Trust in Society
SOCY 63

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Office hours: M 11:05 – 12noon; Th 1 – 3pm

Course Description:
You trust your friend to repay the $10 you loaned her last week; investors trust the stock market to accurately value corporate resources; you trust members of your class work group to complete their parts of the group project; patients trust doctors to inform them about the best treatments; you trust Amazon.com (and the internet) to protect and secure your credit card information when you purchase a CD on-line; waitresses trust patrons to tip them for good service; citizens trust the government to enforce laws fairly.

The word trust appears as a verb in each of these examples, but do we really mean the same thing by trust in each of these very different contexts? What exactly is trust anyway, and why does it matter? Social science and popular press literature of the past decade suggests that trust is the cause of many “good” things, such as the source of group cooperation, the basis of democracy, the foundation of the market economy, the source of national economic power, the key, even, to morality itself. Given its relation to all things good, it is not surprising that some commentators speak with alarm when they claim that “trust is declining” in society. What is trust and what are its benefits? Is trust declining? How would we know if it was?

In this course we will use our" sociological imaginations" to explore the concept of trust. We will read and discuss theoretical and empirical research from across the social sciences. After this course you should be able to: (1) define trust and analyze it according to the various theoretical frameworks about the role of trust in society; (2) distinguish trust from other related concepts such as cooperation, distrust and trustworthiness; (3) identify the pros and cons of different empirical measures of trust; (4) discuss the role of trust in specific social contexts; and (5) apply your knowledge of trust to a specific case or study in your own research paper.

Course Requirements
It is essential that students come to class prepared to discuss the reading material for that day’s class. Students will be expected to participate regularly in classroom discussions, and will be graded on class participation (15% of course grade). Because it is necessary to be in class to participate, missing four class periods will result in at best a “C” grade for class participation. Missing more than six class periods (regardless of reason) will result in a zero for class participation. **Getting sick with H1N1 or any other common illness should be more than accommodated with this policy.**

In addition to class participation, students will write 4 short papers (5-6 pages; 1500 words; 15% each of course grade) throughout the term, analyzing a specific issue or aspect of trust (see specific paper assignments below, and the attached policy on late papers). Finally, students will hand in a final term paper (12-15 pages; 6,000-7,000 words; 25%) on any topic of interest related to trust, discussed with and approved by me.

The following materials are required, and can be purchased from the Dartmouth Bookstore or Wheelock Books. They are also available on reserve in Baker/Berry library, and selected articles/chapters on Blackboard.

*** Students with learning, physical or psychiatric disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible, and by the end of the second week of classes (October 9, 2009). All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Disability Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested. Also, stop by the Academic Skills Center in 301 Collis Center to register for support services. ***

*** For individual peer tutorial assistance with papers, research, and new media projects, students may use RWIT, the Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology. Make appointments online at www.dartmouth.edu/~rwit, or drop by the Center in Baker-Berry Library, Level One. ***

**Honor Principle** and work in this course: You are encouraged to discuss the readings and your papers with other students in the class, or others outside of the class. You are also encouraged to edit and re-edit your papers (comments from others encouraged) before handing in to me.

You should cite concepts and materials from course readings and other materials appropriately in your papers. You may use any citation method that you are familiar with (e.g., MLA or APA, see for more information: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/sources/sources-citation.html) so long as you are consistent.

**Questions to consider for each reading (and generally for each paper):**
What is the causal argument being made? How are the key concepts in the argument defined? What are the flaws in the argument or definition of concepts? Is the author claiming necessary and/or sufficient conditions? What evidence does the author provide to support the argument? How does the argument/concepts compare with others we have read? [Go back and read the Graff reading from the first day!]

**Course Outline**

**Sept 23: Introduction to Course**

**Sept 25: Thinking sociologically, thinking about mechanisms.**
AND

**Section I: What is Trust?**
**Sept 28: Trust and related concepts**
READ: R. Hardin, Trust and Trustworthiness, chs. 1-2

**Sept 30:** READ: R. Hardin, Trust and Trustworthiness, chs. 3-4

**Oct 2:** READ: R. Hardin, Trust and Trustworthiness, chs. 5; 8
Oct 5: Benefits of trust?
BLACKBOARD AND

Oct 7: Trust in society
READ: Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005. “All for all: Equality and Social Trust” BLACKBOARD
AND
Knight, Jack. Chapter 12: “Social Norms and the Rule of Law” In Trust and Society

Oct 9: Trust vs. Confidence; Declining Trust?

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Paper assignment 1: What is trust and why do we care about it? What is the basis of trust?
What effect is trust purported to have: on individuals, on groups, in society in general?
DUE: SUNDAY October 11 by 5pm to BLACKBOARD.
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Section 2: Producing trust interpersonally
Oct 12: READ: Messick and Kramer, “Trust as a form of shallow morality” Ch.3 in Trust in Society AND
Cook, Hardin, Levy: ch 2 “Trustworthiness” in Cooperation without Trust?
REVIEW: Hardin: Ch 5 “Epistemology of Trust” [Again]

Oct 14: READ: Ensminger, Jean. “Reputations, Trust, and the Principal-Agent Problem.” Ch. 6 in Trust in Society. AND
Yamigishi, Toshio. “Trust as a form of social intelligence.” Ch. 4 in Trust in Society.


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Paper assignment 2: Compare and contrast the concept of trust to one other related concept: confidence, cooperation, familiarity, distrust, reciprocity, risk, trustworthiness, uncertainty. In your paper you must define what trust is. Since there are competing models of trust, you will want to choose one definition to discuss. Is trust an action, a decision, a belief, a moral judgment, a disposition, an expectation? DUE: Thursday October 22, 5pm to BLACKBOARD
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Section 3: Producing trust institutionally


Oct 22: Paper 2 DUE

Oct 23: READ: Cook, Hardin, and Levi Cooperation without Trust, ch. 3
Discuss final paper topics

Section 4: Trust and institutions: The Case of the internet
Oct 26: NO CLASS – but you should do the reading!
What is trust again? How does it work online?

Oct 28: Reputation online

Oct 30: Trust and security?
READ: Nissenbaum “Will security enhance trust online or supplant it” Ch 7 in Trust and Distrust in Organizations BLACKBOARD AND Anthony, et al. “Internet exchange and forms of trust” BLACKBOARD

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Section 5: Trust and Institutions continued

Nov 3: Paper 3 DUE


Section 6: Trust and Institutions: The Case of health care

**Nov 9: Trust in doctors and health care organizations**
BLACKBOARD

**Nov 11: Patients’ feelings of trust**
READ: Solbjor, Marit. 2008. “You have to have trust in those pictures.” *Researching Trust and Health* BLACKBOARD
BLACKBOARD

**Nov 13: Differences in trust among patients**
READ: Halbert et al. “Racial Differences in Trust in Health Care Providers.” *Archives of Internal Medicine* 166:896. BLACKBOARD

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**Paper assignment 4:** What does it mean to say that we trust doctors? Has our “trust” in medical care changed in the past decade? What factors might cause a change in the level (or type) of trust people feel for doctors, or for health care organizations?
**DUE:** MONDAY Nov 23, 5pm to BLACKBOARD.
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Section 7: Alternatives to Trust

**Nov 16:** READ: Cook, Hardin, and Levi *Cooperation without Trust*, ch. 5 & 6

**Nov 18:** READ: Cook, Hardin, and Levi *Cooperation without Trust*, ch. 7 & 8

**Nov 20:** READ: Cook, Hardin, and Levi *Cooperation without Trust*, ch. 9 & 10

**Nov 23:** Paper 4 DUE
No Class – Happy Thanksgiving!

**What do we know about trust?**


Dec 2: Last class

**FINAL PAPERS DUE:** Wednesday December 9, 5 pm to BLACKBOARD.
Policy on Late Papers
Short papers handed in any time after they are due will receive a full letter grade reduction. (Basically this means the highest possible grade you can get on a late paper is a B). I will deduct an additional half a letter grade for each additional class period your paper is late. Any paper more than two weeks late will not be accepted.

Extensions may be given for extreme individual circumstances. If you are having problems completing an assignment, for whatever reason, it is best to talk with me as soon as possible. Talk to me after class, come to see me in my office, or email me. I may be able to help you get the paper done on time, and I will be more sympathetic than if I hear of your problem the day before or day (!) the assignment is due. Please note that talking with me will not necessarily lead to an extension.

Also Note Well: Computer failure is never considered a justifiable excuse for a paper extension. Computers sometimes freeze or breakdown; power outages happen. The way to deal with these possibilities is to SAVE YOUR WORK.