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**SOAN 308:**

**Working Across the Life Course**

**Course Objectives:**

We now spend a substantial portion of our lives engaged in paid employment, and the jobs we hold shape our daily activities, our personal identity, our social interactions, and even our life chances. This course explores the meaning, experiences, and challenges of work at four key life stages: adolescence, young adulthood, mid-life, and the senior years. At each stage we examine questions that sociologists who study work and occupations ask. For example, how does paid employment in the teenage years affect schoolwork and adolescent well-being? Do the occupational aspirations of today’s college students match up with the job structure of the contemporary labor market? What types of challenges do workers experience in mid-career? What makes for a good retirement? As we answer these questions, you will become more familiar with sociological methods of research and better equipped at evaluating, constructing, and communicating empirical evidence.

**Course Materials:**

Four books are required for this course:

* Tannock, Stuart. *Youth at Work: The Unionized Fast-food and Grocery Workplace* (Temple University Press)
* Mortimer, Jeylan T. 2003. *Working and Growing Up in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
* Strober, Myra H. Strober and Agnes Miling Kaneko Chan. 2001. *The Road Winds Uphill All the Way*: *Gender, Work, and Family in the United States and Japan*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
* Weiss, Robert S. 2005. *The Experience of Retirement*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

A series of journal articles, book chapters, and newspaper articles are also on e-reserve, JSTOR and ProQuest.

**Readings:**

All of the assigned readings should be completed prior to class discussion. The material represents a balance of classic and contemporary theory and research. Please be an active, critical, and sociologically-informed reader – we will all benefit if you engage the readings and bring your thoughts, insights, and criticisms to class.

**Requirements:**

1. The first assignment is a brief presentation (approximately 10 minutes) of official statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) on a topic of choice ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)). You will find many interesting topics at the BLS website and I encourage you to select one that most interests you. Using the example of “unemployment,” you could examine state rates, national rates, and international rates. You could also look at how rates vary across economic sector, gender, age, race and ethnicity, and disability. Or, you might examine time use among teenagers, college and university students, adult men and women, and seniors. Or, you could look at which states have the highest workplace injuries rate. This assignment provides you with an opportunity to closely examine the BLS website, practice presenting numbers, and learn how to discuss the ways in which statistical data are collected. On April 5, you will specify which topic you will be presenting and the presentation will take place on April 9.
2. This second assignment asks you to answer the question, should adolescents be working in high school? You will complete this assignment by interviewing two adults who worked during their adolescence, and by examining the available literature on this topic. Your task is to compare the findings that emerged from your interviews with the findings that emerged from your literature review. This assignment provides you with an opportunity to conduct original research, write about empirical findings, and develop connections to the existing literature.
3. In a recent article in the *Carletonian*, the authors argued that one way to recoup the costs borne from the current economic downturn is by targeting layoffs at workers who are 55 years and older. These workers, according to the authors, have had the most time to accumulate personal savings and they receive the highest compensation from the College. What would happen if all of the workers in this age bracket were to leave Carleton? This is the issue I would like you to explore in a series of smaller assignments that will culminate in a final term paper.
   1. What proportion of the Carleton workforce is 55+? What types of jobs are they found in? What is the gender composition of these employees? How does age demographic of Carleton compare to national-level statistics? Construct a statistical portrait of the Carleton 55+ workforce that includes summary tables, charts, and accompanying text. This paper will be approximately 5-7 pages in length.
   2. Create a short literature review (6-8 pages) that summarizes sociological research on the effects of job loss for older workers. Your literature review should include a minimum of five sources.
   3. Interview two senior level employees and one junior-level employees and ask them to envision what would happen – from their perspective – if all 55+ employees left Carleton en masse. Write a short paper (5-7 pages) that discusses main themes you uncovered in the interviews. In developing your paper, also draw some connections to the findings that emerged from your review of the literature.
   4. Submit a final paper that combines the first three assignments and also includes an introduction to the final paper, transition sentences between each section of the paper, and a final conclusion. This paper will be approximately 18-24 pages in length and submitted on the last day of class. On this day you will also present your findings to the class.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

***I. Conceptualizing Work***

3/29 Introducing *Working Across the Life Course*

3/31,4/2 What Does Work Mean?

* Fryers, Tom. 2006. “Work, Identity and Health.” *Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health* 2:12.
* Kramer, Peter D. 2009. “Why Your Cubicle Moonlights as a Therapist’s Couch.” *The Wall Street Journal* June 20, 2009.
* Lama, Dalai and Howard C. Cutler. 2003. “Work and Identify.” Pp. 139-156 in *The Art of Happiness at Work*. New York: Riverhead Books.
* Rifkin, Jeremy. 1996. “A New Social Contract.” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 544, Impacts of Changing Employment: If the Good Jobs Go Away (Mar., 1996), pp. 16-26.
* Budros, Art. 1997. The New Capitalism and Organizational Rationality: The Adoption of Downsizing Programs, 1979-1994. *Social Forces.* 76: 229-250.

4/5 Is Work Bad for You?

* Hammer, Michael. 1999. “Is Work Bad for You?” *The Atlantic Online* Aug. 1999.
* Sennet, Richard. 1998. “Drift.” Pp. 15-31 in *The Corrosion of Character*. New York: W.W. Norton, Inc.
* Sennet, Richard. 1998. “Risk.” Pp. 76-97 in *The Corrosion of Character*. New York: W.W. Norton, Inc.
* Marx, Karl. 1989. “Wage Labour and Capital.” Pp. 149-182 in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*, Vol. I. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
* Durkheim, Emile. 1984. “Solidarity Arising from the Division of Labour, or Organic Solidarity.” Pp. 68-87 in The Division of Labor in Society. New York: The Free Press.

4/7 The Routinization of Work

* Sennet, Richard. 1998. “Routine.” Pp. 32-45 in *The Corrosion of Character*. New York: W.W. Norton, Inc.
* Weber, Max. 1958. “Bureaucracy.” Pp. 196-231 in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
* Taylor, Frederick Winslow. 1911. “Fundamentals of Scientific Management.” *The Principles of Scientific Management*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

4/9 Class presentations of BLS data

4/12 Research Resources for Sociologists Studying Work and Occupations

***II. The Experiences and Challenges of Working during Adolescence***

4/14 Youth at Work

* Tannock, Stuart. “Introduction”
* Tannock, Stuart. “Chapter 1. Dead Ends”
* Tannock, Stuart. “Chapter 2. On the Front Lines of the Service Sector”

4/16 Youth in the Workplace

* Tannock, Stuart. “Chapter 3. Store-Level Solidarities”
* Tannock, Stuart. “Chapter 4. Age in the Grocery Store”
* Tannock, Stuart. “Chapter 5. Stopgap Work Cultures”

4/19 Youth in the Union

* Tannock, Stuart. “Chapter 6. Outsiders in the Union”
* Tannock, Stuart. “Chapter 7. The Youth Union”
* Tannock, Stuart. “Chapter 8. Handling Time”

4/21-26 Should Youth Work?

4/21

* Tannock, Stuart. “Conclusion”
* Mortimer, Jeylan T. “Chapter 1. Should Adolescents Work?”
* Mortimer, Jeylan T. “Chapter 2. The Youth Development Study.”

4/23

* Mortimer, Jeylan T. “Chapter 6. Working and Adolescent Development.”
* Paternoster, Raymond, Shawn Bushway, Robert Brame, and Robert Apel. 2003. “The Effect of Teenage Employment on Delinquency and Problem Behaviors.” *Social Forces* 82: 297-335 (JSTOR)
* Johnson, Monica Kirkpatrick. 2004. “Further Evidence on Adolescent Employment and Substance Use: Differences by Race and Ethnicity.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 45:187-197 (JSTOR).

4/26 (one reading will be assigned to you on April 21):

1. Mortimer, Jeylan T. “Chapter 3: Time Allocation and Quality of Work.”
2. Mortimer, Jeylan T. “Chapter 4: The Ecology of Youthwork.”
3. Mortimer, Jeylan T. “Chapter 5: Precursors of Investment in Work.”

4/28: Predicting Future Employment Prospects for Youth

* Mortimer, Jeylan T. “Chapter 7: The Transition to Adulthood.”
* Caspi, Avshalom, Bradley R. Entner Wright, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Phil A. Silva. 1998. “Early Failure in the Labor Market: Childhood and Adolescent Predictors of Unemployment in the Transition to Adulthood.” *American Sociological Review* 63: 424-451 (JSTOR)
* Schneider, Barbara. 2001. “Educational Stratification and the Life Course.” *Sociological Focus* 34: 463-6 (e-reserve).

***III. The Experiences and Challenges of Working during Early Adulthood***

4/30: The Reshaping of Adulthood

* Mortimer, Jeylan T. “Chapter 8: Working and Becoming Adult.”
* Arnett, Jeffrey J. 2000. “Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties.” *American Psychologist* 55 (5): 469-480 (available on-line through The Bridge).

4/28,30: The Transition from School to Work

4/28

* Kerckhoff, Alan C. 2002. “The Transition from School to Work.” Pp. 52-87 in J.T. Mortimer and R.W. Larson (eds.), *The Changing Adolescent Experience: Societal Trends and the Transition to Adulthood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (e-reserve).

4/30

* Brewer, Dominic J., Eric R. Eide, and Ronald G. Ehrenberg. 1999. “Does it Pay to Attend an Elite Private College? Cross-Cohort Evidence on the Effects of College Type on Earnings.” *The Journal of Human Resources* 34:104-123 (e-reserve).
* Roksa, Josipa. 2005. “Double Disadvantage or Blessing in Disguise? Understanding the Relationship between College Major and Employment Sector.” *Sociology of Education* 78:207-232 (e-reserve).
* Greenhouse, Steven. 2009. “As Plants Close, Teenagers Focus More on College.” *The New York Times*, June 26, 2009.
* Egan, Timothy. 2005. “No Degree and No Way Back to the Middle.” *Class Matters*. New York: Times Press.

5/3: **MID-TERM BREAK**

5/5: The Job Search: A Sociological Perspective

* Grannovetter, Mark S. 1973. “The Strength of Weak Ties.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 78:1360-1380 (JSTOR).

5/7: The Job Search: A Career Center Perspective

* Hemesath, Michael. 2009. “Thoughts on the Job Search.” *Carls Help Carls Newsletter*, September 18, 2009 (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/career/staff/enewsletter/?story_id=555961&issue_id=555901>)

5/10: Searching for Work: The Role of Race and Disability

* Stainback, Kevin. 2008. “Social Contacts and Race/Ethnic Job Matching.” *Social Forces* 87: 857-886 (JSTOR).
* Brown, Keith, Doris Hamner, Susan Foley, and Jonathan Woodring. 2009. “Doing Disability: Disability Formations in the Search for Work.” *Sociological Inquiry* 79: 3-24 (JSTOR).
* “Americans with Disabilities Act: July 25”. *U.S. Census Bureau* 26 May 2009. [www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/realeases/archives/facts­\_for\_features\_special\_editions/013739.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/realeases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/013739.html)).

***III. The Experiences and Challenges of Working in Mid-Life***

5/12-17: Balancing Work and Family

5/12

* Strober and Chan. “Introduction”
* Strober and Chan. “Chapter 2. The Women and Men of Stanford and Todai: Survey Procedures, Demographics, Educational Attainment, Occupations, and Employment.”
* Strober and Chan. “Chapter 3. What Influences the Earnings of the Graduates?”

5/14

* Strober and Chan. “Chapter 4: How Did the Graduates Combine Career and Marriage?”
* Strober and Chan. “Chapter 5: How Did the Graduates Care for their Children?”

5/17

* Strober and Chan. “Chapter 6: Looking to the Future”
* Strober and Chan. “Chapter 7: Major Findings and Policy Recommendations.”
* Davis, Amy E., and Arne L. Kalleberg. 2006. “Family-Friendly Organizations? Work and Family in the 1990’s.” *Work and Occupations* 33:191-223 (e-reserve).
* Shellenbarger, Sue. 2009. “Targeting ‘Feel-Good’ Benefits.” *The Wall Street Journal* July 8, 2009 (e-reserve).

5/19: Job Satisfaction

* Verbakel, Ellen, and Thomas A. DiPrete. 2008. “The Value of Non-Work Time in Cross-National Quality of Life Comparisons: The Case of the United States vs. the Netherlands.” *Social Forces* 87: 679-712 (JSTOR).
* Sanserino, Michael. 2009. “Push for Time Off Gains in Many States.” *The Wall Street Journal* June 22, 2009 (e-reserve).
* Krueger, Alan B. 2005. “Job Satisfaction Is Not Just a Matter of Dollars.” *The New York Times* December 8, 2005 (e-reserve).

5/21: Experiencing Job Loss at Mid-Life

* Mendenhall, Ruby, Ariel Kalil, Laurel J. Spindel, and Cassandra M.D. Hart. 2009. “Job Loss at Mid-life: Managers and Executives Face the ‘New Risk Economy’.” *Social Forces* 87: 185-209 (JSTOR).
* Porter, Jane. 2009. “The New Résumé: Dumb and Dumber.” *The Wall Street Journal* May 26, 2009 (e-reserve).
* Mattioli, Dana. 2009. “Only the Employed Need Apply.” *The Wall Street Journal* 7 July 2009 (e-reserve).
* Luo, Michael. 2009. “Job Retraining May Fall Short of High Hopes.” *The New York Times* July 6, 2009 (e-reserve).

***IV. The Experiences and Challenges of Working in the Senior Years***

5/24: The Social Implications of the Aging Population

* Fussell, Elizabeth. 2002. “Youth in Aging Societies.” Pp. 18-51 in J.T. Mortimer and R.W. Larson (eds.), *The Changing Adolescent Experience: Societal Trends and the Transition to Adulthood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (e-reserve).

5/26: The Experience of Age Discrimination

* Roscigno, Vincent J., Sherry Mong, Reginald Byron, and Griff Tester. 2007. “Age Discrimination, Social Closure and Employment.” *Social Forces* 86: 313-334 (JSTOR)
* Mattioli, Dana. 2009. “With Jobs Scarce, Age Becomes an Issue.” *The Wall Street Journal* May 19, 2009 (e-reserve).
* Greenhouse, Linda. 2008. “A Supreme Court Victory for Older Workers.” *The New York Times* June 20, 2008.

5/28,31: Transitioning Out of the Labour Force

5/28:

* Weiss, Robert S. “Introduction: What Does it Mean to be Retired?”
* Weiss, Robert S. “Chapter 1. Reasons for Retirement.”
* Weiss, Robert S. “Chapter 2. The Departure from Work.”
* Greene, Kelly and Anne Tergesen. 2009. “Delayed retirements are boon and bane for firms.” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 13, 2009 (e-reserve).
* Ansberry, Clare. 2009. “Elderly Emerge as New Class of Workers – and the Jobless.” *The Wall Street Journal* February 23, 2009 (e-reserve).

5/31:

* Weiss, Robert S. “Chapter 3. Gains and Losses.”
* Weiss, Robert S. “Chapter 5. Social Isolation.”
* Weiss, Robert S. “Chapter 8: A Good Retirement.”

6/2: 55+ Research Presentations