In compressed form, this six-week course provides an introduction to economic sociology seen not as a subordination of sociology to economics but as the sociological explanation of economic phenomena. As it has developed over the past twenty years, economic sociology has concentrated on two activities: first, the extension of economic models to social phenomena rarely examined by economists, and second, the study of contexts that constrain the operation of economic processes as usually understood by economists. In line with these two preoccupations, economic sociologists have focused on firms and markets. This course emphasizes a third activity, the search for alternative accounts of phenomena that most specialists have explained in terms of economics. In particular, it seeks sociological explanations of production, consumption, and distribution. After a general orientation to economic sociology as a whole, the course explores economic activities in an unconventionally wide range of settings including households, informal sectors, gift economies, and consumption. The course culminates with the analysis of compensation systems as a point of confrontation between conventional and alternative accounts of economic phenomena.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

1. **Readings:**
   a. **Required readings:** All students must read in preparation for class discussion and reports.
   b. **Recommended readings** identify valuable paths to and from the week's topic. Readings will be available in the Sociology Department mailroom. You should return them immediately after reading or photocopying.
2. **Reports:** Over the course of the six weeks each student prepares a total of three written reports. The **first two reports** consist of short critical essays concerning two or three of the current week's readings, of no more than 1,000 words; we will work out student responsibilities for sessions and particular readings in class. These reports serve as a basis for class presentation and discussion; students should circulate their reports electronically to the class by no later than 5 PM the Tuesday preceding the class session. Depending on class size, we may organize formal responses to these statements by other class members.

The reports should focus on the following issues;

a. what question is addressed by the author(s)?
b. what is the significance of that question for key issues in the field?
c. what are competing answers to that question?
d. how well does the author address that question, in terms of logic and methodology?
e. what would be a different, valid way of addressing the same question, preferably one you regard as superior?

(Note: Depending on course enrollment we will modify the number and kind of assignments during our first session).

The **third** report, also of no more than 1,000 words, is due on **Friday, November 2**. It will take up one of the following three options:

1. a brief research proposal based on one of the seminar's subjects or another topic to be chosen in consultation with instructor,

2. A national tradition in economic sociology,

3. Intellectual biography of one of the authors in the course.

For topics 2 or 3 the report should include:

a. an exposition of the tradition or author
b. at least one illustration confirming your description
c. a brief critique, indicating strengths and weaknesses
d. a tentative explanation of this work's distinctive properties

If possible, identify changes either in the work of the author or in the national tradition.
READINGS

WEEK 1 (September 13) ANALYSES OF ECONOMIC PROCESSES

Required:


Paul DiMaggio, "Culture and Economy," pp. 27-57 in The Handbook of Economic Sociology


Recommended:


WEEK 2 (September 20) VARIETIES OF ECONOMIC TRANSFERS

Required:


Recommended:


WEEK 3 (WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 26) TRANSFER MEDIA

Required:


Recommended:


WEEK 4 (October 4) HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY
Required:


Recommended:


WEEK 5 (October 11) CONSUMPTION

Required:


Recommended:


WEEK 6 (October 18) **COMPENSATION**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


