

SO2H5-15 Work in Catastrophic Times

26/27

Department

Sociology

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Lynne Pettinger

Credit value

15

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

Distance or Online Delivery

Description

Introductory description

Work in the 21st Century is often described as being 'in crisis'. There has been a decline in numbers of 'good' jobs, decent work and lifetime careers, and a rise in forms of unstable, exploitative and damaging forms of work. Workers around the world juggle multiple jobs, are adversely incorporated into the labour market, are stressed, injured or exhausted by their work. This module explores theories, concepts and research in the sociology of work to understand contemporary work and its effects on the lives and bodies of workers.

The module explores four especially powerful dimensions of work in a time of crisis and catastrophe. It looks at technologies of work, at the crisis in care and social reproduction, at the expansion of precarious modes of living, and at the catastrophe of environmental change.

The module is taught entirely online. After an introductory week, we take two weeks to cover each of the four topics. Students are expected to engage with lecture material, readings and online activities in their own time; they also attend a fortnightly online seminar to discuss their reflections on the topic.

Module aims

This module

Provides students with insight into and understanding of the sociology of work.

Enables students to consider and reflect on global changes in the world of work and their implications for the social worlds of workers and others.

Enables students to develop knowledge of and understanding of key topics in work, namely work technologies, social reproduction, exploitation through work and of 'green work'.
Actively engages students in their own learning journey through a carefully designed online curriculum

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Introduction: How do sociologists think about work?

1. Precarious lives
 - a. the changing nature of employment
 - b. forced labour
2. Technologies and machines:
 - a. making electronics: factory work in global production networks.
 - b. computers, office work and already-existing automation.
3. Care and social reproduction
 - a. domestic labour and domestic service.
 - b. the dangers of work.
4. Environmental work
 - a. green work, dirty work
 - b. jobs vs environment or a Just Transition?

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Understand key ideas in the sociology of work
- Understand the ways different forms of work are interconnected
- Understand and critically reflect on ways that work is changing
- Understand how key actors – workers, unions, corporations, states and para-state organisations – affect how work is organised
- Gain in-depth knowledge of the treatment of workers, technology and work, care work and/or environmental labour
- Critically assess commentary on the changing nature of work
- Address the aims and objectives of the module demonstrating close engagement with module materials

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

International

The module studies work across the globe, and explores the interconnections and interdependencies of work in different places. It considers how global capitalism - through states, corporations and para-state actors - affects the lifeworld of workers.

Subject specific skills

Critical engagement with academic and non academic material - new capabilities in the analysis of contemporary changes to global work.

Critical reading of theoretically and methodologically diverse material - enhanced capabilities in understanding epistemic claims of sociologists.

Discussion of sociological knowledges - enhanced capabilities in making sociological arguments.

Transferable skills

Enhanced capabilities in:

comprehension of complex arguments,

development of independent lines of analysis,

digital literacy,

group work

short and long-form writing

Study

Study time

Type	Required	Optional
Online learning (scheduled sessions)	5 sessions of 1 hour (28%)	9 sessions of 1 hour
Online learning (independent)	13 sessions of 1 hour (72%)	
Total	18 hours	

Private study description

reading set texts and preparing reflections on those texts

participating in online activities

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
essay	95%	80 hours	Yes (extension)
Students will produce written answers to one essay question chosen from a list that includes all module topics.			

Reassessment component is the same

Assessment component			
contribution to set moodle and padlet activities	5%	2 hours	Yes (waive)
For this online module, contribution marks will be awarded at the end of term to students who participated in online learning activities. The scale for the award of marks will be published to students at the start of term.			

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

for summative essay: departmental feedback proforma via tabula
for contribution: module convenor to read all posts.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
- Year 2 of USOA-L314 Undergraduate Sociology and Criminology

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)