Professions, Organizations, and Careers
Clark University

Sociology 259, Fall 2007
Jefferson 222, M/W, 7:00-8:15
Professor: Debra Osnowitz

Office hours: Jefferson 409, M/W 1:15-1:45, 6:00-7:00 or by appointment
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Professionals are experts. They claim knowledge and skill. They exert power and authority in a defined domain, usually through formal training, which may give them credentials, or through extensive experience in professional practice. The processes of claiming authority, therefore, vary considerably across occupations. How, then, do experts maintain professional status and achieve personal success? How has the work of professionals—along with their occupations—changed over time? What might those changes suggest about the future of professional work and the careers of professional practitioners?

This course analyzes professional occupations in the context of changing organizations and career trajectories. By comparing professions, we will identify conditions that affect professional work. We will chart the development of well-established professions—principally law and medicine—and the means by which they achieved their status. We will consider the effects of gender, race, and class on both specific professions and their practitioners. We will address changes in both the career patterns available to professionals and the prospects they face in a range of occupations. Students will have an opportunity to interview professionals in a specific occupation and so investigate a profession of their own choosing.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to read each week’s reading before the first class session on Monday, attend class, and participate in discussions. Lectures and class discussion will form the basis for three take-home essays during the semester, each of which will cover a portion of the course readings and related class sessions. I will provide essay questions and further information in class. The course also requires a final research paper, based on interviews with professionals in a specific occupation, and presentation of this project in process. Students may consider the final paper an opportunity to investigate a prospective future career.

Grades will be based on the final paper and class presentation (35 percent), each of three take-home essays (15 percent each, or 45 percent), and class attendance and participation (20 percent). Specific due dates for papers are listed in syllabus. Any extensions for late papers require clearance well before the deadline.
Course Readings

The following books are required and available in the bookstore:


An additional packet of readings is available for sale in the university bookstore. Any other materials will be posted on Blackboard or distributed in class.

Course Outline

Week 1, August 27/29  Definitions and Historical Roots


Starr, Introduction; Book One, Chapter 2, pp. 1-29, 60-78

Week 2, September 5  Development of Professions: Control and Organization

Note: No class on Monday, September 3, Labor Day

Starr, Book One, Chapter 3, pp. 79-144

Jo Anne Preston, Domestic Ideology, School Reformers, and Female Teachers: Schoolteaching Becomes Women’s Work in Nineteenth-Century New
Week 3, September 10/12  Development of Professions: Control and Legitimacy

Starr, Book One, Chapters 4, 5, pp. 145-198
Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1994. [Chapter 4, pp. 61-74, course reader]
Pierce, Chapter 2, pp. 26-49

Week 4, September 17/19  Professional Jurisdiction

Starr, Book One, Chapter 6, pp. 198-232
Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1994. [Chapter 5, pp. 75-91, course reader]

Week 5, September 24/26  Professionals in Organizations: Status and Inequality

Chambliss, Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-89
Pierce, Chapters 3, 4, pp. 50-102

Week 6, October 1/3  Professionals in Organizations: Control and Autonomy

Chambliss, Chapters 4-6, Conclusion, Appendix, pp 90-187

First essay due October 3

Week 7, October 10  Professional Mobility and Racial Difference

No class October 8, mid-term break

Week 8 October 15/17  **Gender and Race Relations: Power and Status**

Pierce, Chapters 5-7, pp. 103-187
Costello Chapters 1, 3, pp. 1-16, 35-43

Week 9, October 22/24  **Professional Identity and Socialization**

Costello, Chapters 5, 6, pp.79-163

Week 10, October 29/31  **Identity, Careers, and Instability**

Costello, Chapter 6, pp 164-108

Week 11, November 5/7  **Nonstandard Work Arrangements: Choices and Trade-Offs**

Meiksins and Whalley, Chapter 5, pp. 80-109

**Second essay due November 7**

Week 12, November 12/14  **Reducing Work Time**

Meiksins and Whalley, Introduction, Chapters 1-4, pp. 1-79  

Week 13, November 19  **Rethinking Time: Organizational Practice**  
**Note:** No class November 21, evening before Thanksgiving

Meiksins and Whalley, Chapters 6-7, pp. 110-174 [skim Chapter 8]

Week 14, November 26/28  **Rethinking Time: Public Policy**

Fried, Chapters 1-5, pp. 1-134

Week 15, December 3/5  **Possibilities for Change**

Fried, Chapters 6-7 pp. 134-186  
Costello, Chapter 7, pp. 207-235

Week 16, December 10  **Wrap-up, Final Paper Workshop**  

**Third essay due December 10**

Final paper due during exam week