Preliminary Syllabus – Information Subject to Change – 8/20/2020

SOCY336: Sociology of Work and Technology
Queen’s University - Department of Sociology
Fall 2020

Instructor: Dr. Michael Siciliano

Email: m.siciliano@queensu.ca

Office Hours: Tuesdays 5:30-7:30pm EST
via MS-Teams by appointment

Remote Delivery:
OnQ will be used for readings and access to other
course content unless otherwise noted.
MS-Teams will be used for Group Sessions and Office
Hours

Teaching Assistants: TBA

TA Emails: TBA

Mini-Lectures:
Posted Mondays at 3:30pm EST

Optional Group Q&A Sessions:
Thursdays 4pm-5:20pm EST

Optional Tutorial Sessions with TAs:
Mondays 2:30pm-3:20pm (Starting in Week 2)

Course Description: We’re told almost everyday that our technologically-dense present is radically different from the past, but is that so? Is the present so different from the past and is the emerging future contained in our present really as bright as we’re told? Oriented around these questions, this course examines the relationship between work, technology, and techniques of organization. This includes discussions of industrial machines, information/communication technologies (ICTs), digital platforms, and organizational structures. By focusing on the social relationships between workers, technology, and techniques of organization, the course highlights persistent inequality and power asymmetries along lines of class as it intersects with gender and race/ethnicity. Readings draw primarily from the sociologies of work and organizations with an emphasis on North American contexts. The first 4 weeks provide historical and theoretical background while the remainder of the course focuses on contemporary work in a variety of industries.

Learning Goals for the Course: In this class, you will 1) gain an appreciation of work and labor as key areas of sociological concern, 2) learn about relationships between workers and technologies in the recent past and the present, 3) develop a critical perspective on technological arrangements that you might encounter when you enter the world of work, and 4) critically interpret and analyze real-world examples using relevant sociological concepts.

Figure 1. Workers exiting a demon-like factory in Fritz Lang’s film Metropolis
Format of Course: Each week of the course contains several mini-lectures (5-7 minutes) along with associated readings and additional videos to be completed any time within that week.

On each Thursday, there will be an online, live Q&A with Dr. Siciliano open to the entire class for approximately 80 minutes. This will consist of responses to questions posted in the online forums and responses to live questions. For those who cannot attend, recordings of Q&A sessions with Dr. Siciliano will be made available through OnQ after they take place. Starting in Week 2, TAs will host 50 minute tutorials to review the previous week’s content and field questions. TA sessions will not be recorded. Attendance is optional for both of these live sessions.

There are four (4) short essays to be written in response to provided case studies (i.e., news stories, short excerpts from books, or short video clips) and submitted through OnQ, six (6) quizzes throughout the term on OnQ, and two other assignments (see Assignments section below for more information).

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.

Assignments: Assessment consists of six quizzes, four short essays, responses to posted essays, and discussion forum participation.

Six Quizzes (30%) – This assignment will be evaluated based on percent of correctly answered questions.

Quizzes are made up of multiple choice questions intended to measure recall and familiarity with core concepts from each section of the course.

Each quiz will contain 5-10 questions and be administered through OnQ every two weeks. You will be given two minutes per question to complete the quiz.

Four Case Study Blog Post Essays (40%) This assignment will be evaluated for a letter grade based on the rubric in Appendix A of this syllabus. This assignment will be submitted through OnQ as an MS-Word or PDF of 600-800 word essay in 12 point font that uses ASA style (see Writing Guide on Course Website). This should be roughly 1-2 single-spaced pages.

The point of this assignment is to provide experience in applying sociological knowledge gained in this course to real-world contexts that might differ from those you read about for the course.

For the first three essays, you will be provided with “case studies” to be analyzed using concepts from the course. For the fourth essay, you will choose your own case related to work and technology. These case studies will come in the form of news stories, videos, or websites from the business, labor, or technology sections of newspapers and magazines. These stories will serve as your “data” to be analyzed using concepts from the course in these memos.

(continued on next page)
Model the style and tone of your essay on blog posts (or op-eds, if you’re into newspapers). You should begin with an introduction that grabs the reader’s attention and provides an overview of the post. You should then proceed to summarize the case study materials in 1-2 paragraphs. After that, you must explain how the case illustrates (or deviates) from concepts or theories presented in the course. I encourage you to be creative in your writing, but the essay must follow the assignment and meet the expectations described in Appendix A.

Each case study should make use of readings from the weeks immediately preceding the memo’s deadline (e.g., Essay 1 should use ideas/concepts from the readings in Weeks 1, 2, or 3, Essay 2 should use ideas/concepts from readings in weeks 4, 5, or 6, etc.).

You will be evaluated on how well you follow these instructions and how well you explain the relationship between the provided case and concepts from course readings. The objective of this assignment is to develop a critical dialogue with course content and to practice applying sociological concepts to the real world in order to analyze that world. Simply reciting definitions or summarizing course content will not be sufficient.

Three Responses to Posted Essays (10%) –
For the first three essays in the course, I will post an especially clear or provocative essay to the course’s website (with the student’s permission, of course). An essay appearing on there does not necessarily reflect the essay’s letter grade, only clarity or novelty of argument (i.e., they will not all be A grade essays, but they will be thought-provoking).

You will then write a 2-3 sentence response to their memo explaining in full sentences 1) whether you agree or disagree with their interpretation, 2) what they did well / could improve upon, and 3) how you might have pushed their analysis further. Be positive, polite, and respectful at all times in your comments.

This assignment will be evaluated for full or partial credit. To receive full credit (100%) you must post a response that engages with the posted essay and your response must follow the above-stated instructions. All responses must be posted in a timely manner (i.e., within 1 week of the essay being posted online). Responses that do not meet these criteria will receive partial credit (65%).

Participation in Discussion Forum (20%) –
This assignment consists of three parts. Parts 1 and 3 will be evaluated for full or partial credit based the instructions below. Part 2 will be evaluated for full credit or no credit based on completion. In order to allow for flexibility, your two lowest scores will be dropped.

1) For each week, I will pose 4 discussion questions to which you must respond in the OnQ Discussion Forum. The point of this exercise is to promote your reflection on course material while providing space for discussion among you and your peers.

2) You must also include at least 2 clarification questions regarding parts of the readings or course content that you found confusing or unclear. These should be clarificatory questions (e.g., “I did not understand what Braverman meant by ‘labor power.’ Why is it a commodity?”), not discussion questions (e.g., “Do you believe that technology is neutral?”).

(continued on next page)
You must respond to at least one of your peers’ responses in a timely, thoughtful, and engaging way that demonstrates attention to your fellow students’ thoughts and opinions (i.e., “I totally agree with Jeff” is not enough). By timely, I mean that while there is no hard deadline for these responses, you will not receive full credit for this part of the assignment if you wait until late in the course to respond if you respond to each week’s questions all at once at the end of the course.

Policies and Helpful Information

**Readings, Course Materials, and Copyright:** 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 or WebProxy 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)

Information on how to use the WebProxy may be found at [https://library.queensu.ca/locations-hours/connect-off-campus/how-to-webproxy](https://library.queensu.ca/locations-hours/connect-off-campus/how-to-webproxy)

**Email Policy:** Please include a subject heading that includes SOCY336 and a few words related to the email’s body. I will respond within 24 hours, so please wait until 24 hours have passed before sending a follow-up message.

**Late Assignments Policy:** For essays, I will allow a three day (72 hour) grace period starting on the due date. After the grace period, late assignments will lose 10% for each day (including weekends) until they are received. All other assignments must be completed during their assigned weeks.

**Academic Accommodations Policy:** I ask that I be made aware of any necessary accommodations within the first two weeks of the semester in order to ensure that I am able to properly meet the needs of all students. I understand that this may not be possible in all instances. Please be sure to keep me in the loop as best as you can so that I am able to better adjust to your learning needs.

Queen’s University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Wellness Services (SWS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the Student Wellness website at: [http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/](http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/)
**Academic Considerations for Students in Extenuating Circumstances:** Queen’s University is committed to providing academic consideration to students experiencing extenuating circumstances that are beyond their control and are interfering with their ability to complete academic requirements related to a course for a short period of time. The Senate Policy on Academic Consideration for Students in Extenuating Circumstances is available at [http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.uslcwww/files/files/policies/senateandtrustees/Academic%20Considerations%20for%20Extenuating%20Circumstances%20Policy%20Final.pdf](http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.uslcwww/files/files/policies/senateandtrustees/Academic%20Considerations%20for%20Extenuating%20Circumstances%20Policy%20Final.pdf)

Each Faculty has developed a protocol to provide a consistent and equitable approach in dealing with requests for academic consideration for students facing extenuating circumstances. Arts and Science undergraduate students can find the Faculty of Arts and Science protocol and the portal where a request can be submitted at: [http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/accommodations](http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/accommodations). Students in other Faculties and Schools who are enrolled in this course should refer to the protocol for their home Faculty.

If you need to request academic consideration for this course, you will be required to provide the name and email address of the instructor/coordinator. Please use the following:

Instructor name: Dr. M. Siciliano
Instructor e-mail address: m.siciliano@queensu.ca

**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](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](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.

**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 Appendix B).

**Grade Reappraisal Policy:** If you wish to dispute a mark grade on an exam or quiz, you must submit a statement in writing within two weeks after the exam/quiz was returned to the class explaining the mistake you think has been made. I will not discuss grades with students outside of my office hours or appointment. Please keep in mind that if an assignment is re-graded, your grade may rise, fall, or stay the same. If you simply want to understand what you can do to improve your next paper, please stop by my office hours. Once final grades have been submitted, I will only consider errors in processing.
Lecture & Reading Schedule:

Week 1 - September 8 – 11th – Overview and Context

Mini-Lecture #1 Course Overview
Read
Syllabus

Mini-Lecture #2 Canadian Work in a Global Context
Read

Week 2 – September 14th – 18th - What is Work? What is Labor? What is Technology?
Mini-Lecture #1 What is Work? What is Labor?
Read

Mini-Lecture #2 How does Technology affect Work?
Read

****QUIZ****
Quiz 1 Due by End of the Week

Week 3 – September 21st – 25th - Organizational Techniques, Technology, and Labor
Mini-Lectures 1 & 2 Classical Techniques in the Capitalist Organization of Work
Read
Adam Smith. Selection from Wealth of Nations

Watch
Nails

Mini-Lecture 3 - The Effects of these Techniques on Work and Workers
Read

****DUE BY END OF WEEK****
Case Study #1: Amazon Warehouse
Reports from Amazon and its workers
https://www.aboutamazon.com/amazon-fulfillment/working-here
Preliminary Syllabus – Information Subject to Change – 8/20/2020

Week 4 – September 28th – October 2nd – Technology and the Working Body

Mini-Lecture #1 – Industrial Labor’s Body in the 20th Century

Read
Chapters 1 and 2

Watch
Excerpt from *Blue Collar*
Excerpt from *The Simpsons*

Mini-Lecture #2 – The Body at Work In the Information Economy

Read

Watch
Excerpt from *The Matrix*
Excerpt from *Zero Theorem*

****QUIZ****

*Quiz 2 Due by End of the Week*

Week 5 – October 5th – 9th – Gender and Technology at Work

Mini-Lecture #1 – The Gendering of Technology and Tech Work

Read

Mini-Lecture #2 – Gender as Source of Control and Exclusion in the Tech Sector

Read

Week 6 – October 12th – 16th – New Techniques and Technologies of Organization, Pt. 1

***Thanksgiving***

Mini-lecture #1 – From Hierarchy to Networked Techniques of Organizing Work

****DUE BY END OF WEEK****

*Case Study #2*
“The Vile Experiences of Women in Tech.” in *The Economist*.
https://www.economist.com/open-future/2019/05/03/the-vile-experiences-of-women-in-tech
Preliminary Syllabus – Information Subject to Change – 8/20/2020


Mini-Lecture #1 – Technology as Micro-Structure of Work

Mini-Lecture #2 – Technology as Organizing Technique

****QUIZ****
Quiz 3 Due by End of the Week

Week 8 – October 26th – 30th – Fall Break
NO CLASSES

Week 9 – November 2nd – November 6th- Time and Place in the “New” Economy

Mini-Lecture #1 – The Pace of Work and Everyday Life
Read

Mini-Lecture #2 – Place in the Digitally Networked Organization?
Read

****QUIZ****
Quiz 4 Due by End of the Week

Week 10 – November 9th – 13th - Classification and Technology

Mini-Lecture #1 - The Role of Classification in Class Formation
Read

Mini-Lecture #2 - The Effects of Classification: the Case of Gig Work
Read
Sarah Kessler. Preface, Ch 7, Ch 8 in Gigged. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

****DUE BY END OF WEEK****
Case Study #3
Preliminary Syllabus – Information Subject to Change – 8/20/2020

**Week 11 – November 16th-20th – Technology and the Promise of Entrepreneurialism**

**Mini-Lecture #1** - What do Platforms Do to Work?

*Read*


**Mini-Lecture #2** - Working for a Platform

*Read*


****QUIZ****

*Quiz 5 Due by End of the Week*

**Week 12 – November 23rd – 27th - Hidden Labor of Technology**

**Mini-Lecture #1** – Caught in the Global Circuits of Labor

*Read*


**Mini-Lecture #2** – Ghosts of the Internet

*Read*


**Week 13 – November 30th – December 4th- Finding Work with Technology and Conclusion**

**Mini-Lecture #1** – Branding Yourself?

*Read*


**Mini-Lecture #2** – Course Conclusion

****DUE BY END OF WEEK****

*Case Study #4*

Choose Your Own Case Study

****QUIZ****

*Quiz 6 Due by End of the Week*
## Appendix A: Evaluation Rubric for Essays (40 pts total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Sophisticated (8-10 pts each)</th>
<th>Competent (6.5-7.9 pts each)</th>
<th>Needs Work (0-6 pts each)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction includes complete, clear, and statement outlining the argument made in the essay. Author’s key point or position is clearly stated and provocative, grabbing the reader’s attention.</td>
<td>Introduction includes partial or unclear statement outlining the argument made in the essay. Author states key point or position.</td>
<td>Introduction lacks statement outlining argument or does so in vague manner inconsistent with the essay’s body. Lacks key point or position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept Application</td>
<td>Concepts selected are highly relevant, clearly defined, and used correctly. Student correctly uses quotes or paraphrased portions of course readings in integrated way that explains the case and demonstrates engagement with readings.</td>
<td>Concepts selected are somewhat relevant and used correctly for the most part. Student uses quotes or paraphrased portions of course readings in ways that help explain the case and suggest understanding, but not mastery, of course material.</td>
<td>Concepts selected are irrelevant or used incorrectly. Student uses quotes or paraphrased portions of course readings in ways that do not help explain the case to be analyzed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Student goes beyond examples given by the instructor when using quotes from course readings. Student accurately highlights connections between the case and concepts from the course as well as any gaps between the two.</td>
<td>Student primarily relies upon examples given by the instructor when using quotes from course readings. Student partially highlights connections between the case and concepts from the course.</td>
<td>Student relies upon references to lectures or does not use quotes from course readings. Student does not use course concepts or incorrectly highlights connections between the case and concepts from the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing &amp; Organization</td>
<td>Paper is coherently organized and the logic is easy to follow. There are no spelling or grammatical errors and terminology is clearly defined. Writing is clear and concise and persuasive.</td>
<td>Paper is generally well organized and most of the argument is easy to follow. There are only a few minor spelling or grammatical errors, or terms are not clearly defined. Writing is mostly clear but may lack conciseness.</td>
<td>Paper is poorly organized and difficult to read – does not flow logically from one part to another. There are several spelling and/or grammatical errors; technical terms may not be defined or are poorly defined. Writing lacks clarity and conciseness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

In this course, some components will be graded using numerical percentage marks. Other components 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 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arts &amp; Science Letter Grade Input Scheme</th>
<th>Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment mark</td>
<td>Numerical value for calculation of final mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F24 (F)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F0 (0)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>