

Sociology 302: Sociology of Organizations
Fall 2023
Frances Searle Building 1441
M / W 9:30am-10:50am

Instructor: David Schieber (he/him)

Email: david.schieber@northwestern.edu

Office Hours: I will be in my office (1810 Chicago Ave. Rm. 321, top of the turret) on Tuesdays from 10:00am-12:00pm to meet. Feel free to reach out to set up meetings outside this time as well.

Teaching Assistant:

Ronaldo Monasterio (RonaldoMonasterio2028@u.northwestern.edu)

Office Hours: Mondays / Thursdays: 1:00pm-2:00pm

Shinan Wang (shinan.wang@kellogg.northwestern.edu)

Office Hours: Wednesdays: 3:00pm-5:00pm

Course Description

We all interact with organizations. You are interacting with an organization right now. Much of everyday life, whether it is school, work, shopping, or eating occurs within the context of organizations. The goal of this course is to teach you to think analytically about the organizations you interact with. Throughout the quarter, we will examine *why* organizations are the way they are, how scholar's understandings of organizations have changed over time, and how scholars today think about organizations.

Each week we will discuss theoretical concepts on a variety of topics: How do organizations make decisions? How do organizations interact with their environment? How do people experience working in organizations? By answering these broad theoretical questions, we will also answer applied questions: Why there has been such an influx of microbreweries in the United States in the past 30 years? How do fashion houses choose models for runway shows? How do chefs and cooks think about themselves as professionals?

My goal for you when you are finished with this course is that you will think more deeply about the organizations you interact with. You will understand how organizations manage to persist over time (Northwestern was founded before the invention of the telephone!), why organizations might fail (Kodak invented the digital camera! Then went bankrupt as other companies started selling digital cameras...), and the internal and external processes which guide organizational decision making and outcomes (Law schools spend a bunch of money sending glossy informational packets to other law school professors who already went to law school. Weird. Except they think the glossy packets might

improve their peer review scores on the US News rankings.) Each week we will discuss theoretical concepts in the field of organizational study, and bring in topical cases to illustrate these theoretical concepts.

This course will use academic articles for the majority of readings. These readings will give you the opportunity to see knowledge production at its source, and give you the opportunity to engage with current research in the field. While this course is called *Sociology of Organizations*, the study of organizations is cross-disciplinary, and we will read works by economists, business school professors, in addition to sociologists.

Course Objectives

1. Gain a broad understanding of how sociologists study organizations and the research questions organizational sociologists ask.
2. Gain a broad understanding of the methods and data sociologists use to answer these questions.
3. Develop your skills in reading academic research articles and applying these articles to real world cases.

Course Materials

There are no required textbooks for this course. Readings for this class will be available on Canvas through the course reserves or as PDF links.

Class Procedures

I will lecture in person in our assigned classroom. I expect students to attend lecture, but I will use the Panopto systems in the lecture hall to record the lectures and post them to the course canvas page for students who are unable to attend that day. I conduct class polls during lecture, and each time you answer one of these polls in-person, you will receive one point added to your final grade.

Grading

Reading Response Papers (5 x 4%)

Throughout this course, you are required to complete four 2-3 page reading response papers. These response papers should be divided into two parts: 1.) A summary of the main takeaways from that days readings showing me that you completed the readings, and 2.) A description of a unique case you find that highlights arguments from the readings. See Canvas for a more detailed explanation of what the summary and response should look like.

You may choose which 5 days readings' you respond to, and your paper must be submitted to Canvas before the start of class that day. Each paper is worth 5% of the total writing assignment category. The paper will be graded on a Check Plus / Check / Check Minus system (Check Plus = 5%; Check = 2.5%; Check Minus = 0%).

All writing assignments should be double-spaced, with 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. See the "Reading Response Rubric" posted on Canvas for more details.

Short Answer Questions (16 x 5%):

After every lecture, I will post 1 or 2 short answer questions to canvas. **By Sunday, December 3rd at 11:59pm** you must have answered and submitted 16 answers to these questions. If you would like to save these until the last week and complete them like a typical exam you are welcome to do so. If you want to complete the questions as quickly as possible in the first few weeks of class, you are welcome to do that as well.

These will be the same style of questions I have asked on my exams in the past, but de-bundled from the traditional exam format. Each answer should be ~200-250 words, but more importantly, should answer each part of the question. Please see the rubric on canvas for more information.

Once per quarter, if you or a group of students attend office hours (either mine or a TAs) to discuss a short answer question, it will count as full credit for one of your ten short answer questions.

Letter Grading Scale

93%+	A	90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+	83-86%	B
80-82%	B-	77-79%	C+
73-76%	C	70-72%	C-
67-69%	D+	61-66%	D
0-60%	F		

Emails

Email is the best way to get a hold of me, and I try to respond to emails as quickly as possible. If you have questions about course materials or readings, don't hesitate to email. **Please include SOC 302 in the subject line of any email sent to me.**

Students With Disabilities

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU,

preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

Additional Notes

It is the responsibility of every student enrolled at Northwestern University to support the principles of academic integrity and refrain from all forms of academic dishonesty: <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/>. Always do your own work, and reference any words that did not originally come from you. I will report any suspected academic dishonesty cases to the dean.

Calendar of Lectures and Readings (Subject to Change)

Week 1: What is an Organization?

Wednesday, September 20th

- Introduction, no readings.

Week 2: Rational Systems and Bureaucracy

Monday, September 25th

- W. Richard Scott. 2003. "Chapter 2: Organizations as Rational Systems." Excerpt from *Organizations: Rational, Natural, and Open Systems*.
- Michel Anteby and Curtis K. Chan. 2018. "A Self-Fulfilling Cycle of Coercive Surveillance: Workers' Invisibility Practices and Managerial Justification." *Organization Science* 29(2): 247-263.
- Rose Eveleth. 2019. "Your Employer May Be Spying on You—And Wasting Its time." *Scientific American*.

Wednesday, September 27th

- Max Weber. 1978 (1921). Excerpt from "Bureaucracy" in *Economy and Society*. pg. 956-969.
- Gary Hamel and Michele Zanin. 2018. "The End of Bureaucracy." *Harvard Business Review*.
- Joel M. Podolny and Morten T. Hansen. 2020. "How Apple is Organized for Innovation." *Harvard Business Review*.

Week 3: Open Systems and Resource Partitioning

Monday, October 2nd

- Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik. 1978. *The External Control of Organizations*. Chapter 1.
- Grace L. Augustine and Alessandro Piazza. 2021. "Category Evolution Under Conditions of Stigma: The Segregation of Abortion Provision Into Specialist Clinics in the United States." *Organization Science*: Forthcoming.
- Ana Swanson and Keith Bradsher. "Climate Change Could Worsen Supply Chain Turmoil." [*New York Times*](#).

Wednesday, October 4th

- Carroll, Glenn R. and Anand Swaminathan. 2000. "Why the Microbrewery Movement? Organizational Dynamics of Resource Partitioning in the U.S. Brewing Industry." *American Journal of Sociology* 106(3): 715-762.
- Glenn R. Carroll. 1985. "Concentration and Specialization: Dynamics of Niche Width in Populations of Organizations." *American Journal of Sociology* 90(6): 1262-1283.
- Steven T. Berry and Joel Waldfogel. 2001. "Do Mergers Increase Product Variety? Evidence from Radio Broadcasting." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 116(3): 1009-1025.

Week 4: Institutions and Isomorphism

Monday, October 9th

- Meyer, John W. and Brian Rowan. 1977. "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony." *American Journal of Sociology* 83(2): 340-363.
- Carruthers, Bruce G. and Wendy Espeland. 1991. "Accounting for Rationality: Double-Entry Bookkeeping and the Rhetoric of Rationality." *American Journal of Sociology* 97(1) 31-69.
- Tim Hallett. 2010. "The Myth Incarnate: Recoupling Processes, Turmoil, and Inhabited Institutions in an Urban Elementary School." *American Sociological Review* 72(1): 52-74.

Monday, October 11th

- DiMaggio, Paul and Walter Powell. 1983. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields." *American Journal of Sociology* 48(2): 147-160.
- Godart, Frederic C. and Ashley Mears. 2009. "How Do Cultural Producers Make Creative Decisions? Lessons From the Catwalk." *Social Forces* 88(2): 671-692.

- Caplan, Robyn, and Danah Boyd. 2018. "Isomorphism Through Algorithms: Institutional Dependencies in the Case of Facebook." *Big Data & Society* 5.1.

Week 5: Embeddedness, Networks, and Status

Monday, October 16th

- Wuchty, Stefan, Benjamin F. Jones, and Brian Uzzi. "The Increasing Dominance of Teams in the Production of Knowledge." *Science* 316.5827 (2007): 1036-1039.
- David Burkus. 2013. "Why the Best Teams Might be Temporary." *Harvard Business Review*.
- Brian Uzzi. 1997. "Social Structure and Competition in Interfirm Networks: The Paradox of Embeddedness." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 42(1): 35-67.

Wednesday, October 18th

- Podolny, Joel. 2005. *Status Signals: A Sociological Study of Market Competition*. Chapter 1.
- Reschke, Brian P., Pierre Azoulay, and Toby E. Stuart. "Status Spillovers: The effect of Status-Conferring Prizes on the Allocation of Attention." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 63.4 (2018): 819-847.
- Piazza, Alessandro, Damon J. Phillips, and Fabrizio Castellucci. "High-Status Affiliations and the Success of Entrants: New bands and the Market for Live Music Performances, 2000-2012." *Organization Science* 31.5 (2020): 1272-1291.

Week 6: Categories, Rankings, and Reactivity

Monday October 23rd

- Ezra Zuckerman. 1999. "The Categorical Imperative: Securities Analysts and the Illegitimacy Discount." *American Journal of Sociology* 104(5): 1398-1438.
- Amanda Sharkey. 2014. "Categories and Organizational Status: The Role of Industry Status in Response to Organizational Deviance." *American Journal of Sociology* 119(5): 1380-1433.
- Greta Hsu. 2006. "Jacks of All Trades and Masters of None: Audiences' Reactions to Spanning Genres in Feature Film Production." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 51: 420-450.

Wednesday, October 25th

- Wendy Espeland and Michael Sauder. 2007. "Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds." *American Journal of Sociology* 113(1): 563-589: 1-40
- Gabriel Rossman and Oliver Schilke. 2016. "How Ratings and Awards Do (and Don't) Benefit Companies" *Harvard Business Review*.
- Olav Velthuis and Niels van Doorn. Forthcoming. "Weathering Winner-Take-All: How Rankings Constitute Competition on Webcam Sex Platforms, and What Performers Can Do About It." In *The Performance Complex: Competitions and Valuations in Social Life: Oxford University Press*.

Week 7: Professional Identity and Emotional Labor

Monday, October 30th

- Blake E. Ashforth and Glen E. Kreiner. 1999. "How Can You Do It? Dirty Work and the Construction of a Positive Identity." *The Academy of Management Review* 24(3): 413-434.
- J. Stuart Bunderson and Jeffery A. Thompson. 2009. "The Call of the Wild: Zookeepers, Callings, and the Double-edged Sword of Deeply Meaningful Work." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 54: 32-57.
- Lashley, Kisha, and Timothy G. Pollock. "Waiting to Inhale: Reducing Stigma in the Medical Cannabis Industry." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 65.2 (2020): 434-482.

Wednesday, November 1st

- Arlie Hochschild. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Chapter 1.
- Carol Rambo Ronai and Carolyn Ellis. 1989. "Turn-Ons for Money: Interactional Strategies of the Table Dancer." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 18(3): 271-298.
- Humphrey, Ronald H., Blake E. Ashforth, and James M. Diefendorff. "The Bright Side of Emotional Labor." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 36.6 (2015): 749-769.

Week 8: Racialized Organizations / Clicks, Objectivity, and Journalism

Monday, November 6th

- Victor Ray. 2019. "A Theory of Racialized Organizations." *American Sociological Review* 84(1): (2019): 26-53.
- Adia Harvey Wingfield and Koji Chavez. 2020. "Getting In, Getting Hired, Getting Sideways Looks: Organizational

Hierarchy and Perceptions of Racial Discrimination." *American Sociological Review* 85(1): 31-57.

- András Tilcsik. 2021. "Statistical Discrimination and the Rationalization of Stereotypes." *American Sociological Review*. 86(1):93-122.

Wednesday, November 8th

- Gaye Tuchman. 1972. "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity." *American Journal of Sociology* 77(4): 660-679.
- Angèle Christin. 2018. "Counting Clicks: Quantification and Variation in Web Journalism in the United States and France." *American Journal of Sociology* 123(5): 1382-1415.

Week 9: Social Movement Organizations

Monday, November 13th

- Mancur Olson. 2009 (1965). "The Free-Rider Problem." Excerpt from *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Good and the Theory of Groups*.
- Matt Kahn and Kenneth Sokoloff. 2020. "Do Social Networks Increase or Decrease The COVID-19 Contagion Rate?." *John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center*.
- Aldon Morris. 2021. "From Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter: Protest Expert Aldon Morris Explains how Social Justice Movements Succeed." *Scientific American*.

Wednesday, November 15th

- John D. McCarthy and Mayer. N Zald. 1977. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 82(6): 1212-1241.
- Nicholas Kulish. 2020. "Providing a Pandemic Safety Net, Nonprofits Need Their Own." [New York Times](#).
- Jo Freeman. 1971. "The Tyranny of Structurelessness." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 17: 151-164.

Week 10: Production of Culture

Monday, November 20th

- Wendy Griswold. 1981. "American Character and the American Novel: An Expansion of Reflection Theory in the Sociology of Literature." *American Journal of Sociology* 86(4): 740-765

- Jennifer Jenkins. 2021. "January 1, 2021 is Public Domain Day: Works From 1925 are Open to All!!!" *Duke Law School's Center for the Study of Public Domain.*"
- Cynthia Littleton. 2018. "How Hollywood is Racing to Catch Up With Netflix." *Variety.*

Wednesday, November 22nd

- Moshe Adler. 1985. "Stardom and Talent." *The American Economic Review* 75(1): 208-212.
- Jerry W. Kim and Brayden King. 2014. "Seeing Stars: Matthew Effects and Status Bias in Major League Baseball Umpiring." *Management Science* 60(11): 2619-2644.
- Shelley J. Correll et al. 2017. "It's Conventional Thought That Counts: How Third-Order Inference Produces Status Advantage." *American Sociological Review* 82(2): 297-327.