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## SOCIOLOGY FOR BUSINESS STUDIES

**Period:** a.y. 2022/23 – I sem.

**Instructor:**

**Class times:**

Wednesday: 08:30-11:50

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### Course description

This course aims to provide business and management students with an introduction in the sociological research literature on organizations. The focus of this course is on theoretically driven contemporary research originating in sociology and appearing in the major journals of sociology and management. It is intended for doctoral students who wish to understand the role that sociological processes play in the structure and behavior of markets, industries, and firms and to learn more about this academic field and its current developments.

### *Class format and teaching approach*

As in any doctoral course, students need to be co-owners of the class and collectively responsible for its quality and outcomes. The class activity is mainly based on an **in-depth discussion** of the assigned readings. Each session will be facilitated as a seminar or inquiry in which all participants hold themselves accountable for a solid and rich intellectual enterprise and dialogue. The purpose is to engage each other in developing the best critical understanding of each topic.

During class sessions, the role of the instructor is to stimulate and facilitate such **dialogue**; the students' part is to attend each meeting and to come prepared to take an active role in class. This means reading the assigned materials and being ready to discuss the salient issues, questions, and problems emerging from the readings and topics of the session.

When academics and scholars of all kinds publish their research, part of what they are doing is setting their ideas forth to be criticized. Criticism isn't just familiar to academics; it's an essential component of what they do. Given this perspective, remember that class participation involves opening oneself to **challenge** others' ideas and positions. In return, students should expect to be challenged on their opinions and be prepared to justify them.

## Evaluation and grading policy

Students will be evaluated according to the following table:

| <i>Course requirements</i>                   | <i>Points</i> |
|--|---------------|
| Class participation and discussion questions | 30            |
| Written reports                              | 30            |
| Written exam                                 | 40            |
| <b>TOTAL Points</b>                          | <b>100</b>    |

Letter grades will be assigned according to the observed distribution of total points earned in the class' different required components. Points will be attributed according to the comparison and distribution of the class performance. It will be in students' best interest to perform as well as possible in each task.

### *Class participation and discussion questions*

This course is discussion-based, and the quality of the learning experience depends greatly on each student's contributions and interactions during the class sessions. This means that each student must take responsibility for the class's success by being an active (and constructively critical) participant in all class sessions. Preparation before class is essential and requires reading all assigned materials. However, simply reading the materials is not enough. Students must also evaluate the material, critique it, analyze how it fits with the literature, etc. Remember that this is not a methodology course; thus, we are more interested in the articles' theory, concepts, and logic.

For each session, I expect students to think of questions they would like to discuss in class regarding the assigned articles. Each student can only submit one question (not a series of questions) per session. You can focus on a single article. Otherwise, you might also try to make connections between the current readings or the readings we discussed in previous sessions.

#### DEADLINES AND RULES:

- Questions should be sent by email to the instructor and the entire class and copied into an online document (link will be provided)
- Deadline: two days before each class (Mondays), no later than 11 pm. Questions sent after the deadline will not be discussed in class and will not be evaluated. No exceptions. No excuses.
- Students should not submit questions like those already sent for that session by other students.
- Students cannot submit questions on the same readings of the assigned memos.



- Students cannot change or refine their questions after their first submission. Only the first version will be considered and evaluated.

### *Written reports*

Each student will choose **two articles** - among the readings from sessions 2-6 - to summarize and critique. Instructions regarding this choice will be given before the start of the course.

Structure your written report according to the following points (the reference section below can help you understand some basic concepts):

1. Describe the nature of the gaps or problems in the field of research that this article intends to fill.
2. Summarize the article (its theoretical statements and concepts) in one sentence.
3. Describe the logic/mechanisms (“explanation”) that are used by the author(s) to support such statements.
4. Identify the “boundary conditions” of the article (i.e., the limits of generalizability of a theory).
5. Describe how this article relates to other articles in the same or different sessions.
6. Identify problems, limitations, and future extensions.

#### DEADLINES AND RULES:

- Length: each report should be a 2-3 pages (single-spaced) PDF document.
- Due date: students should upload their files (the link will be provided at the beginning of the course) two days before each class (Monday), no later than 11 pm.

#### REFERENCES:

- Whetten, D. A. (1989). What constitutes a theoretical contribution? *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 490-495.
- Hedstrom, P., & Swedberg, R. (1998). *Social mechanisms*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge (Ch. 1 and 3). [Link](#).

Students should also be ready to briefly (5-10 min.) present a summary and critique of the assigned article in class.

### *Written exam*

The written exam is a closed book examination with 2-3 open questions on the readings and discussions of the course. Students should expect general questions about specific topics and comparisons of different papers. The duration is generally 60 minutes.



## Sessions and readings

### 1. Groups and social boundaries

- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 17(5), 475-482.
- Zerubavel, E. (1996). Lumping and splitting: Notes on social classification. *Sociological Forum*, 11(3), 421-433.
- Deephouse, D.L. (1999). To be different, or to be the same? It's a question (and theory) of strategic balance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 20: 147-166.

### 2. Categories and audiences

- Zuckerman, E. W. (1999). The categorical imperative: Securities analysts and the illegitimacy discount. *American Journal of Sociology*, 104: 1398-1438.
- Perretti, F., Negro, G. & Lomi, A. (2008). E Pluribus Unum: Framing, Matching, and Form Emergence in US Television Broadcasting. *Organization Science*, 19: 533-47.
- Pontikes, E. G. (2012). Two sides of the same coin: How ambiguous classification affects multiple audiences' evaluations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 57: 81-118.

### 3. Categories and players

- Glynn, M. A., & Marquis, C. (2004). When good names go bad: Symbolic illegitimacy in organizations. In *Legitimacy processes in organizations* (Vol. 22, pp. 147-170). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Navis, C., & Glynn, M. A. (2010). How new market categories emerge: Temporal dynamics of legitimacy, identity, and entrepreneurship in satellite radio, 1990-2005. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55(3), 439-471.
- Granqvist, N., Grodal, S. & Woolley, J.L. (2013). Hedging your bets: Explaining executives' market labeling strategies in nanotechnology. *Organization Science*, 24: 395-413.

### 4. Status

- Phillips, D. J. & Zuckerman, E. W. (2001). Middle-status conformity: Theoretical restatement and empirical demonstration in two markets. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107: 379-429.
- Durand, R., & Kremp, P. A. (2016). Classical deviation: Organizational and individual status as antecedents of conformity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(1), 65-89.
- Prato, M., Kypraios, E., Ertug, G., & Lee, Y. G. (2019). Middle-status conformity revisited: The interplay between achieved and ascribed status. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62(4), 1003-1027.



## 5. Stigma

- Vergne, J-P. (2012). Stigmatized categories and public disapproval of organizations: A mixed-methods study of the global arms industry. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55: 1027-52.
- Piazza, A. & Perretti, F. (2015). Categorical Stigma and Firm Disengagement: Nuclear Power Generation in the United States, 1970–2000. *Organization Science*, 26: 724-742.
- Smith, A., Wong, N. D., Sørensen, A. R., Jones, I., & Coraiola, D. M. (2021). Historical narratives and the defense of stigmatized industries. *Journal of Management Inquiry*.

## 6. Social change

- Rao, H., Monin, P. & Durand, R. (2005). Border crossing: Bricolage and the erosion of categorical boundaries in French gastronomy. *American Sociological Review*, 70: 968-991.
- Hiatt, S. R., Sine, W. D., & Tolbert, P. S. (2009). From Pabst to Pepsi: The deinstitutionalization of social practices and the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 54: 635-667.
- Phillips, D. J., Turco, C.J., & Zuckerman, E. W. (2013). Betrayal as market barrier: Identity-based limits to diversification among high-status corporate law firms. *American Journal of Sociology*, 118: 1023-1054.

## Course Schedule

| Sess. | Topics   | Date          | Activities and deadlines               |
|-------|--|---------------|--|
| 1     | <b>Introduction</b><br><i>Groups and social boundaries</i> | Sep. 07 - (W) | CLASS                                  |
| 2     | <b>Categories and audiences</b>                            | Sep. 12 - (M) | <i>Send questions and memos (11pm)</i> |
|       |  | Sep. 14 - (W) | CLASS                                  |
| 3     | <b>Categories and players</b>                              | Sep. 19 - (M) | <i>Send questions and memos (11pm)</i> |
|       |  | Sep. 21 - (W) | CLASS                                  |
| 4     | <b>Status</b>  | Sep. 26 - (M) | <i>Send questions and memos (11pm)</i> |
|       |  | Sep 28 - (W)  | CLASS                                  |
| 5     | <b>Stigma</b>  | Oct. 03 - (M) | <i>Send questions and memos (11pm)</i> |
|       |  | Oct. 05 - (W) | CLASS                                  |
| 6     | <b>Social change</b>                                       | Oct. 10 - (M) | <i>Send questions and memos (11pm)</i> |
|       |  | Oct. 12 - (W) | CLASS                                  |
|       | <b>WRITTEN EXAM</b>  | Oct. 26 - (W) |  |