Sociology 340 · Ethics 280

Taboo Markets

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What this course is about

This course is about taboo, stigmatized, or otherwise morally controversial markets. Examples include trade in alcohol and other drugs, baby-selling, paid domestic labor, care work, sex, human blood, organs, and tissue, eggs, sperm, genetic material, viatical contracts, and pollution rights. We will read ethical arguments together with social-scientific research about these markets, focusing mostly on how exchange in these goods is practically accomplished and morally justified in theory and practice. We will also consider broader questions about the scope and limits, if any, of the market as a social institution, and its relationship to other sorts of transfers, especially gift exchange.

Readings

Readings will be made available on Sakai and may change from those listed below. While not required, I recommend you purchase two books:

Contact information

Office hours are by appointment. My office is 255 Sociology/Psychology, on West Campus. To schedule an appointment or contact me about other class-related matters, email me at kjhealy@soc.duke.edu.

Requirements

You are required to attend, write a weekly 1-page memo, and participate actively in class. There will be an in-class midterm exam, an in-class presentation, and a related final paper.

1. Attendance, Weekly 1-Pagers, Participation. Do the reading, write a 1-page memo, show up to class, silence your phone. This is a relatively small class and will be run as a seminar rather than a lecture. Each week (after the first) you will write a 300 word memo (plus or minus 50 words) in response to some aspect of the week’s reading. These memos should not be summaries or reading notes. They are for your questions about, objections to, or expansions on the reading material. There are nine weeks of assigned reading. You must write eight memos over the course of the semester. Memos are due by 9pm the night before class. You may write your memo for the Tuesday or Thursday class. However, over the course of the semester at least four of your memos must be submitted for the Tuesday class. Be prepared to discuss what you write about in your memos.

Attendance, weekly writing, and participation together will count for 25% of your final grade.

2. In-Class Midterm Exam. This will be worth 25% of your final grade.

3. Group Presentation. Worth 20% of your final grade. We will discuss topics, time slots, and other details in class. Attendance and participation during group presentations (not just your own) is required.

4. Final Paper. Due at the end of the semester (date TBA), worth 30% of your final grade.

Schedule

Assigned readings may change.

Week 1 (1/11). Introduction

Week 2 (1/16, 1/18). Market Society
Paul Seabright, The Company of Strangers, excerpts. Charles Lindblom,

Week 3 (1/23, 1/25). Civilizing Markets

Week 4 (1/30, 2/1). Destructive Markets

Week 5 (2/6, 2/8). Crowding and Nudging

Week 6 (2/13, 2/15). Forbidden Exchanges

Week 7 (2/20, 2/22). Blood and Organs

Week 8 (2/27, 3/1). Eggs and Sperm Rene Almeling, Sex Cells.

Week 9 (3/6, 3/8). Midterm Exam (March 6th). No class Thursday March 8th.

Week 10 (3/13, 3/15) Spring Break: No Class

Week 11 (3/20, 3/22). Care, Intimacy, Sex
Playing the Whore (excerpts). Kimberly Kay Hoang, Dealing in Desire, excerpts.


Week 13 (4/3, 4/5). In-Class Presentations.
Week 14 (4/10, 4/12). In-Class Presentations.
Week 15 (4/17, 4/19) In-Class Presentations.
Week 16 (4/24) Catch-up day/Final paper review.

Duke community standard

Like all classes at the university, this course is conducted under the Duke Community Standard. Duke University is a community dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and service and to the principles of honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability. Citizens of this community commit to reflect upon and uphold these principles in all academic and nonacademic endeavors, and to protect and promote a culture of integrity. To uphold the Duke Community Standard you will not lie, cheat, or steal in academic endeavors; you will conduct yourself honorably in all your endeavors; and you will act if the Standard is compromised.