SYLLABUS

Course meets at Osher Life Long Learning Institute of UC Berkeley, in TBA (non-credit course)
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This course differs from the ones typically taught by other instructors in that it will deal with the intersection of two major areas of sociology: change in work and family over time and across human lives. The emphasis will be on life course/life span theory and research, which has focused on work, family, and health. Much of the course is devoted to exploring the changing nature of jobs, gender relations in the labor market, the influence of the marketplace on the family, and work–family balance. This course will delve into distinctions about the nature of jobs, the eradication of life time employment, emerging new forms of work, and the meaning and scope of the ‘tripartite’ life course. In the course we will explore different work organization patterns that vary within a given society, and across societies, as well as historically. The transitions from education into jobs or from jobs (or occupational careers) into retirement may influence family behaviors and these may vary greatly by gender, race, class, and over time; and they may affect health. Conversely, family behaviors and health events or conditions can influence working patterns. By the end of the course, students will be able to critically reflect about recent trends in work and family in the light of social change and the multiple underlying socioeconomic and demographic developments they bring.

To the extent that class size allows, we will use a seminar or discussion group format at times and otherwise a lecture format. Participants will be expected to engage in a discussion and answer a few questions on the required class readings and to participate actively in class discussions. Class readings will be made available on the course website and slides will be sent out in advance.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTIONS, OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE, AND PRELIMINARY LOOK AT CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE COURSE

Session 1:
Introductions and general overview and discussion of course content
The life course perspective in general and in relation to work; “North American” and “European” variation concerning the life course perspective; the ways in which work will be of interest in this course.

Theorizing Society, Social Change, and Work from a Life-course Perspective
We conceptualize work, distinguishing: tasks, jobs and careers; objective and subjective careers; occupation and profession. This is not a ‘survey’ course in occupations and professions and I make no claim to comprehensive coverage of approaches or the debates between different perspectives taken towards work. We begin our intellectual voyage by noting changes in society that affect the life course, including individualization and the move to the ‘risk society’.

Required Reading:
Content presented is based on:


The Life-course Perspective Applied to Work

Session 2: Applying a Life-course Perspective to Work

We begin the session by considering two somewhat different approaches to studying the life course; we then examine the ‘tripartite’ view of the life course, and we critique it as overly simplistic.

a) The European and the North American Perspectives on the Life Course

Slides will be provided ahead of time to get a general sense of the difference between these approaches—bearing in mind that there has been a lot of trans-Atlantic cross-fertilization in ideas. This general sense will be fleshed out as the course progresses.

Required Reading:

Content presented is based on:


b) Age Structure, the ‘tripartite’ life course; the transition from education to work

We consider the view that the life course (a) is structured largely by work and (b) consists of three phases defined by work. We examine the ‘Fordist’ view of the occupational life course and inquire as to its accuracy in describing work and career.

Required Reading:

Content presented is based on:


PART TWO: A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE OF WORK

Life course theorists generally hold that the life course is strongly structured by work, family and health. These factors interrelate to create opportunities and constraints for people to enter the workforce, remain in it, or leave it.

Session 3: Turbulent Working Careers, and its Social and Economic Consequences

Required Reading:
Content presented is based on:


PART THREE: SOCIAL FACTORS FOR DIVERSITY IN WORK AND THE LIFE COURSE

Session 4: FAMILY AND FERTILITY
We should by now all have a good understanding of the life course. Now we turn to the family and demographic factors that cause variability in the kinds of life courses people are able to fashion and experience.

Required Reading:
Family, the Life Course and the Great Recession (2012), Great Recession Brief, Russel Sage Foundation and The Stanford Center of Poverty and Inequality, by Philip Morgan, North Carolina Chapel Hill, Erin Cumberworth Stanford University, Christopher Wimer Stanford University

Content presented is based on:


Bianchi, S.M. (2000): Maternal employment and time with children: Dramatic change or
surprising continuity? In: Demography 37,4: 401-414.

**Session 5: GENDER, WORK, AND FAMILY**

In this session we reflect on the controversial public debate over modern American Families, the vast changes in family life—the rise of single, two-paycheck, and same sex-parents—haven often been blamed for declining morality and unhappy children.

**Required Reading:**


**Content presented is based on:**


**PART FOUR: AGEING AND OLDER WORKERS**

**Session 6: COMING OF AGE IN TURBULENT TIMES.**

This last session invites participants to reflect on older workers challenges and gifts in modern society.

**Required reading:**


**Content presented is based on:**


