Sociology of Occupations and Professions
Sociology 643, Spring 2011

Time: 11:00am-12:15pm, Tuesday/Thursday
Location: Social Sciences 6116
Instructor: Professor Sida Liu
Office: 3460 Sewell Social Sciences
Office Hours: 2:00-3:00pm, Tuesday/Thursday
Phone: (608) 262-2082
Email: sidaliu@ssc.wisc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction to theories and empirical studies on the professions. With the increasing division of labor in modern society, professions have become dominant forces in bringing knowledge to the service of power. Using case studies of lawyers, doctors, accountants, economists and other professional groups, this course examines the historical change, social structure, market competition, and career path of the professions from the late nineteenth century to the age of globalization.

The course is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the theoretical foundations for understanding the professions in modern society. We will start from general sociological theories on the division of labor and proceed to major theoretical perspectives on professionalism. The second part of the course discusses the relationship between the professions and other social institutions, including clients, the state, and the process of globalization. We will also discuss the trajectory of professional careers and compare high-status professions with working-class occupations using case studies.

REQUIREMENTS

The course is designed as a combination of lectures and discussions, and therefore both careful reading and active class participation are important. In each class, one student is responsible for presenting the reading to the class and leading the discussion. The instructor reserves the rights to take class attendance randomly and to call individual names for answering questions concerning the readings. Please communicate with me if you become ill or emergencies arise so that I will be aware of your circumstances. Reading and class participation account for 10% of your final grade.

From Week 2 to Week 12 (except for Week 8), every student is required to submit a one-page summary of the readings of that week to the Discussion Forum at Learn@UW by 11:00am on Tuesday of each week. These summaries account for 20% of your final grade.
A take-home mid-term exam is scheduled in the week of March 7-11 (Week 8) and it accounts for 30% of your final grade. Specific information about the mid-term exam will be given at least a week before the exam.

There is no final exam. Instead, a 10-page (double-spaced) final paper is required, in which each student is required to use the theoretical perspectives learned in class to analyze a substantive problem concerning one or two professions. Although the course readings are centered on a few professions (e.g., law, medicine), you are strongly encouraged to write on other occupational groups that are not well documented in the readings (e.g., journalists, architects, actors, artists, football players…). The paper cannot be merely a summary of the course readings; instead, it must start from an empirical question regarding the profession and then apply the theories to explain it. The paper is evaluated according to four criteria: (1) valid research question; (2) knowledge of the readings; (3) quality of the analysis; and, (4) innovation.

Every student is required to submit a one-page paper outline for my approval before the April 14 (Thursday) class, which accounts for 10% of the final grade. From Week 13 to Week 15, all students are expected to present their paper outlines in class for discussion. The final paper is due by email to sidaliu@ssc.wisc.edu by 5:00pm on May 12 (Thursday). The final paper accounts for 30% of your final grade.

Percentage distribution of the final grade:

- Reading and participation – 10%
- Summaries – 20%
- Mid-term exam – 30%
- Paper outline – 10%
- Final paper – 30%

READINGS

Textbook:

The course has only one required textbook (Abbott, The System of Professions), which is available for purchase at the University Bookstore. All the other readings are available in electronic format at Learn@UW. After logging in to the course website, please click on the “Content” button at the upper-left corner of the webpage. All the readings are in PDF format under the “readings” folder.
READING SCHEDULE

Week 1: The Division of Labor in Society
January 18 (Tuesday)
Course introduction – no reading.

January 20 (Thursday)

Week 2: What is a “Profession”?  
January 25 (Tuesday)

January 27 (Thursday)

Week 3: Professions as Monopoly: Market Control Theory
February 1 (Tuesday)

February 3 (Thursday)

Week 4: Professions as Ecology: Jurisdictional Conflict Theory
February 8 (Tuesday)

February 10 (Thursday)

Week 5: Professionalism: The Endogenous View
February 15 (Tuesday)

February 17 (Thursday)

Week 6: Professionalism: The Exogenous View
February 22 (Tuesday)

**February 24 (Thursday)**

**Week 7: History of the Professions**
**March 1 (Tuesday)**

**March 3 (Thursday)**

**Week 8: Mid-Term Exam**
**March 8 (Tuesday)**
Library research for mid-term exam – no reading.

**March 10 (Thursday)**
Take-home mid-term exam – no reading.

**Week 9: Clients and Professional Status**
**March 22 (Tuesday)**

**March 24 (Thursday)**

**Week 10: Professions and the State**
**March 29 (Tuesday)**

**March 31 (Thursday)**

**Week 11: Gender and Professional Career**
**April 5 (Tuesday)**

**April 7 (Thursday)**
Week 12: The Globalization of Professions

April 12 (Tuesday)

April 14 (Thursday)

Week 13: Case Studies: Factory Workers and Firefighters

April 19 (Tuesday)

April 21 (Thursday)

Week 14: Case Studies: Chefs and Librarians

April 26 (Tuesday)

April 28 (Thursday)

Week 15: Case Studies: Psychiatrists

May 3 (Tuesday)

May 5 (Thursday)
Review for the final paper – no reading.

**Final paper discussion.