

Sarah Babb  
[babbsa@bc.edu](mailto:babbsa@bc.edu)  
418 McGuinn

### **Sociology 559: Economic Sociology (Fall 2009)**

What are markets and how do they work? In economics, the traditional assumption is that markets are impersonal, anonymous, and more or less universal. In contrast, economic sociologists study how markets are shaped by other social structures, such as law, culture, and social networks. This course is organized around the theme of the embeddedness of markets in non-market social structures. Although it focuses mostly on writings by sociologists, it also includes perspectives coming from economics, anthropology, and history.

The following are the readings required for the course:

- 1) Four books available for purchase at the BC bookstore (one copy of each on reserve at O'Neill library as well).

Biggart, Nicole Woolsey. 1990. *Charismatic Capitalism: Direct Selling Organizations in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Blair-Loy, Mary. 2003. *Competing Devotions: Career and Family among Women Executives*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Healy, Kieran. 2006. *Last Best Gifts: Altruism and the Market for Human Organs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jaffe, Daniel. 2007. *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- 2) A substantial collection of readings on BC online reserve:  
<http://www.bc.edu/libraries/services/reserves/>

This course is a seminar designed for graduate students and advanced undergraduates. There is a substantial amount of reading, and it is expected that students attend all classes having completed the readings, and be prepared to discuss them.

This course has a Blackboard Vista site. To log onto Blackboard, go to <https://cms.bc.edu/webct/entryPageIns.doweбct>.

To ensure informed and interesting discussions, students will be required to post responses to the readings on Blackboard Vista **by 8 a.m.** the day of class. Responses should be posted to the relevant entry in the "discussions" tab at the top. Please post your responses as online text rather than as an attachment. These responses are not supposed to be carefully written essays, but more of a log of how you responded to the readings, and what questions and issues they raised for you. Valid responses could include: 1) summaries; 2) critiques; 3) questions (e.g., "I don't understand what this author means by X,"); 4) musings on how the reading connects to things in the world or other readings; or

5) a combination of all the above. Responses should touch on **all readings** for that week, and should be a *minimum* of 500 words in length, or they will receive a zero out of 5 points (otherwise 5 out of 5). The four lowest response grades over the course of the semester will be dropped; in other words, out of 12 possible responses, you get 4 “freebies” (5 points \* 8 responses = 40 points).

Each student will also be required to present course material and lead discussion during one class session (we will pass out a signup sheet for these the second week of class).

Thus, the breakdown of course responsibilities and grading is as follows:

- 40% Weekly responses to readings.
- 10% An in-class presentation on class readings—on either two shorter readings or an entire book.
- 20% A 5-7 page essay on your choice of a variety of theoretical topics in economic sociology.
- 30% A final examination (graduate students in the class will have the option of writing a literature review on a selected topic in economic sociology in lieu of the final exam).

Finally, a word on my attendance policy: attendance is mandatory. You are allowed to miss one class session without a grade penalty; thereafter, 5 points per missed class will be deducted from your final grade unless you have a serious emergency documented by your Class Dean.

## CLASS SCHEDULE:

### **September 9: Introduction.**

**September 16: Markets in Perspective.** The classical economists assumed that markets were natural, universal institutions. This unit contrasts this perspective to the real-world observations of economic anthropologists. Readings: Excerpt from Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*; Excerpt from Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*; Geertz, “The Bazaar Economy.”

**September 23: Capitalism in Perspective.** What is capitalism, exactly, and what is its relationship to markets? In this unit, we compare Marxist and Weberian approaches to this very important theoretical question. Readings: Marx, “The Communist Manifesto,” “Wage Labor and Capital”; Weber, “Modern Capitalism;” Collins, “Weber’s Last Theory of Capitalism.” \*\*\***Essay topics handed out in class**\*\*\*

**September 30: The Corporation.** This unit examines how contemporary capitalist economies are structured by corporations—and how corporations function differently at different times and in different places. Readings: Chandler, “The Emergence of Managerial Capitalism;” Hamilton and Biggart, “Market, Culture and Authority;” Henwood, “Irresistible Temptations.”

\*\*\***Essay Assignment Due by 8 a.m. on Monday, October 5**\*\*\*

**October 7: Networks and Informal Institutions.** This unit looks at the ways that markets can be embedded in networks of social relationships, and shows that they are not as impersonal as is often assumed. Readings: Granovetter, “Economic Action and Social Structure”; Biggart, *Charismatic Capitalism*.

**October 14: Inequality I—Race.** For some economists, such as the University of Chicago’s Gary Becker, unfettered markets are the key to eliminating racial discrimination, and affirmative action policies are unnecessary and even harmful. This unit looks at some sociological (and economic) counter-arguments. Readings: Becker, “The American Dream”; Arrow, “What has Economics to Say about Racial Discrimination?” Bonacich, “Advanced Capitalism and Black/White Relations in the United States;” Kirshenman and Neckerman, “We’d Love to Hire Them, But...”

**October 21: Emotions and the Economy.** This segment looks at some of the tensions, relations, and contradictions between the market and the world of human feelings. Excerpt from Becker, *A Treatise on the Family*; Excerpt from Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*; Excerpt from Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*.

**October 28: Inequality II—Gender.** This unit looks at how labor-market inequalities between men and women are embedded in cultural values—in particular, expectations that professionals will devote themselves completely to their careers, and that mothers will devote themselves completely to their children. Reading: Blair-Loy, *Competing Devotions*.

**November 4: Relations of Production.** This unit examines different ways of organizing production, and how recent globalizing trends have revolutionized the production of goods and services—for better or for worse. Readings: Braverman (1974), Excerpts from *Labor and Monopoly Capital*; Stinchcombe, “Bureaucratic and Craft Administration of Production”; Excerpts from Castells, *The Network Society*.

**November 11: Culture and Consumption.** How are individuals' purchasing decisions influenced by their wider social environments? In this unit, we explore the intersection of social class, taste, and consumption patterns. Readings: Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital"; Bryson, "Anything but Heavy Metal"; Holt, "Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?"

**November 18: Development.** What does it mean for a country to be "underdeveloped"—and what does "development" entail? This unit explores some economic and sociological approaches to these questions. Readings: Evans (1979), excerpt from *Dependent Development*; Evans (1992) "The State as Problem and Solution;" Joon, "Kicking Away the Ladder;" Sen, excerpts from *Development as Freedom*.

\*\*\*Thanksgiving\*\*\*

**December 2: Markets vs. Gift Economies.** In contemporary capitalist societies, our lives are more dominated by markets than any other time in human history. In this unit, we look at a non-market economic logic that has flourished in the midst of our market madness—the donation of human blood and organs. Reading: Healey, Kieran, *Last Best Gifts*.

**December 9: Economic Globalization.** In many ways, economic globalization has made it more difficult for societies to embed markets in social values (e.g., welfare states, protections for workers, etc.). In this unit, we look at the Fair Trade coffee movement, which explicitly seeks to re-embed global markets in social values. Reading: Jaffe, *Brewing Justice*.

**Bibliography:**

- Arrow, Kenneth. 1998. "What Has Economics to Say About Racial Discrimination?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12(2):91-100.
- Becker, Gary. 1981. *A Treatise on the Family*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- , 1986. "The American Dream May be Coming Closer for Blacks." *Business Week* 4/21/86, p.11.
- Biggart, Nicole Woolsey. 1990. *Charismatic Capitalism: Direct Selling Organizations in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Blair-Loy, Mary. 2003. *Competing Devotions: Career and Family among Women Executives*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bonacich, Edna. 1976. "Advanced Capitalism and Black/White Race Relations in the United States: A Split Labor Market Interpretation." *American Sociological Review* 41(1).
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1983. "The Forms of Capital." Reprinted in In John Richardson, Ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258.
- Braverman, Harry. 1974. *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

- Bryson, Bethany. 1996. "‘Anything but Heavy Metal’: Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes." *American Sociological Review* 61: 884-899.
- Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Chandler, Alfred D. 1984. "The Emergence of Managerial Capitalism." *Business History Review* 58: 473-503.
- Collins, Randall. 1980. "Weber’s Last Theory of Capitalism." *American Sociological Review* 45: 925-42.
- Evans, Peter. 1979. *Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational, State, and Local Capital in Brazil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- , 1992. "The State as Problem and Solution: Predation, Embedded Autonomy, and Structural Change." In Haggard and Kaufman (eds.). *The Politics of Economic Adjustment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1978. "The Bazaar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing." *Supplement to the American Economic Review* 68: 28-32.
- Gereffi, Gary. 1994. "The International Economy and Economic Development." *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*. In Smelser, Neil J. and Richard Swedberg (eds.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Pp. 206-33.
- Granovetter, Mark. 1985. "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness." *American Journal of Sociology* 91: 481-93.
- Hamilton, Gary and Nicole Woolsey Biggart. 1988. "Market, Culture and Authority: A Comparative Analysis of Management and Organization in the Far East." *American Journal of Sociology* 94: S52-94.
- Henwood, Doug. 2003. "Irresistible Temptations." *Left Business Observer* 104: 4-5.
- Healy, Kieran. 2006. *Last Best Gifts: Altruism and the Market for Human Organs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hochschild, Arlie. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Holt, Douglas. "Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?" *Journal of Consumer Research* 25(1): 1-25.
- Jaffe, Daniel. 2007. *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Joon, Chang-Ha. 2005. "Kicking Away the Ladder: ‘Good Policies’ and ‘Good Institutions’ in Historical Perspective." Pp. 102-25 in Gallagher, Kevin P. (ed.). *Putting Development First: The Importance of Policy Space in the WTO and International Financial Institutions*. London, UK: Zed Books.
- Kirschenman, Joleen and Kathryn M. Neckerman. 1991. "‘We’d Love to Hire Them, But...’: The Meaning of Race for Employers." From Jenks et al. (eds.). 1991. *The Urban Underclass*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings.

- Marx, Karl. 1978 [1847]. *Wage Labor and Capital*, pp. 203-217 of Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader 2nd ed.* New York: W.W. Norton.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1978 [1882]. *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 473-91 of Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader 2nd ed.* New York: W.W. Norton.
- Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1972. *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, Inc.
- Smith, Adam. 1937 [1776]. *The Wealth of Nations*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1959. "Bureaucratic and Craft Administration of Production." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 4(2): 168-87.
- Weber, Max. 1927. "The Spirit of Capitalism." Reprinted in Swedberg, Richard (ed.). 1999. *Essays in Economic Sociology*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zelizer, Viviana. 1981. *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. New York: Basic Books.