SOCY428: The Future of Work  
Wednesday – 11:30am – 2:30pm.  
Ontario Hall, Room 207

Instructor: Dr. Michael Siciliano  
Email: m.siciliano@queensu.ca  
Office Location: Macintosh-Corry Hall, D423  
Phone: (613) 533-6000 ext. 75091  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:30am - 12:30pm.

Course Description: “Flexibility,” “Creativity,” “Do what you love,” “Be more Productive.” We often hear these words and slogans alongside fearful discussions of widespread labor insecurity, automation, and app-based employment. In this class, we ask what implication do these ideological and structural features of work have for the social world? In addressing this issue, we will read classic writings on bureaucracy and capitalist labor processes alongside contemporary writings on platforms, creative industries, ethnographies of contemporary workplaces, and fiction related to labor/work. We will trace changes in the organization of work and discuss the social impact of these changes while thinking through what the future of work might be and, given the dire predictions about new technologies, if work has a future. Examinations will include a midterm exam, a final term paper, and weekly response essays. Weeks 1-3 provide conceptual background with which we shall explore cases from contemporary research in the remainder of the course.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, you will have learned:

1) a conceptual language with which to discuss contemporary issues surrounding labor and work along with a broad understanding of emerging, global trends in employment.  
2) how to critically discuss subtle differences in similar arguments  
3) how to explain and defend your position in collegial discussion with others who might disagree  

Readings, Course Materials, and Copyright:

***There is one required book for this course:  
Readings from this book will be listed in the syllabus as Huws, followed by a book chapter.

The required book will be available in the university bookstore as well as various online retailers.

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 additional readings will be available through OnQ or through the library. All materials made available through OnQ are intended for use as part of SOCY428 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.
**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](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 send 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:**

**Weekly Response Post to Course Blog (30%)**– Starting in week 2, you will post approximately 300-500 words (roughly half to 1 full page single spaced) on the course blog on OnQ by 11:59 on Tuesday night before class. You may be creative with essay format in these posts, but they must include the following: 1) a brief statement on the authors’ key argument(s), 2) how you understand the readings relating to one another, 3) 1-3 questions you have about the reading(s). These should be addressed in paragraph form, not a series of bullet-points. Responses will be graded pass/fail, but points may be deducted for excessive typing or grammatical errors or if you answer in a bullet-point/numbered-question format.

**Group Presentations (20%)** - Starting in Week 4: Groups of 3-4 prepare brief presentation on the assigned readings (10-15 minutes) and then prepare to lead discussion. Presentations must include 1) Overview of core themes of all the readings, 2) Brief discussion of the biography of each author, 3) brief discussion of key points from each reading, and 4) Questions or Critiques to lead Discussion.
Midterm Exam (15%) - In class, multiple choice questions with 2 short essays

Final Paper (20%) - Term paper written on topic related to the course chosen by student. 10 pages, double-spaced in 12 point Times New Roman Font with in-text citations and bibliography in ASA format.

Proposal for Final Paper (5%) - 1 page, due Week 8 + Scheduled Office Hours Appointment. Graded Pass/Fail.

Attendance & Participation (10%) – Come to class on time and prepared to actively discuss course material. You may be called upon at any time during class which will count toward your participation grade.

Grading: All components of this course will receive letter grades which, for purposes of calculating your course average, will be translated into numerical equivalents using the Faculty of Arts and Science approved scale (see below). Your course average will then be converted to a final letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale (see next page).

### Arts & Science Letter Grade Input Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment mark</th>
<th>Numerical value for calculation of final mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F48 (F+)</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>F24 (F)</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>F0 (0)</td>
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### Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Course Average (Range)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>50-52</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>49 and below</td>
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Statement on Academic Integrity:
Academic Integrity is constituted by the six core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see [www.academicintegrity.org](http://www.academicintegrity.org)). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the “freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas” essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities [http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities](http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities)).
Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1 http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1), on the Arts and Science website (see http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

Lecture & Reading Schedule

Week 1 – Introductions / What is the Future of Work?
Huws – Introduction

Week 2 – Global Trends in Work & “Cognitive” Capitalism
Huws – Ch 1 and Ch 2

Week 3 – Entrepreneurship for All
Huws – Chapter 3

Week 4 - Invitations to Express and Create
Huws. Chapter 5

Week 5 - Venture Labor and the Hidden Work of Reproduction

Week 6 – Midterm
In-class Midterm

Week 7 – Reading Week
No Class
**Week 8 - The Gig Economy, Pt. 1**

Huws, Ch 6
Selections from Alexandria Ravenelle. 2018. *Hustle and Gig*

**Week 9 – Automation: Recurring Fear or Emerging Problem?**


**Week 10 - The (Invisible) Gig Economy, Pt. 2**


**Week 11 – Emerging Modes of Surveillance at Work**

Selections from *Captivating Technology*

**Week 12 – Class and Labor Resistance in the Age of Platforms**

Huws, Ch 7

**Week 13 – Alternative Futures?**

Readings TBD