Morals and Markets: An Introduction to Economic Sociology
Sociology 252 (12487)
Instructor: Christi M. Smith
Office: King Building 301B
Office Hours: Thursdays, 4-6pm or by appointment

Meeting Place: King 341
Meeting Time: 3:30 pm - 4:20 pm

The Alphabet Soup:
IRP – Individual Research Project
DM – Discussion Memos

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This is an introductory course to the sociological study of the capitalist economy and the social processes that comprise the market system. Neo-classical economics commonly assert that there are fundamental tensions between, on one hand, markets, profit-seeking and efficiency and, on another, social relations, personal ties, and systems of social and moral regulation. Economic sociologists challenge and revise these understandings, showing instead that economic institutions and behaviors are shaped by the same social structures that shape, e.g., political, religious and familial behavior. This course will explore a number of these tensions, as well as how and why the ‘embeddedness’ of markets within social structures matters. We tackle these questions through analyzing both classical and contemporary theory. Some of the questions we will contend with include: Can the market contribute to creating a more moral social order? How do we think about ‘interests’ and the relationship of capitalism to (and in) political systems? How do economic systems generate, exclude, or incorporate groups of people? A diverse range of cases will be used to explore these questions—from varieties of capitalism to pricing human organs; the organization of peasant rebellions to the organization of recycling; conspicuous consumption to political consumption. Finally, we use these theoretical tools to analyze contemporary education reform movements towards the privatization of public education. Across these cases, we will consistently apply a sociological perspective by asking how power operates, with attention to the production of meaning, conceptualizations of actors, and processes of social change.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the Oberlin College Bookstore):
** on reserve at the library


Two places to look on BlackBoard: weblinks (marked WL) are under (sidebar) Weblinks and Assignments. Other readings are under the Syllabus tab (see folders).
ASSESSMENT
Individual Research Project Fair Contribution: 20%
Individual Research Project (including drafts): 40%
Discussion memos, discussion facilitation, active participation: 40%

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS
Timing: DMs should be emailed by noon the day before class. Other assignments are due at the beginning of class (3:30) on the day they are assigned.

Formatting: Assignments should be printed (double-sided) with your name, the course number, assignment title, and page numbers on each page. Unless an alternate arrangement is agreed upon in advance, late assignments will lose one letter grade for each day late – this includes not turning in a hard copy at the beginning of class. Please use Times New Roman, 11 font, standard margins. Handwritten assignments will NOT be accepted.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:
Participation: Please do arrive on time, turn your cell phone off (not to vibrate), listen and respond to others. Ask classmates (and me) to clarify comments and provide evidence to support their contributions. To do this, bring your texts, reading notes, and discussion questions. Please note that this class only has one required book but does expect that you print out articles. If this presents a financial burden, there are several available options. The easiest of these is to arrange a ‘copy share’ with a fellow classmate (please limit sharing to 3 persons). You will have an assigned DM number. On days with your DM# marked on the syllabus, we will discuss your DMs.

Readings: It is very important that you read all assigned materials well in advance of the class for which they are assigned. It is strongly encouraged that you print out and bring readings to class. Note: some readings are more challenging than others! I will give tips on how to tackle particular readings in advance, but I also encourage you to look over the readings a week in advance as part of planning out your workload. It is generally a good idea to first quickly peruse the reading – read the abstract, section headings, etc. – to get a quick sense of what you should read for. I encourage you to make margin notes – including any questions you have as you are reading. After reading, revisit those margin comments to see if your questions have been addressed and if not, bring those questions to class for us to address collectively!

We may decide to change some of the readings in order for the assigned reading to be responsive to student interests. As a group, we may become more interested in certain topics or require more clarification on certain theories. I will announce any changes to the syllabus in class.

I encourage you to write brief summaries of each reading for your own benefit. These should include: how this reading pertains to earlier research (why was this author motivated to address this particular question?), the main argument, a quick description of the evidence used to make that argument, and the findings. On synthesis days, take time to consider how the readings
compare – do they use similar research strategies? Do authors address similar questions? Can you cluster certain readings thematically?

**Discussion Memos ("DM"):** should be based on the reading and connect to past class discussions. Discussion questions should not be definitional (Ex: “What does Zelizer mean by “Connected Lives”?), but rather should compare and contrast readings to illuminate interesting sociological questions.

First, your DMs should briefly *summarize* the most important argument of each of the readings assigned for that class meeting reading.

Second, discussion memos should put the readings in conversation with one another – thus, after reading a contemporary news article you might want to consider how Thorstein Veblen or Anna Julia Cooper would interpret contemporary arguments, to give one example. As such, the challenge is to select appropriate and interesting authors and articles to bring into conversation.

**3 DMs three will be graded. I will assign you a number 1-5 and this will allow you to know which readings you are responsible for. (DM #s are marked on the reading schedule.)**

Please post all 5 DMs on the Blackboard Discussion board by noon on the day before class. If Blackboard is down, please email me.

**Individual Research Project ("IRP"):** You will select a topic (localism, ecotourism, human trafficking, etc.) to analyze using a theoretical perspective developed through this course. A detailed assignment sheet will be distributed.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES AND POLICIES**

**Late Policy:** For each day an assignment is late, the grade will drop one half letter grade. I strongly suggest you complete and print all assignments the night before class, if not earlier. *(Because only three DMs are graded, no late DMs will be accepted)*

**Attendance Policy:**
In the event that you do miss a class, you will be responsible for the material covered and all announcements made in class. If you miss more than two classes, I will worry about you and require that you meet with me. If you miss more than two classes, I reserve the right to dock your participation grade.

**College Sanctioned Absences**
If you intend to miss class for a college-sanctioned event (such as religious holidays or student athlete events) you should notify me within the first two weeks of the semester and provide the appropriate documentation. If these absences coincide with an important class event (project showcase, etc.) is imperative that I know about these absences in advance so that we may make special arrangements to make up activities in a way that is fair to all students. If you miss for a college-sanctioned reason, you are responsible for understanding the material.

**Incompletes**
I will not grant an incomplete except in cases with exceptionally unusual circumstances.
In Class Etiquette:

Any use of cell phones is prohibited during class. Please turn your cell phone off (vibrating is still distracting). I find it painfully irritating when students text in class. I may not be kind to people who text.

Please refrain from using laptops. If you distract others, I will ask that you leave class.

Lecture Notes
It is to your advantage to take notes during class. [http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/]

HOW HANDWRITTEN NOTES FURTHER YOUR LEARNING
Here's some advice borrowed from Princeton's students support staff: (http://www.princeton.edu/mcgraw/library/for-students/great-notes/)

You can maximize what you learn in and from lecture by following three easy steps: 1) adopt active listening skills; 2) take clear, effective notes; and 3) review your notes within 24 hours of taking them.

Listen actively in lecture

(1. Take notes to be more present in class)

• Get to class early so that you can choose a seat free of distractions and close to the lecturer.
• Look over your notes from last time and prepare for the day's lecture, anticipating themes, concepts, and ideas that the lecturer will likely present.
• Listen both for main ideas and for the relevant details supporting them.
• Pay particular attention when the lecturer is analyzing, synthesizing, or processing information for you, such as when she makes a list, notes cause and effect, uses superlatives, or spends a lot of time explaining something.
• Ask questions when you don't understand something.

Take good notes during lecture using the Cornell Method of Note taking

(2. Take notes in a way that sets you up to listen and contribute effectively to class)

• Using only one side of your paper, draw a vertical line a few inches from the left side of the paper and a horizontal line a few inches up from the bottom of the page. (See example below.)
• Take legible notes in the central portion of your paper. Don't transcribe every word that the lecturer says. Rather, focus on main ideas, themes, and concepts, taking down only those details, examples, illustrations, or formulae that will help you to remember the central point(s) of the lecture.
• Use **consistent, understandable abbreviations** whenever possible.
• **Skip lines to indicate transitions** from one thought or idea to the next.
• **Leave noticeable blanks** for words, ideas, or dates that you didn't catch but can fill in later.
• **Put question marks in the left-hand margin** to indicate that you should do further investigation on this section of your notes, either on your own or by going to office hours.

**Fill in and review notes after lecture**

*(3. Take notes to help you study more effectively)*

• **Review your notes within 24 hours** of taking them. Students forget 50% of what they learn if they don't review within 24 hours.
• **Fill in any blanks** you left and answer any questions you may have from lecture.
• Use the left-hand margin to **annotate your notes** indicating key terms, concepts, dates, and any other important information that will help you to review for exams or write papers.
• Use the bottom margin to **write a summary** of each page of notes—or, if it makes more sense, summarize at the end of one set of lecture notes.

Following these steps will help you to store information in your long-term memory and better learn your course material the first time around—a real time saver when it comes to reviewing for quizzes, test, and exams.

**Special Needs**

Students with special needs should inform me within the first two weeks of class and provide appropriate documentation from university services. I will do my best to insure that you have what you need to do your best in this course. [http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/]

**Honor Code**

[http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/honorcode.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/honorcode.html)

**The Honor Code:** Oberlin College students are on their honor to uphold a high degree of academic integrity. All work that students submit is expected to be of their own creation and give proper credit to the ideas and work of others. When students write and sign the Honor Pledge, they are affirming that they have not cheated, plagiarized, fabricated, or falsified information, nor assisted others in these actions.

**Honor Pledge:** "I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment."

Sign each assignment—it is your reminder to know the boundaries of cheating (not doing your own work) plagiarism (taking credit for someone else's work) and fabrication (making up sources, quotations or observations).


If you feel hesitant or if you are tempted to plagiarize, come see me.

It is not possible for us to have an intellectual community without honor. I expect that you demonstrate respect by recognizing the labor of those who create scholarly works.

If you cheat (and this includes plagiarism/ not citing sources), your final grade will be an **F**. You will be reported. Ignorance is not an excuse.
How to get in touch:
Preferred Mode: Office hours/ lingering after class

Email:
Please note that I will try to respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays and I will do my best to answer all emails in a timely manner.

I will not check my email between 7pm-8am on weekdays.
I may or may not check email on weekends. Please plan ahead.

Emails cannot make up for inadequate planning so please utilize office hours and do not expect last-minute assistance on readings/ assignments via email.

Learning time management is an important aspect of college.

When sending an email, include the course number and description of your inquiry in the subject line.

Please check Blackboard/ syllabus before sending an email to make sure that the information you need is not available.

Please note that if you have a longer question, I will suggest that you discuss it either in class (so that we can all discuss your idea) or in office hours.

**Drafting emails (perhaps in Word so they aren’t accidentally sent) can be a great way to commit ideas to paper but save these and bring them to class as a discussion memo! Do remember that email is professional correspondence. Please use proper grammar, capitalization, and salutation/signature.

Unannounced Pop-ins: If it is a general question, I recommend checking with your classmates before emailing me.
If you want to pop by my office, here is The Code: door ajar – please knock/ door closed – busy.

Office Hours: Please do arrange to meet with me individually (or in pairs) before October.
Office hours are for your benefit. Office hours are a time to talk about your progress in the course, to discuss particulars regarding your project, or other individual concern. Office hours are not the place to discuss ideas that could better be discussed in class.

Class Dinners: We will also have a few class dinners over the course of the semester. I will announce these two weeks in advance. These will be held at Wilder, Stevenson, or Lord/Saunders Afrikan Heritage House.
Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings:
Come to class having read the assigned reading, bring readings and reading notes, and DMs.

I reserve the right to change the syllabus. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out about any changes and prepare accordingly.

I will post reading guides and questions to ponder on Blackboard prior to class.

Introduction to Morals & Markets
In this first section of the class, we explore a variety of cases, some of which you may wish to delve into more deeply for your IRP. These cases raise questions about how inequality is produced through competitive markets, what constitutes exploitation, and how we can think sociologically about issues of ‘sustainability,’ ‘fair labor,’ and ‘social responsibility’ or ‘university divestiture.’ This first section begins by examining a few popular contemporary responses to these challenges. Lecture will be used to discuss these as we preview major debates in classical theory.

M 08/31: Introduction. Byrd, “Consuming with Care”

Roberts. “Brothers in Business.” WL


F 09/04: Maniates, Michael. 2001. Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World? Global Environmental Politics 1:3: 31-52. DM1

**Assignment: Course Goals & Introduction essay due

M 09/07: No Class: Labor Day

W 09/09: Ch. 22, “Physiological Reform”, pp. 316- 340 in R.S. Fletcher. WL


F 09/11: Chakravorti, “How Do We Get Businesses Working Towards the Sustainable Development Goals?” WL

Stuart, “In Praise of Regulation” WL


[These are all very short readings – please spend some time learning more about these issues on your own]

**Guest Speaker:** Hilary Sparks – Roberts, Executive Director of Social Venture Partners. Please review the website and create a few questions you would like to ask (www.svpcle.org). DM2

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### Classical Perspectives on Power, Ideas, and the Market

In this section of the course, we deepen our discussion of how sociologists have theorized economic questions while applying these classical theories to case applications in class. As a starting point, consider how these writers conceptualize exploitation, human agency, and the aim of capitalism. Referencing back to Hirschman, does capitalism make the social order more moral, sow the seeds of self-destruction, or do we need new theoretical tools for 21st century challenges?


(watch the brief video in this article)

**W 09/16:** Hill, Lisa. “Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, and Karl Marx on the Division of Labor.” *Journal of Classical Sociology* November 2007 vol. 7 no. 3 339-366 [Filed under: “Hill on Smith, Ferguson, and Marx.”] DM4


**W 09/23:** No Class: Yom Kippur


IRP Selection Due.

W 09/30: Synthesis DM4 (DMs should help us link across past readings)

F 10/02: Gaventa. Preface: Power & Participation  DM5
**Note: I have invited alumni from the Oberlin Alumni Association of Africana Ancestry to join us as part of their reunion weekend.

Doing Good?
Can the market be a solution to social problems? Can responsible investing, regulation of food production or labor codes, or other similar solutions discipline the market?

“For almost a century since 1918, the centralised nation-state has been the world's default political form. Its various experiments in industrialisation, urbanisation, mass literacy and consumerism have brought more people into public life.” - Pankaj Mishra

M 10/05: Sunstein, “Why Markets Don’t Stop Discrimination”


F 10/16: First Draft Individual Research Project Assignment Due.

--- FALL RECESS: OCTOBER 17-25---

M 10/26: Comparing across cases and review

Out of Bounds?
In her studies of morals and markets, Zelizer asks, Do interpersonal negotiations actually transform both available culture and personal relations, and how do negotiated interpersonal relations shape the accomplishment of concrete economic activity? How do we measure the worth or value of people, ideas, or goods?


M 11/02: Zelizer, Ch. 1, Valuation of Human Lives DM3


W 11/04: Research Instruction Session with Librarian Cynthia Comer
Bring your questions!

Change of office hours! If you have questions about preparing for the project showcase, be sure to come to office hours on TUESDAY (not Thursday this week!), 3-5pm
F 11/06: Zelizer. Chapter 3, From Baby Farms to Baby M. DM1
(Google: visit the website for California Cryobank celebrity donor Look-A-Likes)


Zelizer, Ch. 9: Do Markets Poison Intimacy? DM4

W 11/11: Project Showcase: Bring an outline and a ‘trailer’ for your project. Your goal is to get critical and generative feedback from others. Invite your friends!
(Creativity encouraged – your piece should be no longer than 5 minutes)

F 11/13: Documentary: The Business of Being Born
(I will be out of town for a conference Nov. 12-15)

M 11/16: Zelizer, Ch. 2 The Price and Value of Children DM2; Zelizer, Ch. 4, The Priceless Child Revisited DM5

– Everyone reads pgs. 1-25 and 83-91
DM1’ers: Ch3 Who are the Child Workers? 27-34
DM2’ers: Ch4 The Cost of Increasing the Quantity and Quality of Education 35-48
DM3’ers: CH4 Direct Household Costs of eliminating Child Labor 49-58
DM4’ers: Public sector costs of eliminating child labour 59-66
DM5’ers: The Benefits of Education 67-74


M 11/23: Bring a scholarly article or book chapter that presents an alternative to Chowdhry and Beeman. DM2
--- THANKSGIVING RECESS: NOVEMBER 26-29 ---

Public Education/Public Good: Should Market Logics Apply?
In this final section of the course, we consider how to apply approaches from earlier sections of the course to the issue of public education. Like intimate relations, public education systems have traditionally been viewed as a bounded sphere that could be harmed by market logics. Yet, increasingly, pressure to privatize public schools has resulted in charter schools, merit pay, and Race to the Top policy. We synthesize course readings to think about the issue of school privatization, and neo-liberal school reform broadly, and the links between the market and citizenship rights more broadly.


W 12/02: Renzulli and Roscigno, Charter Schools and the Public Good 572-578; NYT Universal Free Preschool. DM4

F 12/04: The Finnish Comparison – Hancock, Why Are Finland’s Schools Successful?” (WL)

**Find 2-4 additional news articles to share with the class. Bring a one-page summary of the articles you select. DM5


W 12/09: Project Workshop

F 12/11: Synthesis

---READING PERIOD: DECEMBER 12-15---
Recommended Reading: (Many are uploaded on Blackboard)


Benford, Robert D. and David A. Snow. 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment" *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26:611-639


