

Sociology 440
Winter 2013 T2
T/TR 2:00-3:30
Room ANSO 202

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Office Hrs: By appointment

ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

Course Description

Most, if not all, economic activity—whether it takes place at the level of individuals, organizations, or markets—requires rules, norms, and institutions. Efficiency alone cannot account for the existence and nature of those rules, norms, and institutions. Beliefs, values, power structures, perceptions of self-interest, political structures, history, and numerous additional factors hold explanatory potential as well. This course investigates these factors. In the process, students explore some of the most important theoretical frameworks in sociology and politics such as rational choice theory, historical institutionalism and statist theory, and some key topics in sociology such as international development.

This course examines economic activities at the individual, organizational, national, and international levels. In each case, it considers real-life instances, such as the purchasing behavior of people, the internal structures of organizations, the development problems of Third World countries, and the practices of accounting, to unearth the relationship between economic and societal factors. In the process, a number of theoretical schools of thought are considered: neo-institutionalism, rational choice theory, world systems theory, globalization, historical sociology, and others.

Course Objectives

By taking this course, students will learn to:

1. Understand the social underpinnings of most economic activity in society
2. Identify the fundamental insights of economic sociology
3. Conduct primary and secondary sociological research on economic activity in organizational, national, and international settings
4. Investigate, through participant observation, the unfolding of economic activity in shops and marketplaces.

Required Texts

The following five required books are for sale at the bookstore and are on reserve at Koerner library. I have also sent you the initial assigned sections of these books for the first two weeks via email (because not all the books are available as of the start of the semester):

Patrick Aspers. 2011. Markets. Polity Press.

Nina Bandelj and Elizabeth Sowers. 2010. Economy and State. Polity Press.

Bruce G. Carruthers and Laura Ariovich. 2010. Money and Credit. Polity Press.

Miguel Centeno and Joseph Cohen. 2010. Global Capitalism. Polity Press.

Francesco Duina. 2011. Institutions and the Economy. Polity Press.

Course Requirements

Students will be expected to write two papers. In the first paper (35% of the final grade), students will critically review the literature read thus far. Papers will be evaluated on the bases of clarity, comprehensiveness, and use of the texts. The papers will be due by Thursday of Week 6 at the beginning of class.

In the second paper (35% of the final grade), students will select an economic subject matter of their choice (within the confines of organizations, national economies, or international economy) and conduct an original analysis of the matter in question. They will be asked to present one or more alternative accounts of the observed issues and assess, whenever appropriate, the explanatory power of different approaches. The paper will be due at the start of the last class. Students are expected to present the subject of their papers and their findings during the last meeting of the class.

Students are also expected to form teams and conduct three simple exercises. The first consists of visits to a shopping area, selecting a store (The Gap, Starbucks, Best Buy, etc.), observing the layout of the store, observing the clientele, and visiting the chain's online Website (if available). During Week 3, selected groups will present their findings to the class. The second involves conducting research on the history and structure of two industries: defense and coffee. During Week 7 selected groups will present their findings to the class. The third consists of conducting research on the economic performance of two countries: South Korea and Zimbabwe. Selected groups will present their findings during Week 9. Presentations will contribute to participation grade for the course (30% of the final grade).

Late papers will be marked 1/3 of a letter grade off for every 24 hours past the deadline. Extensions will be granted only if requests are supported, ahead of the due date, by a doctor's note or a letter from Arts Advising.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when you present as your own the words or ideas of someone else. This includes quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing source material without indicating through the use of proper citation methods that you quoted, paraphrased, or summarized the respective material. Plagiarism of any form, even if it is unintentional, will not be tolerated. Please be sure to review UBC's online tutorial on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

<http://help.library.ubc.ca/planning-your-research/academic-integrity-plagiarism/>

Sources

For your final paper, you should rely only on peer-reviewed, published academic sources, and, depending on the nature of your paper, official publications and data released by reputable and well-known governmental and non-governmental organizations. Please do not use any data or information from any other source.

Course Outline

Week 1. Introduction to the Course

January 7: no reading

January 9:

Patrick Aspers. Chapter 1 of Markets.

Part I. INDIVIDUALS

Week 2. Institutions and Individual Transactions

January 14:

Francesco Duina. Pp. 3-4, 21-25 and pp. 31-40 of Institutions and the Economy.

Commercials (Part I)

January 16:

Francesco Duina. Pp. 41-61 of Institutions and the Economy.

Commercials (Part II)

Week 3. The Social Dimensions of Money

January 21:

Bruce G. Carruthers and Laura Ariovich. Chapter 3 of Money and Credit.

January 23:

Bruce G. Carruthers and Laura Ariovich. Chapter 4 of Money and Credit.

Group Exercise: Groups 1 and 2 present.

Week 4: The Consumer and Types of Markets

January 28:

Patrick Aspers. Pp. 69-80 of Markets.

January 30:

Patrick Aspers. Pp. 40-69 of Markets.

Controversial question: Should advertisements be banned or otherwise strictly regulated (only the facts)?

Part II. ORGANIZATIONS

Week 5. Institutions Outside and Inside Organizations

February 4:

Francesco Duina. Pp. 62-79 of Institutions and the Economy.

February 6:

Francesco Duina. Pp. 79-88 of Institutions and the Economy.

Week 6. The Environment and Organizations

February 11:

Bruce G. Carruthers and Laura Ariovich. Pp.122-156 of Money and Credit.

February 13:

Francesco Duina. Pp. 88-91 of Institutions and the Economy.

Nina Bandelj and Elizabeth Sowers. Chapter 5 of Economy and State.

Part III. NATIONAL ECONOMIES

Week 7. National Political Economies

February 25:

Nina Bandelj and Elizabeth Sowers. Chapter 1 of Economy and State.

February 27:

Nina Bandelj and Elizabeth Sowers. Chapter 3 of Economy and State.

Group Exercise: Groups 3 and 4 present.

Week 8. Institutional Dynamics

March 4:

Francesco Duina. Pp.104-111 of Institutions and the Economy.

March 6:

Nina Bandelj and Elizabeth Sowers. Chapter 4 of Economy and State.

Video: Inside Job

Week 9. The Question of Performance

March 11:

Nina Bandelj and Elizabeth Sowers. Chapter 6 of Economy and State.

March 13:

Francesco Duina. Pp.111-120 of Institutions and the Economy.

Group Exercise: Groups 5 and 6 present.

Part IV. THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY

Week 10. Trade and Capital Flows

March 18:

Miguel A. Centeno and Joseph N. Cohen. Chapter 2 of Global Capitalism.

Bruce G. Carruthers and Laura Ariovich. Pp. 156-162 of Money and Credit.

March 20:

Miguel A. Centeno and Joseph N. Cohen. Chapter 3 of Global Capitalism.

Week 11. International Development

March 25:

Nina Bandelj and Elizabeth Sowers. Chapter 6 of Economy and State.

Video: Black Gold

March 27:

Miguel A. Centeno and Joseph N. Cohen. Chapter 6 of Global Capitalism.

Week 12. Disciplinary and Methodological Considerations

April 1:

Francesco Duina. Pp.165-174 of Institutions and the Economy.

April 3:

Francesco Duina. Pp. 174-180 of Institutions and the Economy.

Week 13. Reflections on the Course

April 8: no reading assignment.