In compressed form, this six-week course provides an introduction to economic sociology seen not as a subordination of sociology to economics but as the sociological explanation of economic phenomena. As it has developed over the past twenty-five years, economic sociology has concentrated on two activities: first, the extension of economic models to social phenomena rarely examined by economists, and second, the study of contexts that constrain the operation of economic processes as usually understood by economists. In line with these two preoccupations, economic sociologists have focused on firms and markets. This course emphasizes a third activity, the search for alternative accounts of phenomena that most specialists have explained using economic concepts and theory. In particular, it seeks sociological explanations of production, consumption, and distribution. After a general orientation to economic sociology as a whole, the course explores economic activities in an unconventionally wide range of settings including households, informal sectors, gift economies, and consumption. The course culminates with the analysis of compensation systems as a point of confrontation between conventional and alternative accounts of economic phenomena.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

1. **Readings:** (a) *Required readings*: All students must read in preparation for class discussion and reports, (b) *Recommended readings* identify valuable paths to and from the week’s topic. Readings will be available in the Sociology Department mailroom. You should return them immediately after reading or photocopying. If you are able to download copies of some readings from the web, please feel free to do so.

2. **Reports:** Over the course of the six weeks each student prepares a total of three written reports. The **first two reports** consist of short critical essays concerning three or four of the current week’s readings, of no more than 1,000 words; we will work out student responsibilities for sessions and particular readings in class. These reports serve as a basis for class presentation and discussion; students should circulate their reports electronically to the class by no later than 5 PM the Monday preceding the class
session. Depending on class size, we may organize formal responses to these statements by other class members.

The reports should focus on the following issues:

a. what question is addressed by the author(s)?
b. what is the significance of that question for key issues in the field?
c. what are competing answers to that question?
d. how well does the author address that question, in terms of logic and methodology?
e. what would be a different, valid way of addressing the same question, preferably one you regard as superior?

(Note: Depending on course enrollment we will modify the number and kind of assignments during our first session).

The third report, also of no more than 1,000 words, is due on **Wednesday November 10**. It will take up one of the following three options:

1. A brief research proposal based on one of the seminar's subjects or another topic to be chosen in consultation with instructor.

2. A national tradition in economic sociology.

3. Intellectual biography of one of the course's authors.

For topics 2 or 3 the report should include:

a. an exposition of the tradition or author

b. at least one illustration confirming your description

c. a brief critique, indicating strengths and weaknesses

d. a tentative explanation of this work's distinctive properties

If possible, identify changes either in the work of the author or in the national tradition.
WEEK 1 (September 22) **ANALYSES OF ECONOMIC PROCESSES**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


WEEK 2 (September 29) VARIETIES OF ECONOMIC TRANSACTIONS

Required:


Recommended:


Laurel Smith-Doerr and Woody Powell, “Networks and Economic Life,” in The Handbook of Economic

WEEK 3 (October 6) **TRANSACTION MEDIA**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


WEEK 4 (October 13) **HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY**

**Required:**


Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila, “I'm Here, but I'm There,” in *Families at Work: Expanding the Bounds*, edited by Naomi Gerstel et al. Nashville, TC: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002, pp.139-161


**Recommended:**


WEEK 5 (October 20) CONSUMPTION

**Guest Discussant:** Michaela De Soucey, PostDoctoral Fellow, Center for the Study of Social Organization.

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


WEEK 6 (October 27) **COMPENSATION**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


