

Professionals, Policy and Practice

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Professionals, Policy & Practice examines how professionals have come to be among the most influential actors in contemporary organizations and the global political economy. Professionals have long been the focus of research in organization and management studies, but interest in them crosses disciplinary boundaries; thus, the course will include readings from sociology, accounting, legal studies, finance, and political science. We'll draw on their varied theories, methods and approaches to examine how and why professionals coordinate and compete, shaping norms, standards and practices within and among organizations.

The course will begin by reviewing the history of the professions, to understand their special role and privileges in society, along with key issues such as self-governance, professional ethics, and the impact of misconduct. Because professional work is increasingly both a product of and a producer of globalization, the course will investigate the intersection of the two phenomena through case studies of transnational professions and multi-national professional service firms. Reflecting this global scope of professional activity, the course will take a broadly international perspective, including authors and case studies from around the world.

The reading requirements for this course are intensive; successful completion of a college-level Sociology course is a pre-requisite for enrollment in this class.

Format and Learning Objectives

This course will be delivered in seminar style, with a high degree of student participation required; each class meeting will center around discussion, rather than lectures. Starting with the second class meeting, students will be asked to lead discussions, providing an agenda and questions in advance.

The key learning objective will be to develop students' analytic skills, including their abilities to apply social scientific theories and integrate ideas the course readings. Examinations and grading will center on evaluating those competencies. Each student will be graded as follows:

- *20% class participation*—this includes the quality of comments in class meetings, as well as respectful, attentive listening and responsiveness to other students' comments
- *20% discussion leadership*—this refers to the day a student leads the class discussion, and includes the quality of discussion questions and other materials provided in advance
- *30% midterm*—in week 5, this will take the form of a brief individual oral exam, with the same questions provided to each student
- *30% final presentation*—in week 10, each student will select and present to the class an analysis of a case study that ties together two or more major themes of the course

Policies

The skills of critical social scientific analysis are taught primarily by doing. Faculty model them, and students learn by engaging with ideas in class discussion—both with their professors and with other students. The following three expectations stem from this premise:

1. Be punctual: Regular on-time attendance is expected, with exceptions as given below. Being late by 10 minutes or more for any individual class will result in the loss of a point for participation. Each missed class session will result in the loss of a step in the final grade (e.g., B to B-). If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes from another student; *please do not ask me*. I do not distribute my own notes.

Note: The only excused absences will be illness (documented with a doctor's note), major religious observances (please see me about these within the first week of class), or a catastrophic event (such as the death of an immediate family member, documented with a Dean's note). Otherwise, schedule conflicts resulting from extra-curricular activities, holidays, weddings, etcetera will result in an unexcused absence. This is especially important to keep in mind for examinations: the midterm and final take place on fixed dates; **there will be no make-up exam dates** except in one of the three circumstances above. Rationales for lateness, absence and exam conflicts are subject to the [Dartmouth Academic Honor Principle](#): that means dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated.

2. Be prepared for class: Readings must be done no later than the date shown in the syllabus. In a small seminar-style class, it becomes very noticeable when students don't do this, and it diminishes the learning experience for everyone.

3. Be engaged and help others engage: Engagement means immersing yourself in the readings, and thinking through their implications, listening carefully in class discussions, and grounding your own comments in evidence-based reasoning. To facilitate these aims, *students will not be permitted to use laptops, tablets, phone or other electronics in class*. This is due to the seeming impossibility of keeping people off the internet. Web browsing, emailing and other online

activities during class not only degrade each students' educational experience, but that of everyone around them. They also distract your professor.

A word about grading: I don't "round up" grades; that means if you earn a 79.8 as your final class grade, it won't be rounded up to an 80. If you believe I have made a mistake in grading your work, please write a short, well-reasoned explanation (no longer than one page) articulating your rationale; your graded work should be attached. Please keep in mind that grading is based on the information you make available on the page and its relationship to the question(s) you were asked to answer; thus, comments such as "but I know the material" or "I worked really hard" or "what about that other student who got a higher grade" are not compelling rationales. Whenever you submit work for re-grading, that work may be given a lower grade than was originally assigned; the grade might also go up, or stay the same. **For any graded item, you have one week from the time it is returned to you to request re-grading.**

About correspondence and questions: If you have a question about the class, you should first consult the syllabus—it's highly detailed. Second, ask another student in the class. Only if you've been unable to find a solution in those ways should you contact me, preferably via email. Please use a salutation ("Dear Professor Harrington,") and avoid SMS shorthand ("r" for "are," "u" for "you," etc.).

Writing in English: It's important for anything you'll do later in life, and most people can improve. Fortunately, Dartmouth has resources to help with that—notably RWIT (the Student Center for Research, Writing and Information Technology). There, you can meet one-on-one with an undergraduate tutor to discuss your work. If English is not your native language, I am very sympathetic—feel free to come talk with me about any challenges you face. I'm happy to chat with you in French or German, or even a bit of Danish, Italian or Turkish.

Disability-Related Accommodations: Students who require accommodations must register with SAS—the Student Accessibility Services office. This includes not only learning disabilities, but chronic diseases and psychiatric issues. Once SAS has authorized accommodations, the student must show the original, signed SAS Services and Consent form and/or a letter on SAS to the professor. All inquiries and discussions about accommodations will remain confidential. Call 603-646-9900 to start the SAS process. Please let me know by the second week of class if you'll need accommodations.

Students from Low-Income Backgrounds: If you encounter financial challenges related to this class, please let me know. Some resources on campus might be useful for you.

Introduction to the Professions: Key Themes

Week 1:

The readings for this week introduce students to the general field of research on the professions, with some classic papers on themes and concepts we will revisit throughout the class.

- Scott, W.R. 2008. Lords of the dance: Professionals as institutional agents. *Organization Studies*, 29: 219-238.
This article provides a good overview of key institutional concepts and how they apply to professional occupations and organizations. It represents an attempt to develop an institutionalist perspective on how professional service firms globalize, the challenges they are likely to encounter, and how these can be addressed.
- Smets, M., Morris, T. and Greenwood, R. 2012. From practice to field: A multilevel model of practice-driven institutional change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55: 877-904.
This paper draws on the framework set out by Oliver (1992) to explore how professional service firms coordinate norms and practices.
- Adams, T. 2017. Self-regulating professions: Past, present, future. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, 4: 70-87.
This article sketches out some key features that distinguish professions from other forms of work, including self-governance, and the historical bargain with society that is the basis of professionals' authority and monopoly privileges.
- Abbott, A. 1988. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 11 in *The System of Professions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Abbott's classic book builds on the articles from last week by providing a more in-depth sociological analysis of professions, including what makes them interesting and the key questions and controversies in the field.

History of the Professions

Week 2:

- Krause, E. 1996. Chapters 1, 7 and 8 in *Death of the Guilds: Professions, States and the Advance of Capitalism, 1930-Present*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
Krause's cross-national comparative study of contemporary professionals and

professional associations places these developments within the context of larger socio-economic events, showing how experts have come to play such a pivotal role in establishing the structures and practices that govern our daily lives.

- Flexner A. 1915. Is social work a profession? Presentation to the Forty-Second Annual Session of the National Conference of Charities and Correction. Baltimore, MD, 17 May. This short speech encapsulates early American attempts to understand what distinguishes professions from other types of work, and how its special privileges and responsibilities evolved historically.
- Davis, M. 2009. Is engineering a profession everywhere?. *Philosophia*, 37: 211-225. This article traces the development of engineering over centuries of history, from an occupation to its current status as a profession.
- Burnham J. 1998. How the idea of profession changed the writing of medical history. *Medical History Supplement No. 18*. London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine. This study looks at the professionalization of one of the most ancient forms of expertise: medicine.
- Harrington, B. 2016. Chapter 2 “Wealth Management As A Profession” in *Capital Without Borders: Wealth Managers and the One Percent*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. This chapter traces one recently-professionalized line of work—wealth management—from its medieval origins to its modern instantiation, including legal recognition, the formation of a code of ethics, the creation of a professional society, and of university degree programs to confer expert credentials.
- Jarausch, K. 1990. The German professions in history and theory. Pp. 9-24 in Cocks, G., & Jarausch, K. H. (Eds.). (1990). *German Professions, 1800-1950*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. This article traces the early European origins of the concept of the profession, and how professions distinguished themselves from occupations.

Professionals' Impact on Economy and Society

Week 3:

- Sarfatti Larsen, M. 1977. *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
This short but brilliant book traces the history of the professions from ancient societies to the present, focusing on their impact on bureaucracy; the book also includes case studies of the medical and legal professions, to which we shall return later in the class.
- Gouldner, A. 1979. *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*. New York: Macmillan.
This pamphlet-sized book replies to historical accounts of professionalization in Marx and Weber by positing that expert authority will fundamentally alter class, power and economic relations. This book is particularly relevant to our case on engineers later in the class.
- Suddaby, R. and Viale, T. 2011. Professionals and field-level change: Institutional work and the professional project. *Contemporary Sociology*, 59: 423–442.
This paper examines the role of professionals in changing organizations, as well as larger social institutions.
- Hofri-Winogradow, A. 2014. Professionals' contribution to the legislative process: between self, client and the public. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 39: 96-126.
The article analyzes a case study of Israeli attorneys' role in shaping national laws by mediating between the interests of their clients and the concerns of legislators in the Knesset.
- Seabrooke, L. 2014. Epistemic arbitrage: Transnational professional knowledge in action. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, 1: 49-64.
This article examines how professionals create trans-national governance regimes by working through organizations such as the World Health Organization and the International Monetary Fund.
- Harrington, B. 2012. Trust and estate planning: A profession and its contribution to socio-economic inequality. *Sociological Forum*, 27: 825-846.
This article examines the role of professionals in creating systems of stratification that affect not only their clients, but all of us.

Building Professional Careers and Client Relationships

Week 4:

- Harrington, B. 2017. Habitus and the labor of representation among elite professionals. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, 4: 282-301.
This article examines a subtle but important issue in professional careers: self-presentation. This profoundly affects gender, class and race diversity within the professions, as well as the potential for career mobility.
- Ashley, L. and Empson, L. 2013. Differentiation and discrimination: Understanding social class and social exclusion in leading law firms. *Human Relations*, 66: 219–44.
This article discusses social class and its associated forms of self-presentation as a barrier to advancement in the legal profession.
- Carter, C. and Spence, C. 2014. Being a successful professional: An exploration of who makes partner in the Big 4. *Contemporary Accounting Research*, 31: 949-981.
This paper analyzes a key process in professional careers: attaining partnership status in a professional services firm. The empirical case here is the field of corporate accounting.
- Strike, V. and Rerup, C. 2016. Mediated sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59: 880–905.
This article explores the sense-making function of professionals in relation to their clients, looking at the case of “most trusted advisors” to family businesses.
- Harrington, B. 2016. Chapter 3 “Client Relations” in *Capital Without Borders: Wealth Managers and the One Percent*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
This chapter reviews the complex personal relationships that some professionals develop with their clients. An intimacy characteristic of physician-patient relationships often extends to relations between lawyers, accountants, bankers and high-net-worth clients.
- Harrington, B. 2015. Going global: Professionals and the microfoundations of institutional change. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, 2: 1-19.
This article traces the impact of wealth managers on institutional change through the mechanism of client relations.
- Harrington, B and Strike, V. 2018. Between kinship and commerce: Fiduciaries and the institutional logics of family firms. *Family Business Review*, 31: 417-440.

This empirical study explores a crucial aspect in professional work—that of fiduciary duty toward clients—and examines how practitioners enact this responsibility in family business settings, where the institutional logics of commerce and kinship collide.

Professional Ethics and Misconduct

Week 5:

- Durkheim, É. 1992 [1898-1900]. Selections from *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*. London: Routledge.
Émile Durkheim was a founding father of sociology and among the first scholars to theorize the professions—starting with their moral role and obligations as integrators of societies being fragmented by secularization and globalization. We’ll read Bryan Turner’s “Preface” to this edition as a big picture overview, along with chapter one of Durkheim’s own text, titled “Professional Ethics.”
- Etherington, L. and Lee, R. 2007. Ethical codes and cultural context: Ensuring legal ethics in the global law firm. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 14: 95-118.
This article examines a challenge for many contemporary professionals working in multi-national contexts: that the concept and specifications of professional ethics are not the same everywhere they may practice.
- Spence, C. and Carter, C. 2014 An exploration of the professional habitus in Big 4 accounting firms. *Work, Employment and Society*, 28: 946–962.
As a case study in ethics, this article reviews the moral foundations of the accounting profession and the ethical dilemmas that often face practitioners as they build careers.
- Cooper, D., Dacin, T. and Palmer, D. 2013. Fraud in accounting, organizations and society: Extending the boundaries of research. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 38: 440-457.
This paper reviews the history of fraud, which begins with malfeasance by ancient accountants, and discusses the impact of these rogue practices on organizations, economy and society.
- Gabbioneta, C., Prakash, R. and Greenwood, R. 2014. Sustained corporate corruption and processes of institutional ascription within professional networks. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, 1: 16-32.

This article analyzes misconduct within corporations, and why professionals so often fail to sanction unethical or illegal behavior by practitioners.

- Harrington, B. 2018. Turning vice into virtue: Institutional work and professional misconduct. *Human Relations*, 72: 1464-1496.
This study examines how professionals engage in institutional work to legitimate misconduct in relation to their own professional ethics and in the eyes of the public.

- Thiemann, M. and Lepoutre, J. 2017. Stitched on the edge: Rule evasion, embedded regulators, and the evolution of markets. *American Journal of Sociology*, 122: 1775-1821.
This article analyzes the role of finance professionals in the Asset-Backed Commercial Paper market, and their skill in evading the spirit of the law while complying with the letter of the law.

Transnational Work and Professional Service Firms

Week 6:

- Harrington, B. and Seabrooke, L. 2020. Transnational professionals. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 46: 399-417.
This article details the process through which professions move from their traditional position as sets of nationally-bounded practices to trans-national activities.
- Faulconbridge J. and Muzio D. 2012. The re-scaling of the professions: towards a transnational sociology of the professions. *International Sociology* 27: 109-125.
This article assesses the state of the art in research on professions in trans-national settings.
- Fourcade, M. 2006. The construction of a global profession: The transnationalization of economics. *American Journal of Sociology*, 112: 145-94.
This classic article uses the case study of professional economists to delineate the process by which a profession transcends national boundaries to exercise influence internationally.
- Dezalay, Y. and Garth, B. 2010. Marketing and selling transnational 'judges' and global 'experts:' Building the credibility of (quasi)judicial regulation. *Socio-Economic Review*, 8: 113-130.
This paper examines the transnational expansion of the legal profession as a model

for the globalization of expertise.

- Henriksen, L. and Seabrooke, L. 2016. Transnational organizing: Issue professionals in environmental sustainability networks. *Organization*, 23: 722–741.
This article analyzes how professionals build international networks to establish their expert authority on matters of global concern, such as environmental sustainability. The model can be generalized to business, medicine, law and other fields of practice.
- Muzio, D. and Faulconbridge, J. 2013. The global professional service firm: ‘One firm’ models versus Italian distant institutionalised practices. *Organization Studies*, 34: 897-925.
This article is a direct application of the framework developed by Scott (2008) to professional services firms, but uses a qualitative approach to highlight the institutional tensions and conflicts in professional organizations.
- Boussebaa, M. and G. Morgan. 2015. Internationalization of professional service firms: Drivers, forms and outcomes. Chapter 4 in Empson et al. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Professional Service Firms*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press..
This chapter offers an introduction to professional service firms and an overview of key debates in the field concerning them.
- Faulconbridge, J. and Muzio D. 2016. Global professional service firms and the challenge of institutional complexity: 'Field relocation' as a response strategy. *Journal of Management Studies*, 53: 89-124.
This article explores the role of professional service firms as global institution builders.
- Hanlon, G. 2004. Institutional forms and organizational structures: Homology, trust and reputational capital in professional service firms. *Organization*, 11: 186-210.
This article reviews the history of professional service firms, focusing on 19th century British attorneys and their role in building national institutions, as well as serving their clients.

Case Studies: Experts in Finance and Law

Week 7:

- Seabrooke, L. and Tsingou, E. 2014. Distinctions, affiliations, and professional knowledge in financial reform expert groups. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21: 389-407.

This study analyzes professional competition to establish regulations, norms and standards governing financial activity.

- Boussard V. 2018. Professional closure regimes in the global age: the boundary work of professional services specializing in mergers and acquisitions. *Journal of Professions and Organization* 5: 279-296.

This study investigates the emergence of a new group of experts specializing in capital allocation through mergers and acquisitions.

- Harrington, B. 2016. Chapter 5 “Wealth Management and Inequality,” and Chapter 6 “Wealth Management and the State,” in *Capital Without Borders: Wealth Managers and the One Percent*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

These chapters review the impact of finance professionals on economic inequality and law-making, both offshore and onshore, and the impact these activities have on professional regulation, as well as democratic institutions, worldwide.

- Sandefur, R. 2015. Elements of professional expertise: Understanding relational and substantive expertise through lawyer’s impact. *American Sociological Review*, 80: 909–933.

This study examines what attorneys actually do, and how their work affects larger practices within the legal profession, by focusing on the case of litigation specialists.

- Faulconbridge, J. and Muzio, D. 2014. Transnational corporations shaping institutional change: The case of English law firms in Germany. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 15: 1195–226.

This study of international law emphasizes the role of firms in shaping how professionals can use their expertise and build careers.

- McBarnet, D. 1992. Legitimate rackets: Tax evasion, tax avoidance, and the boundaries of legality. *The Journal of Human Justice*, 3: 56–74.

McBarnet’s focus is on attorneys specializing in tax rules, and the practice of “creative compliance”—adhering to the letter of the law, while violating it in spirit.

- Quack, S. 2007. Legal professionals and transnational law-making: A case of distributed agency. *Organization*, 14: 643–66.

This paper examines the processes through which some attorneys establish international standards and practices.

Case Studies: Experts in Medicine and Engineering

Weeks 8 and 9:

- Seabrooke, L. and Tsingou, E. 2016. Bodies of knowledge in reproduction: Epistemic boundaries in the political economy of fertility. *New Political Economy*, 21: 69-89. This paper examines how physicians set global standards and practice norms, in cooperation with economists and policy-makers; the empirical case concerns reproductive technologies, but generalizes to other uses of medical expertise.
- Anteby, M. 2010. Markets, morals, and practices of trade: Jurisdictional disputes in the US commerce in cadavers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55: 606-638. This paper looks at the role of physicians in the market for cadavers for medical training purposes; it is a case study in ethics and commerce.
- Grant H. 2006. From the Transvaal to the prairies: The migration of South African physicians to Canada. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32: 681-695. This paper examines the migration of medical professionals, following the linkages among former colonies in the British Empire.
- Clemens, M and Pettersson, G. 2008. New data on African health professionals abroad. *Human Resources for Health*, 6: 1. This paper examines the geographical patterns of physicians as they build careers across national boundaries.
- Evans, J., Kunda, G. and Barley, S. 2004. Beach time, bridge time and billable hours: The temporal structure of technical contracting. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 49: 1-38. This study examines professional engineers as “free agents” in a global marketplace for talent, with particular attention to the temporal cycles in their careers.
- Saxenian A. 2007. Chapters 1, 2 and 8 in *The New Argonauts: Regional Advantage in a Global Economy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. This global study of engineers traces the geography of their professional careers, from home countries like India and China, to the US, and then often back home—creating circuits of expert knowledge rather than “brain drain.”
- Kunda, G. 1995. *Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

This ethnographic study sheds light on the role of organizational context for professional careers, through detailed interviews with professional engineers at a Boston-area high-tech firm.

Applications and Analyses

Week 10:

- In lieu of assigned readings, students will be asked to select and present to the class their analysis of a case study tying together two or more key themes from the class. These case studies can be drawn from books, newspaper articles, or other reliable non-fiction sources. We will discuss case selection and analysis early in the class so that students can prepare.