 4) lead the discussion. The clip and questions should be emailed to Professor Mortimer a day or two before the class meets so she can incorporate them in her powerpoints.

A sign-up sheet will be distributed the first day of class for this assignment. The sign-up sheet indicates the topics to be discussed on that day. Student presentations may be related to these topics or to other topics of their choice.

Student Writing Support Services

This class will not provide instruction about grammar, punctuation, spelling, and similar matters, though they will matter in the evaluation and grading of your papers. Student Writing Support (SWS) offers free writing instruction for all University of Minnesota students at all stages of the writing process. In face-to-face and online collaborative consultations, SWS consultants help students develop productive writing habits and revision strategies.
SWS consultants are teachers of writing, including graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants and professional staff. Some consultants specialize in working with non-native speakers, and others have experience with writing in specific disciplines.

Consulting is available by appointment online and in Nicholson Hall, and on a walk-in basis in Appleby Hall. In addition, SWS offers a number of web-based resources on topics such as avoiding plagiarism, documenting sources, and planning and completing a writing project. For more information, go to writing.umn.edu/sws or call 612.625.1893.

Consultants in the Center will help you get started on your paper, provide commentary on drafts, assist you in the writing process, and teach you how to revise, edit, and proofread your work.

SYLLABUS

Tuesday, January 16  Introduction
Organization and requirements of this course.
Discussion: What is a senior project? Two project options.
Sign-up for Work in the Media Presentations

Thursday, January 18  Change in the Labor Force: Increasing Inequality and Precarity of Work

Selection of Senior Project Options
First Assignment due (5 points): Students indicate whether they will select Options 1 or 2
If 1 is selected, describe your career goals in one page (approximately 200 words).
If 2 is selected, describe your topic in one page (approximately 200 words).


Tuesday, January 23  Prospects for Recent College Graduates
Reading: Nickel and Dimed, “Serving in Florida”
Class Visitor: Monica Siems McKay, Service Learning Coordinator, to discuss volunteer opportunities in the Twin Cities
Thursday, January 25  **Guest Lecturer**: Katy Hinz, CLA Career Development Services, Resources available for CLA students
**Reading**: *Nickel and Dimed*, Start, “Scrubbing in Maine”

Tuesday, January 30  **Learning about work in family settings**
**Reading**: *Nickel and Dimed*, Finish, “Scrubbing in Maine”

Thursday, February 1  **Learning about work in school and unpaid work settings**
**Reading**: *Nickel and Dimed*, Start, “Selling in Minnesota”

Tuesday, February 6  **The debate surrounding teen work: work intensity**
**Reading**: *Nickel and Dimed*, Finish, “Selling in Minnesota”

Thursday, February 8  **The character of early paid work: work quality**
**Reading**: *Nickel and Dimed*, “Evaluation”

Tuesday, February 13  **Consequences of early paid work in the teenage years**

Thursday, February 15  **Long-term consequences of early work experiences, effects on career development and attainment**
**Second Assignment Due**: My Work Experiences----Comparing my early work experiences with Ehrenreich’s (2 pages, 5 points)

Tuesday, February 20  **Difficulties of the School-to-Work Transition in the U.S.**
**Reading**: *Intern*, “Prologue: Captive”, “Internship: An Introduction,” Chapters 1-3

Thursday, February 22  **The School-to-work Transition in International Perspective**
**Reading**: *Intern*, Chapters 4-6

Tuesday, February 27  **Vocational Development and Career Choice**
**Reading**: *Intern*, Chapters 7-9
Thursday, March 1  Challenges of Work in Professional and Managerial Occupations

Reading: Intern, Chapters 10-12

Tuesday, March 6  No class
Third Assignment Due:  Career Pathway Narrative (3 pp, 10 points)
    Submit via Moodle

Thursday, March 8  Guest Lecturer:  Nancy Herther, Social Sciences Librarian, Wilson Library.  How to find sources for Assignment 5 (due April 5).  We will meet in Wilson Library s30b (lower level).
Reading: Intern, Chapters 13-15

Tuesday, March 13, Thursday March 15  Spring Break

Tuesday, March 20  Good Writing
Reading: Intern, Chapters 16-18

Thursday, March 22  Writing Strategies
Reading: Intern, Chapters 19-21

Tuesday, March 27  Guest Visitor, Mellissa Solin (Soc Graduate, LCD)

Thursday, March 29  Guest Visitor, Lydia Quint (Soc Graduate, LCD and policy analysis, Americorps, Governor’s Housing Task Force)
Fourth Assignment Due:  Do I anticipate any of the challenges described by Jauhar?  (2 pp, 5 points)

Tuesday, April 3  Guest Visitor, To be Announced

Thursday, April 5  Guest Lecturer:  Katy Hinz, CLA Career Development Services. Resume-writing, preparation for job interviews, and entering the labor market.
Fifth Assignment Due:  My Occupational Choice: my career choice(s); needs and projections for this kind of work; intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, job stressors, competition/cooperation with other occupational groups (3 pp, 20 points)
Tuesday, April 10  **Guest Visitor**, To Be Announced.

Thursday, April 12  No Class  
**Sixth Assignment Due: First Draft Final Paper 5%**

Tuesday, April 17  **Work and Life Balance**

Thursday, April 19  **Guest Visitor:** Emily Bryant, Graduate of U of MN Sociology, Grad Student at Boston University  
**Seventh Assignment Due: Career Experience Report** (1 page, 5 points)

Tuesday, April 24, Thursday April 26  (Consultations with Instructor and TA to review first draft – sign-up schedule will be distributed)

Tuesday, May 1  **Editing and polishing your Senior Project Paper**  
Senior Exit Survey

May 3  **No Class. Final Senior Project Papers due at 4 pm** (12-18 pp., 25 points)  Submit via Moodle.