COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is one of two core substantive courses in the Sociology Ph.D. program curriculum. Its goal is to provide a foundational introduction to the study of social institutions. The institution is a central construct of the discipline but vies with “social structure” as one of its least specified concepts. This course will examine theories of and empirical work on institutional organization, process, and practice. Though institutional theory has best accounted for social order or reproduction, we will also explore theories of emergence and change. We will also make some efforts to situate institutional analysis in the context of studies of inequality, social structure, agency, culture, social organizations, and social networks. Finally, we will assess an array of research on particular social institutions in the latter half of the course (on topics chosen by the class). I strongly encourage students to consider how an institutional focus might apply to their own research interests.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS

Class periods will be organized around mini-lectures, presentations, and structured discussions of the readings. On presentation days, presenters will follow a short lecture and will be expected to lead discussion for 30 to 60 minutes. I will then try to fill in the gaps and respond to student discussion points for the remainder of the class.

The requirements for the course are as follows.

- 7 weekly discussion points    15%
- Class participation and two presentations  10
- Take-home mid-term exam    30
- Final Paper        45

1. Weekly Discussion Points (affectionately known hereafter as “DPs”). For seven different class periods, each student should prepare a reaction/question/comment on the readings for that day. These DPs will be due by 4pm the day before class and will be distributed electronically to everyone else in the course using the course D2L discussion forum, which will give the rest of the class roughly 20 hours to read these before class begins (a requirement for everyone). These discussion points should serve to help you organize your thoughts on a main theme from the readings and facilitate discussion in class. The topic of each weekly discussion point will be up to you and you should feel free to pick what is especially interesting, relevant, and/or puzzling to you. Each discussion point should:
• Consist of a minimum of 600 words (roughly 1 single spaced page with a standard 12 pt. font and inch margins)
• Include an explanation of the issues at stake and why you think they are important, even if you cannot fully answer the question(s) you ask.
• Include at least 2 questions you have about the readings. Formulate these carefully and think of them as critical questions you would pose to the author(s) if you could or questions involving the interrogation of one author by another.
• Discuss connections between at least two of the readings for that day
• Involve a serious engagement with the material. You may reference the discussion points of your fellow students but you must lay out your own ideas and concerns.

I would encourage you to make references to readings from previous weeks of the course, as you find useful and appropriate. I will grade these discussion points on a regular basis; my feedback will be posted on D2L as comments on the discussion board itself and/or individual feedback via the D2L grading section. You are required to provide at least seven discussion points over the course of the semester. Again, regardless of whether you have completed a DP for a given week, you are required to have read all posts for the week before class and be prepared to discuss them.

2. Class participation and presentation. Each course member should be prepared to be actively involved in discussions of the readings each week, regardless of whether you are presenting that week or whether you have completed a discussion point assignment for the week. I will be prepared to do some lecturing on the material but the success of the course depends heavily on your active engagement. Your grade for this component of the course will be determined by the quality and consistency of your participation in class discussions and your presentations.

Each person will also be expected to do one class presentation. Each presenter(s) will be assigned to read, present, and lead a discussion of the readings for that day. The initial presentation should last no longer than 15 minutes, after which the presenter will also be expected to lead a class discussion of that material and also respond to pertinent discussion points made by other course members in their discussion points. Each presentation should include a brief written summary or detailed outline for the rest of the class, but students must present the material, NOT read the summary; this written component should include a compilation of the discussion point questions for the week.

3. Midterm Examination. The midterm will cover material read and discussed in the first seven weeks of the course. It will be a take-home exam with a few essay questions assigned October 27, the week before it is due (October 16). This early assignment is designed to induce you to consolidate your understanding of course material.

4. Final Paper: This paper will involve applying course to material on an institution that interests you. We will discuss this further at a later date. It will be due Friday, December 15, but you will need to submit a proposal for your paper by mid-November. Further details on the paper will be provide within the first few weeks of class.
A NOTE ON YOUR EXPECTED TIME COMMITMENT TO THIS CLASS: University Policy on Credit Hours

As the UW System assumes “that study leading to one semester credit represents an investment of time by the average student of not fewer than 48 hours” (UWS ACPS 4), a 3-credit course such as this one will require a minimum of 144 (3 x 48) hours of your time. You may find it necessary to spend additional time on a course; the numbers below only indicate that the course will not require any less of your time.

As this is a traditional, face-to-face, course, you will spend a minimum of

- 37.5 hours in the classroom
- 75 hours preparing for class, which may include reading, note taking, completing minor exercises and assignments, and discussing course topics with classmates and the instructor in structured settings
- 31.5 hours preparing for and writing major papers and/or exams.

UWM Credit Hour Policy, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Faculty Document No. 2838, can be found at https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/faculty/2838_Credit_Hour_Policy.pdf. UWS ACPS 4, the University Of Wisconsin System Policy On Academic Year Definition And Assorted Derivatives, can be found at at http://www.uwsa.edu/acss/acps/acps4.pdf.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Sep.11  What are institutions? What is institutionalism?
- Scott, chapters 1-4

Sep.18  The History of Conceptualizing and Theorizing Institutions
- Scott, chapters 5-9.

Sep. 25 Varieties of Institutional Theory: New Institutionalism

Oct. 2  Varieties of Institutional Theory: Economic Institutionalism and Historical Institutionalism
Oct. 9  Institutional emergence

Oct. 16  Institutional change and diffusion

Oct. 23 Institutions and Fields, part 1

MIDTERM EXAM DUE October 27.

Oct. 30 Institutions and Fields, part 2
- Fligstein and McAdam. 2012. Chapters 5-7.

Nov. 6 Institutions, Organizations, and Inequality

Nov. 13, 20, 27, Dec. 4, 11 topics and readings to be determined by the class
UNIVERSITY AND SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that page is: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf

1. Students with disabilities. Notice to students with disabilities that special services and accommodations are provided. Information is available from the Accessibility Resource Center at http://uwm.edu/arc/

2. Religious observances. Information concerning accommodations for absences due to religious observance is available at: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm

3. Students called to active military duty. Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty is available at http://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/

4. Incompletes. A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. The policy outlining incomplete grades is available at: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf

5. Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Policy regarding discriminatory conduct can be found at: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discriminatory_Consulting.pdf

6. Academic misconduct. Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University. The policy and procedures concerning academic misconduct is available at http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/

7. Complaint procedures. Students may direct complaints to the Sociology Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Sociology Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences, or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. Policy may be found at: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discriminatory_Consulting.pdf

8. Grade appeal procedures. A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the College of Letters & Science or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the sociology department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College of Letters & Science. Procedures for undergraduate student grade appeal can be found at http://uwm.edu/letters-science/advising/answers-forms/policies/appeal-procedure-for-grades

Procedures for graduate student grade appeal can be found at http://uwm.edu/graduateschool/academic-appeals-procedure/

9. LGBT+ resources. Resources to support inclusivity of students who identify as LGBT+ in the learning environment are available at http://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/

10. Final examination policy. Policies regarding final examination requirement can be found at: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm

11. Publication royalties. Royalties from the sale of faculty-authored publications to students in their classes are donated to the UWM Foundation–Sociology account to support activities and awards for UWM Sociology students.

Update 08/2017