

TEACHING ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY

Filiz Garip is a Professor in Sociology at Cornell University. She received her PhD in sociology from Princeton University in 2007 and is the author of *On the Move: Changing Mechanisms of Mexico-U.S. Migration*. Jennifer Bouek spoke with her about teaching economic sociology.



Jennifer Bouek: How do you approach building your economic sociology syllabus? What topics do you cover?

Filiz Garip: As a graduate student at Princeton, I took three economic sociology courses from three pro-

fessors with little overlap across the syllabi. This experience made me think of economic sociology as a very broad field. But, later on, as an early assistant professor at Harvard, I went over many economic sociology courses to design my own course, and realized that most syllabi put the emphasis on particular domains of economic activity: organizations and markets. I refrained from following this path (which, to me, seemed to replicate a similar tendency in economics to narrowly define domains of economic activity). I instead took Viviana Zelizer's advice, and her syllabus as a guideline, and decided to cover many different kinds of economic activity – from the division of labor in the household to transfer of remittances in immigrant families. I also committed early on to include many economics papers in my syllabus (and not just Gary Becker's work to be treated as a strawman). I think it is crucial to have an up-to-date and nuanced understanding of economics in order to strike a conversation with (or to provide an alternative account to) that field.

JB: Your own research lies at the intersection of economic sociology, migration, and inequality. How do you incorporate related subfields into your course? What subfields do you think are most important right now to include in an economic sociology course?

FG: Economic sociology offers a great framework to think about many questions in sociology. How do individuals make choices? How do social relations and cultural understandings shape those choices? How do organizations come to be and evolve? I cannot think of a single field in our discipline that does not ask some version of these questions.

Economic sociology gives us useful ideas, tools, and examples that can be applied to many domains, and the field itself could benefit from integrating a broader range of areas into its core. Research on migration (my own area of interest), family demography, public health, for example, offers many new questions and applications that are important to include in economic sociology courses.

JB: What is your favorite book or article to teach?

FG: My favorite work to teach is Viviana Zelizer's *Social Meaning of Money*. It is priceless to see students work their way through her argument (we think that money invades and changes our social relations, but in fact, it is the other way around). A new favorite is Greta Krippner's *Capitalizing on Crisis*.

JB: What is the one thing you most hope that students remember after taking your course?

FG: That there are different ways of thinking about the same question, and no ground truth on bases of human behavior.

JB: What have you learned from teaching economic sociology?

FG: I have learned the importance (and the difficulties) of dialogue across different disciplines.