**SOCY336: Sociology of Work and Technology**
Tuesdays 11:30 – 1:00pm; Fridays 1:00pm – 2:30pm
Kinesiology Building, Room 101

**Instructor:** Dr. Michael Siciliano  
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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 2:00pm – 3:00pm; Fridays 11:00am-12:00pm

**Course Description:** This course examines the relationship between work and technology. In the context of this course, technology most often refers to, on one hand, machines and information/communication technologies (ICTs) and, on the other hand, techniques for organizing work. By focusing on these two forms of technologies (machines and techniques), the course highlights persistent inequality and power asymmetries along class lines. Readings draw primarily from the sociologies of work and organizations and classical sociological writings on labor and organizations. The first 4 weeks provides historical and theoretical background while the remainder of the course focuses on contemporary emergent work patterns and work structures in a variety of industries.

**Learning Goals for the Course:**
In this class, you will
1) gain experience thinking critically  
2) gain experience arguing your point of view  
3) learn conceptual language by which to understand work and technology  
4) gain experience critically discuss work and labor issues.  
5) Learn to parse complex arguments from multiple, often conflicting, points of view

**Readings, Course Materials, and Copyright:**
All information in this syllabus pertaining to readings and deadlines may be changed or altered by the instructor at any time during the course.

All readings will be available through OnQ, either as PDFs or as links to materials held by the library or housed on other websites. All materials made available through OnQ are intended for use as part of SOCY336 at Queen’s University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated.

Third party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters and articles) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law. Copying this material for distribution (e.g. uploading material to a commercial third-party website) can lead to a violation of Copyright law. Find out more about copyright here:  
[http://library.queensu.ca/copyright](http://library.queensu.ca/copyright).
Accessing Materials from Scholarly Journals: You will need to access peer-reviewed articles from scholarly journals in this course. These are freely available to you as students of Queen’s University, but you must be on a Queen’s University network in order to access peer-reviewed articles from scholarly journals or logged in through the Queen’s VPN if you are off campus. Information on how to use the VPN may be found at https://library.queensu.ca/locations-hours/connect-off-campus
I will review how to do this exactly one time in class. After that, you should ask a classmate or, better yet, an on-campus IT person.

Note on Course Content: This course presents ideas and readings that have been important to the sociology of work and labor over the past several decades. Competing opinions and points of view are invited and expected in the course. If you disagree with any of the readings or materials presented in the course, that’s great! Still, you must be able to explain your position in relation to the authors/ideas with which you agree or disagree in a respectful way. That’s part of what you learn at university: to explain and justify your point of view while respecting others’ opinions. The readings assigned and ideas presented in the course do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Queen’s University or of the instructor. Instead, they are ideas and information that I think might be worth contemplating (even if you disagree) in order to have a good handle on how sociologists discuss work and technology.

Email Policy: Please include a subject heading that includes SOCY428 and a few words related to the email’s body. I will respond within 24 hours, so don’t sent a follow up message until 24 hours have passed.

Accommodations Policy and Late Assignments: I must be made aware of any necessary accommodations within the first few weeks of the semester. Late assignments will be docked one (1) full letter grade per day unless you provide proper documentation of accommodations at the beginning of the course or a note from your doctor.

Cellphone policy: Turn off or silence all cellphones upon entering class. If this becomes an issue, I will ask that you leave the classroom and, potentially, the course.

Assignments:
- Final Paper (30%) – 6-8 pages in response to prompt
- First Test (20%) – In class, short answer and multiple choice
- Second Test (20%) – In class, short answer and multiple choice
- Attendance and Participation in Tutorials with Teaching Assistant (15%)
- Attendance Quizzes in Lecture (15%) – Short pop quizzes during lecture

Lecture & Reading Schedule:

Week 1 – Overview / What is work and what is technology?

Course Overview and Work in a Global and Canadian Context
**What is Work, What is Technology, and How does Technology affect Work?**


in *Labor and Monopoly Capital*.


in *The Machine at Work*.

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**Week 2 – Techniques of Organization and their Effects on Labor**

*Techniques of Organizing Work*

Adam Smith. Selection from *Wealth of Nations*


pp. 1-10

*The Effects of these Techniques on Work and Workers*


Richard Edwards. “Chapter 8: Bureaucratic Control” in *Contested Terrain*.

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**Week 3 – The 20th Century: Bureaucracy, Automation, and Participation**

*The Road to the 20th Century*

Shoshanna Zuboff. Chapters 1 - 2 in *In the Age of the Smart Machine*, pp. 19-96.

*Informating White Collar Work*


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**Week 4 – New Organizational Forms / Technologies as (Potential) Structures**

*The Road to the Present?*


*Technologies as (Potential) Structures*


Week 5 – Algocracy and Algorithms at Work

*Algocracy and Algorithms*

First Test

Week 6 – Precarity and Time

*Precarity and Time*

*Precarious Time*

Week 7 – Reading Week

NO CLASSES

Week 8 – Classification, Freelancers, and Gigs

*The Role of Classification in Class Formation*

*The Effects of Classification: the Case of Gig Work*
Sarah Kessler. Preface, Ch 7, Ch 8 in *Gigged*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

Week 9 – Infrastructures for Work, Pt. 2: Entrepreneurialism, but for whom?

*On-demand Apps*
Alex Rosenblat. 2018. Chapters 3 and 5, pp. 73-106; 138-166 in *Uberland*.
Berkeley: University of California Press.
Retrieved December 17, 2019
**Social Media**


**Week 10 – Infrastructures for Work, Pt. 3: Questioning the “need” for a personal brand**

**Looking for Work, Pt. 1**


**Looking for Work, Pt. 2**


**Week 11 – Hidden Labor of Technology / Persistence of Inequalities**

**Hidden Labor**


**Persistent Inequalities**


**Distribution of Final Paper Prompt**

**Week 12 – Technology & New Labor Movements**

**Labor Collectivities**


**Organizing Against Platforms**


Irani, L. C. and M. S. Silberman. 2015. “Turkopticon: Interrupting Worker Invisibility in Amazon Mechanical Turk.” *https://escholarship.org/uc/item/10c125z3*
Week 13 – Conclusion & Final

**Other Options for Changing the Future of Work**

Trebor Scholz. 2017. Selections from *Uberworked & Underpaid*.
Nick Srnicek. 2016. Selections from *Inventing the Future*
Mary Gray. 2019. Selections from *Ghost Work*.

**Second Test**