



# Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy (Sociology for a New Century Series)

By Stephen A. Sweet, Peter Meiksins

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## **A comparative review of the historical transformations in work**

Opening with engaging vignettes of four workers, Jamal (a low-wage worker), Eileen (a high-powered professional), Dan (a displaced autoworker), and Chi-Ying (a young, Chinese, employee), **Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy** frames the development of jobs and employment opportunities in an international comparative perspective, revealing the historical transformations of work and examining the often profound effects that these changes have had on employee satisfaction. This text provides a rich analysis of the overtime-laden American workplace in the larger context of an integrated global economy and offers strategic recommendations for making the new economy work for us all.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

*"Changing Contours of Work, by Sweet and Meiksins, represents a truly excellent and synthetic sociological guide for understanding the historical and contemporary interplay of work, inequality, and human dignity. Moving beyond simplistic conceptions of "old" versus "new" economy, the authors demonstrate, through careful aggregate analyses and carefully selected anecdotes, the ways in which old and new work forms continue to intersect, how various status groups continue to be differentially impacted, and why so many workers in the current era face job insecurity, overwork, and maltreatment. The well-articulated position of the authors regarding sorely needed challenges to these trends, and where such challenges might arise, are equally important and deserving of attention from social scientists, students, and policymakers alike"*

- **Vincent J. Roscigno**, Professor at *Ohio State University* and author of *The Voice of Southern Labor* (U Minn Press) and *The Face of Discrimination: How Race and Gender Impact Work and Home Lives* (Rowman & Littlefield).

(Vincent J. Roscigno)

*"Changing Contours challenges the widespread notion of postindustrial, offers a careful analysis of demographics as they intersect a changing labor market, and devotes an entire chapter to a broad discussion of working time. This is a book that students will find informative, and possibly unsettling, but in the end they'll find hope in the possibilities for agency and change"*

- Cynthia Negrey, *University of Louisville* (Cynthia Negrey)

*"This volume provides a solid, concise overview of the current state of work, mostly based on US patterns but with some comparative information."*

(J.P. Jacobsen *CHOICE*)

*"Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy* provides numerous insights into the new world of work and is a prolific source of material for class discussion, further research, and written assignments." (Michael P. Bochenek *TEACHING SOCIOLOGY*)

#### About the Author

**Peter Meiksins** is a Professor of Sociology at Cleveland State University. He is the author of many articles on the sociology of work, including studies of the work experiences of engineers and part-time work in professional technical occupations and essays on labor process theory, professional work in comparative perspective, and contemporary labor relations. His work has appeared in a variety of journals, including *Work and Occupations*, *Theory and Society*, *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, *Work, Employment and Society*, and *Sociological Quarterly*. He is the author of *Putting Work in Its Place: A Quiet Revolution* (with Peter Whalley) and of *Engineering Labour: Technical Workers in Comparative Perspective* (with Chris Smith); he is co-editor of *Rethinking the Labor Process* (with Mark Wardell and Tom Steiger) and *Rising From the Ashes: Labor in the Age of Global Capitalism* (with Ellen Wood and Michael Yates). In 1996, together with Peter Whalley, he received a major grant from the Sloan Foundation to study "Flexible Work for Technical Professionals." His current research, again with Peter Whalley, concerns the sociology of

design work (a study of the work of graphic designers, industrial designers and interior designers). This research has been supported by a Fund For the Advancement of the Discipline Grant from the American Sociological Foundation.

**Stephen Sweet** is an assistant professor of sociology at Ithaca College and formerly the associate director of the Cornell Careers Institute: A Sloan Center for the Study of Working Families. He has written a number of articles on the challenges confronting working families, focusing on the issues of concern to dual career couples across the life course. His studies appeared in the a variety of publications, including the *New Directions in Life Course Research*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Innovative Higher Education*, *The International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, *Journal of College Student Development*, and *Community, Work, and Family*. His recent books, *College and Society: An Introduction to the Sociological Imagination* and *Data Analysis with SPSS: A First Course in Applied Statistics* (now in its second edition), have been extensively adopted in sociology courses. In 2001 Dr. Sweet was awarded a Sloan Officers Grant to study the effects of corporate downsizing on dual earner couples. He is currently completing two book projects, *The Handbook of Work and Family* (with co-authors Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes and Ellen Ernst Kossek) which will be published in 2005 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates and *Managing Careers in the New Risk Economy*, written in collaboration with his co-investigator Phyllis Moen.

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