

Course name: Work, Entrepreneurship and Technology in Contemporary Societies

Course code: HS2.401

Date: 30/08/2025

Quiz 1

Total Marks: 30 marks

Compulsory section

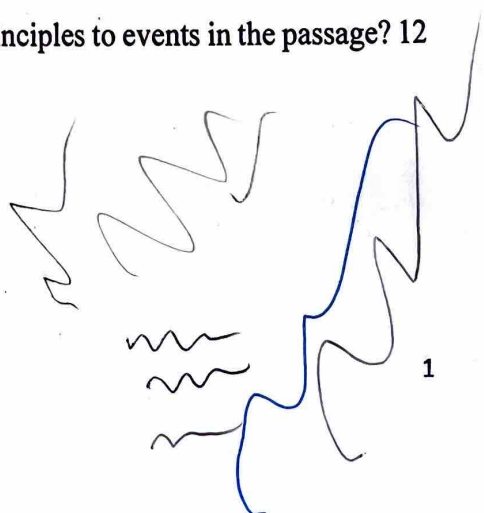
This quiz is a team exercise, and each team member will be marked equally. The format is as follows:

- Individual reading of the passage (20 minutes)
- Team deliberation (maximum 30 minutes)
- Writing (40 minutes)

Questions:

- 1) Summarize the passage in 200 words, use concepts/phrases used in lectures? 7 marks
- 2) From the passage, give 3 examples of flexibility in workplace? Give reasons as to why you feel they are appropriate examples? 6 marks
- 3) What are the principles that Braverman provides to describe production enabled by Taylorism? Relate these principles to events in the passage? 12 marks

↓ dissociation of



rewarded with common incentives for higher production to enable the disciplining device of peer pressure. This reduces the need for detailed supervision or monitoring and ensures much greater "self-discipline." Far from humanizing labor relations, Custers notes that this has the effect of reducing solidarity among workers and further weakening their collective power. It is interesting to note that this method of managerial control has been increasingly copied by companies across the world, and has even spread beyond the sphere of production into finance. Micro-credit, for example, which was actively promoted as a "development panacea" by multilateral organizations and many governments, has relied on creating groups of women who benefit in common from loans (in what are euphemistically called "self-help groups") so that peer pressure for repayment substitutes for the absence of collateral in lending.

Combined with this is external centralization, which also affects workers negatively. A large corporation's relations with small supplier firms are increasingly regulated by the principles of "just-in-time delivery" (*kanban* in Japanese). These supplier firms, in turn, employ workers with clearly secondary status in terms of workers' rights who are driven by the instability and insecurity of their employers' earning. Methods of transferring risks to workers are firmly entrenched by the informal nature of most work contracts, the reliance on part-time workers, and the use of piece-rate wages.

Once again, this description is remarkably prescient of current processes, as such methods have gone global in nature. The vertical "disintegration" of the production process into complex geographically disparate but controlled chains is its current expression, as evident from much recent research.⁵ Two major sets of changes have dramatically increased the relocation possibilities in international production. Technological changes have allowed for different parts of the production process to be vertically split and locationally separated, and these created different types of requirements for labor involving a few highly skilled professional workers and a vast bulk of semi-skilled workers for whom burnout over time is more widely prevalent than learning by doing. They have also enabled geographical relocation in service activities that were previously locationally rigid. Organizational changes have been associated with concentra-

tion of ownership and control, as well as with greater dispersion and more layers of outsourcing and subcontracting of particular activities and parts of the production process. Therefore we now have the emergence of international suppliers of goods and services that rely less on direct production within a specific location and more on subcontracting a greater part of their production and distribution activities. This has led to the emergence and market domination of "manufacturers without factories," as multinational firms such as Nike and Adidas effectively rely on a complex system of outsourced and subcontracted production based on centrally determined design and quality control. More recent outsourcing in services, ranging from publishing to back-office work, also combines some amount of flexibility (which implies greater control over workers) with centralized control. In all of these activities, women workers are both essential and dominate the lower end of work processes in terms of pay and lack of control.

Women and the Reserve Army of Labor

Custers correctly identifies the significance of women as a labor reserve for capitalism. In a consideration of Japanese women, he notes that they have always borne the characteristics that Marx described for the major categories of the industrial reserve army: the latent, the stagnant, and the floating. He also notes how the availability of such women workers is conditioned by the broader economic conditions, so that the greater poverty or misery of families sends out greater numbers of women (often younger women) in search of paid work. This is also affected by life-cycle social pressures. He notes that married, middle-aged women employed as part-time workers often most clearly fulfil the general criteria for being part of the labor reserve. They are available as a cheap labor reserve precisely because of their forced absence from the labor market for childbearing and child rearing, but the patriarchal relations underlying this cement their role as insecure, subordinate, and low-paid workers who can be brought into or expelled from jobs whenever employers require it.