**SOCIOLOGY 401**  
**INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS**

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**TTh: 2:40-4:00, Eliot 414**  
Office Hours: tba

**Course description:** This is an advanced treatment of the theory and empirical practice of institutional analysis in sociology and related fields. Part one of the course focuses on structure, treating institutions as contextual determinants of action, addressing economic, historical and sociological approaches to these contexts, and identifying different mechanisms by which institutions promote order, stability and distinctive patterns of behavior. Topics covered included path dependence, isomorphism, "lock in," structure-induced equilibria, institutional contingency, diffusion, and globalization. Part two of the course focuses on agency and action—how to explain institutional building and change without abandoning the contextual insights of institutional analysis. Topics covered include punctuated equilibria versus evolutionary theories of change, the role of ideas and incentives in institutional systems, institutional entrepreneurship, endogenous change dynamics, processes of transposition, theorization and translation, and the relationship between social movements and institutional fields. Four specific fields or empirical phenomena will preoccupy us at multiple points throughout the semester: the American health care system, the emergence and deinstitutionalization of the corporation, the rise of French, nouvelle and hybrid cuisine, and the regulation and deregulation of insurance.

**Course prerequisite:** Sociology 211, Introduction to Sociology and one upper division class in sociology, or consent of the instructor.

**Course assignments:** This is a reading intensive seminar which will proceed entirely by discussions of materials supported by regular reading memos. One to two page memos are due each week for the first half of the semester. Three to four somewhat longer reading memos of three to five pages will be due roughly every other week for the second half of the semester. There are no other papers or exams. Late work will not be accepted.

**Readings:** The following books are available at the Reed College bookstore and are on reserve. Additional readings listed below are available though JSTOR or are on reserve.

READING ASSIGNMENTS

INTRODUCTION: EXPLAINING SOCIAL ORDER AND ITS TRANSFORMATION

Week 1: (January 24)

PART I: CORE APPROACHES AND PROBLEMS

Week 1: (January 26)

*Rational choice institutionalism*: Two classic statements


Week 2: (January 31, February 2)

*Rational choice institutionalism*: overview and elaborations


Week 3: (February 7, 9)

*Historical Institutionalism: Foundations and exemplars, Institutions as context*


Week 4: (February 14, 16)

*Historical Institutionalism Meets Rational Choice: Path Dependence*

Douglass, North 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Chapters 1, 11-14 (books on reserve)


Week 5: (February 21, 23)

*Historical Institutionalism Rethinks History and Time*

Paul Peirson. *Politics in Time*, chapters 2-6

Week 6: (February 28, March 2)

*Enter Sociology: Fields, Organizations, Cognitive Schemas and more*


Week 7: (March 7, 9)

*Globalization, Diffusion and the Critique of Actor-Centered Theory*


Scott, WR. 2001. *Institutions and Organizations*, Chapters 3 and 4 (Recommended)
Spring break: March 11-19

Week 8: (March 21, 23)

Institutionalization and Path Creation


Week 9: (March 28, 30)

Institutional change as punctuated history: shocks, infiltration, succession, defection


Week 10: (April 4, 6)

*Institutional change as punctuated history/regime shifts II:*


Week 11: (April 11, 13)

*Institutional change as path dependent rational adaptive processes: evolutionary approaches in economic institutionalism*

Douglass North, *Understanding the Process of Economic Change* (selections)

Week 12: (April 18, 20)

*Institutional change as layering, transposition, recombination I: Evolutionary approaches in sociological and historical institutionalism*


Week 13: (April 25, 27)

*Institutional change as layering, transposition, recombination II*


