The study of economic life has been central to the intellectual project of sociology from the beginning. “Economic sociology” was recognized as a distinctive specialization as early as 1898—when Émile Durkheim started a new sociology journal, he even gave this title to one of its largest sections—but it was not widely recognized as a division of academic sociology in the United States until a century later. We will mostly read recent work, though we will also read some classics that have enjoyed renewed appreciation in our century.

The grade for this course has three components, one of which rests, in part, on an oral presentation, and two of which depend on written assignments.

1. **Participation and oral presentation.** 25% of final grade. Of this grade, 10 percentage points will be assigned for regular attendance and well-prepared participation in discussion, and 15 percentage points will be assigned for your oral presentation. You will choose one week, in consultation with the rest of the class, for an oral presentation, the aim of which is to initiate discussion by concisely presenting the argument of one or more assigned readings, explaining briefly why the argument is important to the field, and describing what is in your judgment, the best line of critique that could be advanced against the evidence presented to support the argument. The presentation can be very brief. The aim is simply to help us get to the heart of the discussion quickly, by explaining why the work is important enough to bother criticizing, and then drawing our attention to a line of criticism that is worth talking about. As always the aim of criticism in this seminar is to identify what we do not yet know in order to identify opportunities to learn more through future research.

2. **Book Review.** 25% of final grade. Due by the Friday of week 5. Pick a book in economic sociology published by a university press since 2008 that is not listed as required reading on this syllabus, and that was not written by the instructor of this course, and write a 900-1200 word book review of it, following the style sheet from *Contemporary Sociology*, which I will distribute. The point of this assignment is to practice one of the important genres of writing in the profession.

3. **Final paper.** 50% of final grade. Due by the end of the final exam period. A research paper or proposal of at least eight pages double-spaced, not counting references. We will talk in week 1 about topics.

The organization of the syllabus is topical. The list of topics is inevitably selective; in ten weeks, we simply can’t cover very much of the field, though what we cover will be central to some recent debates.

The topics and assigned readings by week are listed on the following pages. (Recommended readings are listed here under each topic heading for your future reference, with no presumption that anyone will have time to read them before class in the corresponding week. Anything listed here as a recommended reading is something I think is either good, or important, or both. The list reflects my own perhaps idiosyncratic reading in the field, and is by no means exhaustive or comprehensive of what I think it is important to read.)

Required books recommended for purchase are indicated with a $.

Notice that there is required reading in preparation for week 1 and it is a big book. It would be wise to get started over spring break.
Week and topic

1. Economies and societies

Required:

Recommended:


2. Labor

Required:

Recommended:


3. Money and debt

Required:


Recommended:


4. Markets I

Required:


Recommended:


5. Markets II

Required:

6. Valuation outside of the marketplace

Required:


Recommended:

7. Capitalisms I
Required:

Recommended:

8. Capitalisms II


9. Finance I (Financial markets)

Required:


Recommended:

10. Finance II (Public finance)

Required:

Recommended:
