soc 690s

Gifts and Debts

Kieran Healy
kjhealy@soc.duke.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This graduate-level special topics course explores some current debates at the intersection of economic sociology and the sociology of culture. The theme of the course is Gifts and Debts. There are no formal prerequisites for students in the department, but the course can be thought of as following on from both Lisa Keister’s Economic Sociology seminar and Steve Vaisey’s Sociology of Culture seminar, both of which were offered last semester.

REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

The course is a seminar. I take for granted that you have a basic interest in the material and an enthusiastic attitude toward participation. I expect you to attend each meeting, do the reading thoroughly and in advance, and come to class ready to participate. In addition, three other kinds of work are required:

1. Each week, you will write a brief (1-3 page) memo and send it to me by 6pm the day before class. This is a hard deadline. The memos should discuss topics or questions arising from the week’s reading. They are writing and thinking exercises, not finished papers or polished short essays. However, I expect them to engage with the readings in an intelligent way. Do not summarize the reading,
They should be used to develop ideas informally, and raise issues that seem to you worth developing in class or in your own writing. I encourage you to share your memos with the class.

2. You will make a presentation to the class on the material for one of the weeks.

3. You will write a final paper for the class. This might take several forms, depending on your situation. I will meet with you mid-semester to discuss the options.

Readings are available in electronic format either via a link in the syllabus or through the course website. I will provide you with a username and password to access the website. I encourage you to buy and read as many of the required and recommended books as you can.

1 INTRODUCTION


*Recommended*


2 GIFT EXCHANGE I


*Recommended*


3 GIFT EXCHANGE II

Berkeley: University of California Press.
Barter, Exchange, and Value: An Anthropological Approach, edited by Caroline

Recommended

4 EMBEDDED EXCHANGES

Karl Polanyi. 1980. The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of
Mark Granovetter. 1985. “Economic Action and Social Structure: The problem of

Recommended
Bernard Barber. 1995. “All Economies are Embedded’: The Career of a Concept, and Beyond.” Social
Research 62:387–413.

5 MARKETS AND MARKET ACTORS

Press. Chapters 1, 2, 10.
2:1–40.

**Recommended**


6 THE MARXIST CRITIQUE OF CREDIT


**Recommended**


7 CONSUMERS, COMMODITIES, GIFTS


Recommended

8 MONEY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS


9 CONSUMER DEBT AND CREDIT I


10 CONSUMER DEBT AND CREDIT II

Marion Fourcade and Kieran Healy. “Economic Categories in Neoliberal Society.”

11 THE PERSISTENCE OF THE GIFT

12 DEBTS AND POLITICS

Recommended

13, 14
Catch-up, presentations.