

PhD Seminar on Labour Markets and Careers
Summer 2020
Eliot Sherman, PhD, esherman@london.edu, Office A304

Course Overview

This course offers key readings in the area of Labour Markets and Careers. This is a broad category of scholarship that lives at the nexus of sociology, economics, and psychology. While sociological theories are often invoked, the unit of analysis is (usually) the individual—thus it is of potential relevance to students of micro OB, macro OB, and strategy. The papers I have selected address an array of phenomenon, including hiring, performance, wages, and mobility.

We will leverage our focus on Labour Markets and Careers toward a supplemental endeavour: Namely, instruction regarding the academic writing process. Learning “how to” write in a manner that maximizes your odds of publication is a critical but generally overlooked aspect of graduate education. Because, while good writing does not guarantee publication, bad writing will almost certainly preclude it.

Note that when I say “writing” I am referring not only to the process of constructing coherent sentences, but also—and more importantly—to what precedes it: Determining how to theoretically situate your paper’s contribution. Judging by the papers I read as a reviewer for both disciplinary and management journals, far too many scholars pursue this objective haphazardly. Claims are made about important topics heretofore unexamined; “black boxes” the author has opened; or theoretical lenses that have been newly applied. These justifications for a paper’s existence are usually vague, unconvincing, or incorrect, which is frankly tragic given the amount of work that authors commit to their projects.

While rejection is the most prevalent form of feedback in our field, thoughtful theoretical framing can reduce your chances of experiencing it. (Within reason—it cannot, for example, overcome fatal flaws in your research design.) However, while papers “on theory” abound, I will not make you read any of them. You may do so on your own time; they are often entertaining, if not informative. My view is that theorizing is really just thinking, and insofar as writing is the medium through which we express thought, expository clarity, consistency, and economy should take precedence. (With the possible exception of a certain 60-page article on Renaissance Florence.)

Three procedural stipulations follow from our supplemental goal. First, our approach to readings will emphasize depth over breadth. In other words, I am assigning fewer papers per week than is normative. I trust this will not be objectionable to anyone. Second, we will discuss the merits of each paper both as a piece of research and as a piece of writing. Third, each student will choose one research project to “workshop” throughout the course. (The use of “workshop” as a verb, while insufferable, is sadly the correct nomenclature.) The project you choose may be one you are currently conducting in collaboration with co-authors. However, all of the work that you submit for this course must be produced entirely by you (see the final paper requirements below).

This course will be conducted via Zoom.

Readings

Readings will be available through Canvas. Occasionally, additional and optional readings will be emailed or posted. Sometimes the faculty will change his mind about readings at the last minute and your adaptability will be tested. But you will be fine.

Course Requirements & Grading

Class Participation: Students are expected to complete all of the required readings by the class meetings specified below as well as actively contribute to class discussions. We will not be relying on individual students to facilitate each class session. There are not going to be any days where you can hide, basically.

Reaction Paper: Weekly reaction papers will not be a feature of this class. To be honest, I have never fully understood why this is an institutionalized aspect of our coursework. Students will, however, be required to circulate and review writing samples for certain sessions, as indicated below.

Final Paper: At the conclusion of session 10, students will submit a final paper. The topic will be entirely of their choosing, and can derive from a collaboration with co-authors, so long as it meets the following conditions: 1) The research is not speculative, but is actually being conducted by the student, 2) The paper is written entirely by the student, 3) The paper includes data analysis, the results of which are reported.

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| Class Participation | 25% |
| Referee Reports | 25% |
| Final Paper | 50% |

SCHEDULE & READING LIST

Session 1

What Genre of Paper Are You Writing?

Charles A. Lave and James G. March. 1993. *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. Chapter 2: An Introduction to Speculation: 10-16.

“MIT Economic Sociology Program: Guide to Evaluating / Refereeing Research Papers.” Various authors, I guess?

Ezra W. Zuckerman Sivan. 2017. “On genre: A few more tips to article-writers.” *The Internet*.

- *Ezra’s article is short but incredibly dense (in a good way). Read it carefully because it is the foundational text for this course.*
- *Can you think of any genres that do not fit into Ezra’s taxonomy (and are not listed below as “missing”)?*

- *What is the “myth of progress” and how will it affect your career?*
- **Please be prepared to briefly discuss, during this session, the project you will be workshopping in this course. Please be prepared to deliver, without relying on notes, two different summaries: An “elevator pitch” of one or two sentences, and a more detailed explanation. This is worth practicing so that you can speak cogently about your research at conferences—beginning with the elevator pitch and expanding on it if your interlocutor exhibits (or feigns) interest. If their eyes start darting around for the exit then it’s best to leave it at the elevator pitch.**
- As you currently envision your paper, in which “genre” have you situated it?

Session 2

The Horse Race

Pierre Azoulay, J. Michael Whalen, and Ezra W. Zuckerman Sivan. 2019. “Death of the Salesman but not the Sales Force: How Interested Promotion Skews Scientific Valuation.” *American Journal of Sociology* 125(3):786-845.

Pier Vittorio Mannucci and Kevyn Yong. 2018. “The Differential Impact of Knowledge Depth and Knowledge Breadth on Creativity over Individual Careers.” *Academy of Management Journal* 61(5):1741-1763.

Sameer B. Srivastava and Eliot L. Sherman. 2015. “Agents of Change or Cogs in the Machine? Re-examining the Influence of Female Managers on the Gender Wage Gap.” *American Journal of Sociology* 120(6):1778-1808.

Session 3

“No Warrant” – Missing Evidence

Pierre Azoulay, Toby Stuart, and Yanbo Wang. 2014. “Matthew: Effect or Fable?” *Management Science* 60(1):92-109.

John-Paul Ferguson. 2015. “The Control of Managerial Discretion: Evidence From Unionization’s Impact on Employment Segregation.” *American Journal of Sociology* 121(3):675-721.

Benjamin Artz, Amanda H. Goodall, and Andrew J. Oswald. 2018. “Do Women Ask?” *Industrial Relations* 57(4):611-636.

Session 4

“No Warrant” – Alternative Hypothesis

Olenka Kacperczyk. 2012. “Opportunity Structures in Established Firms: Entrepreneurship versus Intrapreneurship in Mutual Funds.” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 57(3):484-512.

Raina Brands and Isabel Fernandez-Mateo. 2017. “Leaning Out: How Negative Recruitment Experiences Shape Women’s Decisions to Compete for Executive Roles.” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 62:3:405-442.

Roberto M. Fernandez and Santiago Campero. 2017. "Gender Sorting and the Glass Ceiling in High-Tech Firms." *ILR Review* 70(1):73-104.

Session 5

"No Warrant" – Clarifying Confusion

Ray Reagans, Ezra Zuckerman, and Bill McEvily. 2004. "How to Make the Team: Social Networks vs. Demography as Criteria for Designing Effective Teams." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 49(1):101-133.

Amir Goldberg, Sameer B. Srivastava, V. Govind Manian, William Monroe, and Christopher Potts. 2016. "Fitting in or Standing Out? The Tradeoffs of Structural and Cultural Embeddedness." *American Sociological Review* 81(6):1190-1222.

Ezra W. Zuckerman, Tai-Young Kim, Kalinda Ukanwa, and James von Rittman. 2004. "Robust Identities or Nonentities? Typecasting in the Feature-Film Labor Market." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(5):1018-1074.

Session 6

Missing Genre #1: Phenomena!

Emilio J. Castilla and Aruna Ranganathan. 2020. "The Production of Merit: How Managers Understand and Apply Merit in the Workplace." *Organization Science*, Articles in Advance.

Amandine Ody-Brasier and Isabel Fernandez-Mateo. 2017. "When Being in the Minority Pays Off: Relationships Among Sellers and Price Setting in the Champagne Industry." *American Sociological Review* 82(1):147-178.

Lauren A. Rivera. "Go With Your Gut: Emotion and Evaluation in Job Interviews." *American Journal of Sociology* 120(5):1339-1389.

Thought experiment: How likely are you to read a paper about:

- The psychology of false confessions
- The sociology of secrets
- What is charmingly called "the international marriage market"
- Speed / online dating
- Old-timey pirates (Arrr Matey)

(These papers were all published in sociology, economics, or psychology journals.)

Session 7

Missing Genre #2: The Revision Process

Weiyi Ng and Eliot L. Sherman. "In Search of Inspiration: Internal Mobility, External Hiring, and Creative Production." Working paper, November 2019.

Eliot L. Sherman. "Cover Letter to the Editor-in-Chief of *Organization Science*." November 2019.

Matthew Bidwell (Senior Editor, Organization Science) and Three Anonymous Reviewers: Decision on OS-MS-19-13380.

Weiyi Ng and Eliot L. Sherman. "Response to Editor's and Reviewers' Comments," OS-MS-19-13380.

Weiyi Ng and Eliot L. Sherman. "In Search of Innovation: Internal Mobility, External Hiring, and Intrapreneurship." Working paper, May 2020.

Session 8

First Workshop:

Please give us one full week to review your manuscript. So, if you are listed for Session 8, please e-mail us your paper before the beginning of Session 7. What you chose to circulate is entirely up to you. It may be separate from the final paper that you submit for this course. If you are seeking especially granular feedback, you may wish to circulate just one section of a working paper. If you are close to submitting a paper to a journal, you are welcome to seek feedback on the entire thing. The group will rise to the occasion, regardless of what you send. (But keep in mind that this exercise will be more useful to you insofar as you give readers more to work with.)

Reviewers of the paper—which is to say, the other students—will submit to the author and professor a referee report of no less than one written page single spaced. Please follow the guidelines provided by the MIT Economic Sociology Program Guide to Evaluating Research Papers.

Session 9

Second Workshop:

Please give us one full week to review your manuscript. So, if you are listed for Session 9, please e-mail us your paper before the beginning of Session 8. What you chose to circulate is entirely up to you. It may be separate from the final paper that you submit for this course. If you are seeking especially granular feedback, you may wish to circulate just one section of a working paper. If you are close to submitting a paper to a journal, you are welcome to seek feedback on the entire thing. The group will rise to the occasion, regardless of what you send. (But keep in mind that this exercise will be more useful to you insofar as you give readers more to work with.)

Reviewers of the paper—which is to say, the other students—will submit to the author and professor a referee report of no less than one written page single spaced. Please follow the guidelines provided by the MIT Economic Sociology Program Guide to Evaluating Research Papers.

Session 10

Third Workshop:

Please give us one full week to review your manuscript. So, if you are listed for Session 10, please e-mail us your paper before the beginning of Session 9. What you chose to circulate is entirely up to you. It may be separate from the final paper that

you submit for this course. If you are seeking especially granular feedback, you may wish to circulate just one section of a working paper. If you are close to submitting a paper to a journal, you are welcome to seek feedback on the entire thing. The group will rise to the occasion, regardless of what you send. (But keep in mind that this exercise will be more useful to you insofar as you give readers more to work with.)

Reviewers of the paper—which is to say, the other students—will submit to the author and professor a referee report of no less than one written page single spaced. Please follow the guidelines provided by the MIT Economic Sociology Program Guide to Evaluating Research Papers.