Sociology 797 Economic Sociology and Inequalities
Mondays 1:25PM - 3:55PM
Thompson Hall room 919
Instructor: Donald Tomaskovic-Devey

Economic sociology encapsulates a set of mutually complementary ideas for understanding how economic behavior is produced. In a nutshell, what we refer to as the economy is produced via social relations (networks, power, status) that exist in specific institutional contexts (organizations, states, laws, cultural frames). Thus economic and market dynamics are social -- constructed and channeled by status and power relations, individual and organizational networks and institutional frameworks. During the period that came to be called neoliberalism, economic sociology developed as an alternative to asocial, natural law-like analyses by neoclassical economists of market processes. This was a good thing. At the same time that economic sociology has provided a sociological analysis of economic behaviors, the subfield has tended to neglect the inequalities produced in markets – the consequences of those behaviors – and has also avoided a direct confrontation with neoliberal capitalism. This is not so good. This class will not leave inequality and neoliberalism unexamined.

My goals for this class are threefold. 1. Provide an overview and critique of the subfield of Economic Sociology. 2. Develop an economic sociology of inequality as an alternative to more individualistic and societal approaches to inequality. 3. Reflect on the system level consequences of global-neoliberal capitalism, and especially financialization.

Readings:
1) Mark Granovetter. 2017 Society and Economy (Harvard)
3) David Weil. 2014. The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became so Bad for so Many and What Can be Done to Improve It (Harvard)
5) Various articles

Resources:

Society for the Advancement of Socioeconomics and its journal Socio-Economic Review http://www.sase.org/

ASA Economic Sociology Section and Newsletter http://www2.asanet.org/sectionecon/newsletter.html

European Economic Sociology network http://econsoc.mpifg.de/newsletter/newsletter_current.asp
Course Activities
The course is a seminar, weekly participation is required.

a. Each student will take responsibility for leading one class session
b. Each week you are to prepare an analytic memo of that week’s reading plus one other reading of your choice. This review will outline the main ideas in the readings in such a way as to demonstrate their overlap and distinctions, as well as questions that arise as you read/think about the material. You will draw out the implications of both for future research or thinking on these topics. These memos are intended to be writing and thinking exercises to foster class discussion and identify what for you are promising areas for future investigation. They should not be treated as finished papers. Perfection is the enemy of progress. Memos should be between 2 and 5 pages long and are due to me via email by Saturday midnight.
c. We will have post-class discussions on-line. I expect some participation from seminar participants most weeks. The person responsible for that week’s class will post the discussion question(s).

You will write a class paper on the topic of your choice. Student should outline a course paper early in the semester and promptly begin the research to accomplish it. Topics should be arrived at in consultation with the instructor. Course papers can be literature reviews, research proposals, or theoretical or empirical papers. If your goal is to begin an eventually publishable paper it is permissible for two or more members of the class to collaborate on their course paper. The paper will be tackled in five stages.

a. One page topic paper with 1-3 key references. This paper will define the topic of your course paper, why it is potentially important, and identify key references you will build from. (Due February 12)
b. A reading list for the paper, organized by sub-topics or themes (Due March 5th)
c. An outline of the paper, with a short description of the proposed/anticipated contents of each section or a book review summarizing and contrasting to monographs you will use in your final paper (Due March 26).
d. A draft paper to be commented on by the instructor and two classmates (Due April 23, comments Due April 30th).
e. A final paper (Target due date May 7th, but later papers will be accepted)

1 It is possible at any time in the semester to switch paper topics -- you are, however, still responsible for all stages of the paper process at the time of new topic choice. Switching topics implies accelerated stages.
Syllabus

1. Introduction to Economic Sociology January 22nd

Week 1 Thinking like an economist, thinking like a sociologist
   c. Mark Granovetter. 2017 Society and Economy, Chapters 1-2

   c. Mark Granovetter. 2017 Society and Economy, Chapters 3-6

Background Readings

Week 3 Culture and Economic Action, February 5th

Week 4 Embedded Exchange, February 12th


Week 5 Markets as Networks, February 26th


Week 6 Markets and Institutions March 5th


Week 7 Thinking Organizationally, March 6th


Week 8 Organizations as Action Fields March 19th
d. Pat Hill Collins, TBA

Week 9 Relational Inequality Theory, March 26th

Week 10 The Fissured Workplace April 2nd
David Weil. 2014. The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became so Bad for so Many and What Can be Done to Improve It (Harvard)

Week 11 Rising Between Workplace Inequalities, April 9th

Week 12 Financialization, April 17th (Tuesday)

**Week 13 Neoliberalism. April 23rd**


**Week 14 The End of Capitalism? April 30th Everyone!!!!!**

Wolfgang Streeck, 2016. *How Will Capitalism End?* Chapters 1-5