

SOC 552
Fall 2022

Economic Sociology

Thursdays, 8:00-11:00 am, Boucke 308

Instructor:

Daniel DellaPosta

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 - 4:30 pm (no appointment required)

Course Overview and Goals:

This course serves as an advanced introduction and survey of the field of economic sociology. While encompassing a variety of theoretical and methodological orientations, economic sociologists seek broadly to understand the role of social forces in the organization of economic life. As such, theory and research in economic sociology extends, refines, and sometimes critiques complementary perspectives from economics, management, psychology, industrial organization, and other social science fields. The topics emphasized in the course will include the “embeddedness” of economic action in social structure; the role of institutional logics and myths in economic and organizational behavior; structure and change in markets and organizational fields; the role of politics in the economy; how social networks affect economic activity; the role of culture in economic action; patterns of consumption and valuation; trust and uncertainty; and the diffusion of innovations. By the end of the course, students should have a broad understanding of the field of economic sociology and be able to apply knowledge from this field in their own research.

Course Requirements:

1. Attend classes and participate actively.
2. Complete assigned reading before coming to class each week. Arrive prepared to discuss the reading in detail. For a discussion-based seminar such as this one, this means that each student should come to class with at least 1 prepared question or comment on each assigned reading. Students are also responsible for leading group discussion of the readings (described in more detail below).
3. Complete a final paper. I encourage you to develop this paper in a way that makes the course helpful and relevant for your research, and I am available to help you do this. A prospectus outlining your paper idea will be due mid-way through the semester. You will also make an in-class presentation on your final paper.

Course Materials:

All assigned readings will be available for download from Canvas. Use the “Modules” page to access and keep track of assigned materials (or find them under “Files”).

Grade Distribution:

In-Class Participation	25%
Mid-Semester Prospectus	10%
Final Paper	50%
In-Class Presentation	15%

Assessment Breakdown:

1. In-Class Participation

- A typical meeting of the seminar will feature a brief introductory lecture, after which the rest of our time will be spent on in-depth discussion of the readings for that week. To participate in these discussions, every student should come in with at least one question and/or comment on each of that week’s assigned readings. In addition, one student will serve as a discussion leader for each reading. Each student will serve as discussion leader for a total of 3 readings over the course of the semester. The discussion leader is expected to begin our discussion with a **brief** (2 minutes maximum) verbal summary of the reading and to get us started with at least one discussion question for their classmates. The discussion question can be something you found challenging, puzzling, confusing, surprising, insightful, disagreeable, or otherwise interesting about the assigned reading. Sign-ups for discussion leader slots will take place at the end of the first week of classes; please try (when possible) to avoid signing up for multiple readings in the same week.

2. Prospectus and Final Paper

- The bulk of the final grade will come from the completion of a final paper (roughly 15 pages double-spaced). Students are encouraged to use the final paper as an opportunity for incorporating ideas from the field of economic sociology into their own research field. There are two options for the final paper. The first option is to submit a journal-style paper reporting on the results of a research project. Since not everyone may have such a project, the second option is to submit an extended research proposal that (a) poses a research question that can be related to topics or ideas in economic sociology (broadly defined); (b) summarizes and critiques previous research relevant to this question; and (c) proposes an avenue for future research (including a proposed research design) that could shed greater light on the research question. A brief (roughly 2-page) prospectus of your research paper will be submitted in the first week of November and the final paper will be due on Monday 12/12, after the last week of classes. More details will be forthcoming in class.

3. In-Class Presentation

- During our last in-class meeting of the semester, students will present the content of their final paper to the class. These presentations should include slides (for example, PDF or Powerpoint) and should be approximately 15 minutes long.

Other Policies and Resources:

- **Covid:** The course will be following [Penn State COVID-19 guidance for faculty and instructors](#).
- **Due Dates:** Please make every effort to complete any assignments by the assigned dates and times. If you contract an illness and are not able to complete coursework, please contact me so that we can discuss a plan for making up work. However, please note that you are **not** required or expected to share any personal health information with me.
- **Academic Integrity** is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights, and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.
- **Disability Accommodation:** Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.
Student Disability Resources: 814-863-1807 (<http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/>)
- **Counseling and Psychological Resources:** Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to

differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): (814) 863-0395

(<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>)

Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400

Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741

- **Educational Equity**: Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the Report Bias webpage (<http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/>).

Course Schedule

Meeting:	Content:
Aug. 25	<p>Course Overview and Introduction</p>
Sept. 1	<p>Economic Theory and Sociological Critiques <i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Becker. 1976. Selection from <i>The Economic Approach to Human Behavior</i> – Williamson. 1981. “The Economics of Organization: The Transaction-Costs Approach.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – Granovetter. 1985. “Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>.
Sept. 8	<p>The “Embeddedness” of Economic Action <i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Portes and Sensenbrenner. 1993. “Embeddedness and Immigration: Notes on the Social Determinants of Economic Action.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – Uzzi. 1996. “The Sources and Consequences of Embeddedness for the Economic Performance of Organizations: The Network Effect.” <i>American Sociological Review</i>. – Krippner. 2002. “The Elusive Market: Embeddedness and the Paradigm of Economic Sociology.” <i>Theory and Society</i>.
Sept. 15	<p>Trust, Uncertainty, and Cooperation <i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Beckert. 1996. “What is Sociological about Economic Sociology? Uncertainty and the Embeddedness of Economic Action.” <i>Theory and Society</i>. – Yamagishi, Cook, and Watabe. 1998. “Uncertainty, Trust, and Commitment Formation in the United States and Japan.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – Baldassarri. 2015. “Cooperative Networks: Altruism, Group Solidarity, Reciprocity, and Sanctioning in Ugandan Producer Organizations.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>.

Week of:	Content:
Sept. 22	<p>Illicit Economic Behavior and Exchange</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Gambetta. 1988. “Fragments of an Economic Theory of the Mafia.” <i>European Journal of Sociology</i>. <li>– Beckert and Wehinger. 2013. “In the Shadow: Illegal Markets and Economic Sociology.” <i>Socio-Economic Review</i>. <li>– Erikson and Bearman. 2006. “Malfeasance and the Foundations for Global Trade: The Structure of English Trade in the East Indies, 1601–1833.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>.
Sept. 29	<p>New Institutionalism</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Meyer and Rowan. 1977. “Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. <li>– DiMaggio and Powell. 1983. “The Iron Cage Revisited: Collective Rationality and Institutional Isomorphism in Organizational Fields.” <i>American Sociological Review</i>. <li>– Greif. 1993. “Contract Enforceability and Economic Institutions in Early Trade: The Maghribi Traders’ Coalition.” <i>The American Economic Review</i>.
Oct. 6	<p>Institutional Change</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– DellaPosta, Nee, and Opper. 2017. “Endogenous Dynamics of Institutional Change.” <i>Rationality and Society</i>. <li>– Dobbin and Sutton. 1998. “The Strength of a Weak State: The Rights Revolution and the Rise of Human-Resources Management Divisions.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. <li>– Rao, Monin, and Durand. 2003. “Institutional Change in Toque Ville: Nouvelle Cuisine as an Identity Movement in French Gastronomy.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>.
Oct. 13	<p>The Sociology of Markets</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Geertz. 1978. “The Bazaar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing.” <i>American Economic Review</i>. <li>– Fligstein. 1996. “Markets as Politics: A Political-Cultural Approach to Market Institutions.” <i>American Sociological Review</i>. <li>– Rivera. 2012. “Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Services Firms.” <i>American Sociological Review</i>.

Week of:	Content:
Oct. 20	<p>Politics and the Economy <i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Polanyi. 1957. “The Economy as Instituted Process.” From <i>The Sociology of Economic Life</i>, edited by Granovetter and Swedberg. – Krippner. 2017. “Democracy of Credit: Ownership and the Politics of Credit Access in Late Twentieth-Century America.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – Chu and Davis. 2016. “Who Killed the Inner Circle? The Decline of the American Corporate Interlock Network.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>.
Oct. 27	<p>Social Networks and Economic Action <i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Burt. 2004. “Structural Holes and Good Ideas.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – Vedres and Stark. 2010. “Structural Folds: Generative Disruption in Overlapping Groups.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – Eagle et al. 2010. “Network Diversity and Economic Development.” <i>Science</i>.
Nov. 3	<p>**PROSPECTUS DUE BY MIDNIGHT TUESDAY 11/1**</p> <p>Culture and Economic Action <i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Zelizer. 1989. “The Social Meaning of Money: ‘Special Monies’.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – Fourcade. 2011. “Cents and Sensibility: Economic Valuation and the Nature of ‘Nature’.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – Christin. 2018. “Counting Clicks: Quantification and Variation in Web Journalism in the United States and France.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>.

Week of:	Content:
Nov. 10	<p>Race and Gender Inequalities in Economic Relations <i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ray. 2019. “A Theory of Racialized Organizations.” <i>American Sociological Review</i>. – Robinson. 2020. “Making Markets on the Margins: Housing Finance Agencies and the Racial Politics of Credit Expansion.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – Rivera and Tilcsik. 2019. “Scaling Down Inequality: Rating Scales, Gender Bias, and the Architecture of Evaluation.” <i>American Sociological Review</i>.
Nov. 17	<p>Consumption and Valuation in Markets <i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bourdieu. “The Forms of Capital.” From <i>The Sociology of Economic Life</i>, edited by Granovetter and Swedberg. – Zuckerman. 1999. “The Categorical Imperative: Securities Analysts and the Illegitimacy Discount.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – Salganik, Dodds, and Watts. 2016. “Experimental Study of Inequality and Unpredictability in an Artificial Cultural Market.” <i>Science</i>.
Dec.1	<p>Diffusion and Innovation <i>Reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strang and Soule. 1998. “Diffusion in Organizations and Social Movements: From Hybrid Corn to Poison Pills.” <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>. – Strang and Macy. 2001. “In Search of Excellence: Fads, Success Stories, and Adaptive Emulation.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>. – DiMaggio and Garip. 2011. “How Network Externalities Can Exacerbate Intergroup Inequality.” <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>.
Dec. 8	<p>In-Class Presentations</p> <p>***FINAL PAPER DUE BY MIDNIGHT MONDAY 12/12***</p>