

Sociology 291: Sociology of Organizations  
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 Sam Mather 217

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**Office Hours:** Wednesdays and Fridays 10AM-12PM in Ralston 203

**Course Description:** In this course, we survey the broad field of the sociology of organizations, starting with classic texts like Weber's discussion of bureaucracy, and consider how major organizations theories and schools of thought shed light on different organizational settings, from the workplace to the state. We'll discuss major concepts in organizational ecology, survey institutional and field theory, and address issues of power and inequality through the study of individuals within organizations. We will then couple these broad schools of theoretical explanation with the lens of gender to examine the relationship between organizations and careers, education, and the state as an organization. We will ground our analysis in current issues, like job applicant inequality and cultural matching, the changing meaning of a college education, sexual harassment on campus, and the role and meaning of the American state in structuring citizens' social life and meaning-making processes. In so doing, students will develop presentation skills, critical reading and writing skills, and individual analysis skills, as the final project for the course asks students to engage with the class's theories to study an aspect of Kenyon College as an organization.

**Guiding Questions:** What is an organization? How is action structured in organizations? What kinds of differences between organizations affect function? What is bureaucracy? What is organizational ecology? Who are the actors of an organization? What is a network? What is institutionalism? What is organizational culture? How are colleges and universities organizations? What does that mean for students and other campus actors? How is Kenyon an organization? How does the state function as an organization? How is social life organized?

**Course Objectives:**

By the conclusion of this course, students will:

1. Be able to articulate and explain some of the major theories of organizations in sociology in both written and oral forms.
2. Be able to apply these theories to various empirical cases and use them to interpret and analyze the organizations we discuss in class and those that affect our daily lives.
3. Outline and explain the relationship between theory, data, and argument in empirical research.
4. Challenge existing scholarship and frame their own analytical arguments in relation to other major texts in sociology pertaining to organizations.
5. Respectfully engage in dialogue about complex social issues in class.

### **What You Can Expect of Me**

1. I am dedicated to creating a safe learning environment for every student in my classroom. While we engage and encounter difficult and challenging material and different viewpoints, it is my responsibility to ensure that every student feels empowered to share their opinion and maintains that safety for themselves and others in the classroom.
2. I have learning objectives for every component for the course as well as the overall structure and shape class. However, the most important thing for me is that students learn. I take facilitating learning seriously, and I understand that students learn in different ways. Therefore, I am committed to making learning objectives clear for students and helping students meet those learning objectives in their own way over the course of the class. This involves my position in the classroom and availability outside of the classroom.
3. Respect is paramount to me. I respect and value every student in my classroom and on this campus. It is my responsibility to ensure that students understand and feel that respect.
4. I am available in office hours regularly. Additionally, I am available to schedule individual appointments and to respond regularly to emails (please review my email policy later in this document).
5. Communication is key to facilitating learning. Therefore, students can expect regular communication from me via email and within the classroom. If the schedule or plan changes, it is my responsibility to communicate that change in a timely and respectful manner to students in both the classroom and via email and the class Moodle page.

### **What I Expect From Students**

1. Respect: I expect respect for your classmates, for the class, and for me. We will discuss some sensitive issues in this course, and I expect students to be mindful that everyone in our class comes from a variety of backgrounds and will likely possess different perspectives. It is precisely this diversity that will enhance all our learning.
2. Effort and Commitment to the Course: I am demanding, and I expect a lot from students. There is a lot of reading and a lot of writing for this course. However, none of it is randomly or superfluously assigned. I expect students to come to class with the reading completed and critically processed. This means that I expect students to have not only consumed the assigned material but thought about that material and developed ideas, arguments, and questions that they wish to tackle in seminar. I detail more about how to prepare for class later in this document.
3. Communication: If you are having trouble in the classroom or out of the classroom or something is affecting your experience of this course (including illness, personal struggles, academic struggles, confusion, and enthusiasm) I expect you to communicate regularly with me, either in office hours or via email (please review my email policy below).

**Major Texts**

Armstrong, Elizabeth and Lauren Hamilton. *Paying for the Party*.  
 Khan, Shamus. *Privilege*.  
 Krakauer, Jon. *Missoula*.  
 Rivera, Lauren. *Pedigree*.  
 Turco, Catherine. *The Conversational Firm: Rethinking Bureaucracy in the Age of Social Media*.  
 Vargas, Robert. *Wounded City*.  
 Wingfield, Adia Harvey. *No More Invisible Man: Race and Gender in Men's Work*.

**Assignments**

Participation: 15%  
 In-class Group presentations: 20%  
 2 Reflection Papers: 10%  
 Midterm (Take Home): 20%  
 Final Paper Proposal: 10%  
 Final Paper: 25%

Participation is essential to success in this class. This means regularly attending class, contributing to course discussion, and thoughtfully responding to your peers' comments and questions. I expect you to come to class prepared, with the reading done, your notes organized, and your questions and thoughts ready to be shared. **You may have two unexcused absences for the entire semester without penalty to your grade, but I expect you to attend all class meetings.** If you are ill, please email me and let me know that you will miss class. Only those absences labeled as excused by the Dean of Academic Advising's Office will be accepted and recorded as excused.

*Preparing for Class:* For students to actively and fully participate in class discussion, I have some guidelines for class preparation. Students should complete all of the assigned reading before class. While reading, I suggest students maintain notes about major themes, arguments, the logic of the argument presented by the author, the theories and other literature the author draws on, the methods used (if relevant), major findings, and students' own theoretical and personal reactions to these components. Students should be prepared to discuss the following for each reading assigned:

1. Who is the author(s)? When was the reading published?
2. What is the research question or orienting theoretical puzzle guiding the piece?
3. What are the major themes throughout the author's analysis?
4. What is the overarching argument of the piece (for books, it might be useful to break this down by chapter)?
5. What theoretical framework does the author(s) use? Why? Which major literatures are they drawing on? What debates are they speaking to?
6. What methods does the author use? What is their data? Is this satisfactory to you as a reader?
7. What does the author find? Do they provide sufficient evidence?
8. Are you convinced by the author's claims? Why?

9. Does this reading speak to other readings in the course or in your personal research project?
10. How might you remedy the problems with the reading you identify? How would you rethink the argument/research process/etc?
11. What confuses you about the reading?
12. What is the most compelling argument or piece of the reading that you want to discuss with your classmates?

If you take the time to think through these questions as you read and as you reflect on your reading, our discussion will be much richer and more interesting.

*In Class Presentations* Every Wednesday class meeting, a small group of your classmates (2-3 individuals) will begin our class with a twenty minute presentation to orient our class discussion for the day. In your presentations, you are expected to prepare prefatory comments, summaries of the major arguments and points you wish to discuss with your classmates, and a series of discussion questions for your peers.

*Reflection Papers* In 3-5 pages, you are expected to pose a research question—theoretical or empirical—inspired by the readings from the previous weeks in the course. These research questions can be related to your final paper topic or distinct. You then will explain how two of the authors we encountered in the course would go about answering the question you propose and why. You are expected to engage the authors in conversation with each other and to pose a clear, concise argument summarizing the major points of each author, how these points inform your question and their proposed answers, and the strengths and limitations of each author's approach. For Reflection Paper 1, you may draw on content covered from 1/18-2/22. For Reflection Paper 2, you may draw on content from 3/24-4/26.

*Take Home Midterm* The take home midterm will be posted the afternoon of 3/20. You must submit your answers to the midterm questions by 8 PM Friday 3/24.

*Final Paper Proposal* In 2-4 pages, you will propose your object of study for the final paper and explain how you intend to analyze this organization, the justification for your choice of subject, and the data you will collect to develop your arguments.

*Final Paper* For your final paper, in 12-15 pages you will pick some aspect of Kenyon College as an organization or an organization within Kenyon (for example, the Sociology department, Office of Housing and Residential Life, the Horn Gallery, Peirce Dining Services, Delta Kappa Epsilon) and collect original data to analyze that component of the organization or the organization of your choice using the theories and empirical studies we consider in class.

## Course Policies

**Office Hours:** Come to office hours! I will have 4 hours of office hours each week, but I am very open to meeting at other times as you need. I will hold additional hours before larger written assignments are due. It is better that you come earlier in the semester than later. If you are unavailable during my office hours and would like to talk with me in person, please send me an email with ample notice (the night before the assignment is due is not a good idea, so try for 3-4 days before) and I will try to schedule another appointment for us to meet. If need be, we may also schedule a Skype or phone conversation.

**Academic Honesty:** I expect students to follow the standards of academic integrity as set forth by the College. As a general rule, you should attribute all words and ideas written by published sources and websites. Plagiarism—the act of reproducing in your written work someone else’s thoughts, writing or research without explicit acknowledgement or citation—is strictly forbidden, and I will follow the College’s guidelines with regard to these issues. At Kenyon College we expect all students, at all times, to submit work that represents our highest standards of academic integrity. It is the responsibility of each student to learn and practice the proper ways of documenting and acknowledging those whose ideas and words they have drawn upon (see Academic Honesty and Questions of Plagiarism in the Course Catalog). Ignorance and carelessness are not excuses for academic dishonesty. Additional information can be found in the Student Handbook (<http://www.kenyon.edu/directories/offices-services/registrar/course-catalog-2/administrative-matters/academic-integrity-and-questions-of-plagiarism/>).

**Accommodations:** If you have special learning needs, please see me as soon as possible. Special needs are defined broadly—this can include a learning disability, levels of anxiety, or a difficulty stomaching the way I lead class. While you are not required to inform me about personal matters, if you are struggling with the course it is crucial that you let me know as soon as possible so I can help you succeed.

If you have a disability or feel that you may need for some type of academic accommodation(s) in order to participate fully in this class, please feel free to discuss your concerns with me privately and also identify yourself to Erin Salva, Director of Student Accessibility and Support Services at [salvae@kenyon.edu](mailto:salvae@kenyon.edu).

**Additional Resources:** If you are struggling or require assistance—academically or personally—please feel free to contact me so I can help you succeed. College is a stressful and difficult time, and you may find yourself in new and overwhelming situations. You are not alone. I am happy to be available to provide you support and guidance. You may find the following resources of use:

Kenyon College Health and Counseling Center (<http://www.kenyon.edu/student-life/health-counseling/>)

Kenyon College Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (<http://www.kenyon.edu/about-kenyon/diversity-at-kenyon/odei/>)

Kenyon College Office of Academic Advising (<http://www.kenyon.edu/directories/offices-services/academic-advising/>)

Student Accessibility and Support Services (<http://www.kenyon.edu/directories/offices-services/student-accessibility-support-services/>)

Kenyon College Writing Center (<http://www.kenyon.edu/directories/offices-services/the-writing-center-2/>)

**Title IX and My Responsibilities:** As a faculty member, I am deeply invested in the well-being of each student I teach. I am here to assist you with your work in this course. If you come to me with other non-course-related concerns, I will do my best to help. It is important for you to know that all faculty members are mandated reporters of any incidents of sexual misconduct. That means that I cannot keep information about sexual misconduct confidential if you share that information with me. The Health and Counseling Center, Sexual Misconduct Advisors (SMAs), and the College chaplain are confidential resources.

**Late Assignments:** I must have all papers by the deadline listed on this syllabus. I do not accept late assignments unless we have discussed your circumstances before the due date. If you miss class, you are still expected to get the paper to me by the deadline unless we have discussed your circumstances prior to the due date.

**Email Policy:** If you have any questions or concerns about the course, my availability to meet, or special accommodations concerns, please feel free to email me ([gualtieri1@kenyon.edu](mailto:gualtieri1@kenyon.edu)). Please be conscientious when you email me. If you have questions about assignments or content covered in class, please check the course webpage and this syllabus to see if your question can be answered in these locations. Before emailing me, please contact your classmates first (there is space at the bottom of this document for you to take down the name and contact information of at least three classmates; this will be your “network” for the class) to see if they can help you with the information (perhaps I answered the question in class). If you cannot answer your question in these ways, then please feel free to email me or come to Office Hours, and I will be happy to help! Emails about questions that can be answered by reviewing the course syllabus or website and/or by contacting classmates will be answered after emails about other concerns, so please try to use your resources wisely, as I may not be available via email until class meets!

**Technology:** Laptops and tablets are allowed in class for academic purposes only. If you are checking email, Facebook, Instagram, etc. I reserve the right to ban laptops for an individual student or the whole class (excluding those students with special accommodations). Cell phones are never permitted in class.

**Your “Network”** This is the space for you to collect and store the contact info of your class network—your classmates who you can email for help and questions throughout the course.

	Classmate 1	Classmate 2	Classmate 3
<b>Name</b>			
<b>Email</b>			
<b>Phone</b>			

**Course Schedule and Readings**

\*\*\*This schedule is subject to change with ample notice. Please continue to review the Moodle Page for the most up to date schedule\*\*\*

**1/18: INTRODUCTIONS****1/20: WEBER'S BUREAUCRACY**

Weber, Max. 1968 [1978]. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Chapter 11 "Bureaucracy."

**1/25: WEBER'S BUREAUCRACY****1/27: ORGANIZATIONAL ECOLOGY: INERTIA AND RESOURCE PARTITIONING**

Hannan, Michael T., and John Freeman. 1984. Structural inertia and organizational change. *American Sociological Review*, 49: 149-164.

Carroll, Glenn R., and Anand Swaminathan. 2000. Why the microbrewery movement? Organizational dynamics of resource partitioning in the American brewing industry after Prohibition. *American Journal of Sociology*, 106: 715-762

**2/1: INDIVIDUALS IN ORGANIZATIONS: TOKENISM**

Turco, Catherine. 2010. "The Cultural Foundations of Tokenism: Evidence from the Leveraged Buyout Industry." *American Sociological Review* 75(6): 894-913.

Wingfield: *No More Invisible Man* Introduction, Chapter 1

**2/3: INEQUALITY AT WORK**

Wingfield: *No More Invisible Man* Introduction, Chapters 2-4

**2/8: NETWORKS**

Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78: 1360-1380.

Burt, Ronald. 1992. "The Social Structure of Competition."

**2/10: BUREAUCRACY, NETWORKS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Turco, Catherine: *The Conversational Firm* Introduction, Chapters 1-2

**2/15: BUREAUCRACY, NETWORKS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Turco, Catherine: *The Conversational Firm* Chapters 5-7

**2/17: NO CLASS**

**2/22: INSTITUTIONAL THEORY**

Meyer, John W., and Brian Rowan. 1977. Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83: 340-363.

DiMaggio, Paul J., and Walter W. Powell. 1983. The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48: 147-160.

**2/24: NO CLASS**

**Reflection Paper 1 Due**

**3/1: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: AT SCHOOL**

Khan, Shamus: *Privilege* Introduction, Chapters 1-2

**3/3: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: AT SCHOOL**

Khan, Shamus: *Privilege* Chapter 3-4

**March 4-19: SPRING BREAK!**

**3/22: FIELDS**

N. Fligstein, 2001. "Social skill and the theory of fields" *Sociological Theory*. 19:105-25.

N. Fligstein and D. McAdam. 2011. "Towards a general theory of strategic action fields." *Sociological Theory* 29:1-25.

**3/24: COLLEGE AS AN ORGANIZATION**

Hamilton and Armstrong *Paying for the Party* Introduction, Chapters 1-2

**Midterm Due**

**3/29: COLLEGE AS AN ORGANIZATION**

Hamilton and Armstrong *Paying for the Party* Chapter 3; 5-6

**3/31: COLLEGE AS AN ORGANIZATION**

Hamilton and Armstrong *Paying for the Party* Chapter 7

Rivera, Lauren *Pedigree* Chapter 1

**4/5: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: AT WORK**

Rivera, Lauren: *Pedigree* Chapters 2-4

**4/7: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: AT WORK**

Rivera, Lauren: *Pedigree* Chapters 6-7

**4/12: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: AT WORK**

Rivera, Lauren: *Pedigree* Chapters 8-9

**Final Paper Proposal Due**

**4/14: THE STATE AS AN ORGANIZATION**

Krakauer *Missoula* Part One

**4/19: THE STATE AS AN ORGANIZATION**

Krakauer *Missoula* Part Two

**4/21: THE STATE AS AN ORGANIZATION**

Krakauer *Missoula* Parts Three and Four

**4/26: THE STATE AS AN ORGANIZATION**

Krakauer *Missoula* Part Five

**4/28:** THE STATE AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Vargas *Wounded City* Chapters 1-3

**Reflection Paper 2 Due**

**5/3:** THE STATE AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Vargas *Wounded City* Chapters 4-6

**5/5:** KENYON AND ITS ORGANIZATION(S)

**FINAL PAPER DUE Wednesday May 10 at 4 PM**