

INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS
Labor Studies 37:575:100 online: Section 90
Draft subject to change

Fall 2020

Professors Paula B. Voos and Xiangmin (Helen) Liu

Please copy all professors when you email about the course. That way one of us can be sure to get back to you.

Contact information for Professor Voos:

Cell phone: 732-261-5958. She is available to speak by phone most mornings but its best to text to be sure (and include your name at the end of the text). Professor Voos prefers to answer substantive questions about subject matter in the course by phone, rather than email.

Email is great for many things: pbvoos@SMLR.rutgers.edu. You can also email her in the internal Canvas email system

Contact information for Professor Liu:

Email is her preferred method of contact: Xiangmin.Liu@rutgers.edu. Her cell phone is 848-252-9265.

Schedule: *The weeks in the course begin on Monday and end on Sunday evening at 11:59 p.m. You often will have things due on either Thursday evening or Sunday evening, just like any course that meets twice a week. The schedule and the assignments are subject to change. This is an online course that is largely asynchronous.*

Text: Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*. 3rd Edition. Sage, 2017. (Please note: the second and third editions are similar, although the latter is more up to date. The first is very different – do not use it).

Grades:

For purposes of grading, there are multiple components of the course:

- Introductory exercises (Personal information/pre-test participation) (4%)
- 6 Threaded Discussions (Forums) (42%)
- 3 Exams or “Quizzes” at 15% each (45%) Or 12% each & add short paper/assignment?
- Short take-home final (9%)

The professors reserve the right to determine the division between B and B+ etc., although in many years B+ starts at an overall average of 88. That cutoff is subject to change each semester.

For Learning Objectives and Policy on Disability, see the Appendix

Schedule: The course is asynchronous but students must read and participate each week:

Unit I. The Situation Working People Face Today (Sept. 1- Oct. 4)

Week 1: Introduction (Sept. 1-6)

- Explore what the course is about and make note of what is required of you.
- Learn how to use Canvas and locate readings & other online resources. There are excellent instructional videos online about the use of the system.
- Post information about yourself for the instructor and other students you will be working with (worth 2% of your grade –less if you are late)
- Take the Pre-test. Your score does not affect your grade, but it is important to be sure how your computer will interact with the exam software to prevent later problems. (worth 2% of your grade). So please use the computer you will later use to take quizzes.
- Buy or rent the text

Read: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 1

Assignment for Week 1: Interview at least one parent or grandparent about your family's work history (preferably more). You do not need to write anything about the interview. It will form the basis of an online discussion next week.

Week 2: Work and Our Lives (Sept. 7-13)

- You and your family's history of work
- The contemporary economic/work situation
- Longer term trends in work

Watch: Joseph Stiglitz, "What's Next for the U.S. Economy," June 4, 2020, CNBC.

Read:

Heather Long & Andrew Van Dam, "Pay Cuts Are Becoming a Defining Feature of the Coronavirus Recession," *Washington Post*, July 1, 2020.

Start to think about work in the longer term:

Watch: NBC News, "What Does the Future of Work Look Like in a Post-COVID-19 World," May 20, 2020.

Watch: Richard Florida, "The Rise of the Creative Service Worker," on Big Think (link in shell).

Due week 2: Participate in Forum 1: You need to post at least twice by Sun. evening, and then another two times by next Sunday evening. Both quantity and quality count so you may want to post beyond this minimum.

Week 3: Corporations & Work in the “New Economy” (Sept. 14-20)

- Corporations – structure, power, and rights
- Old and new forms of work organization
- The rise of contingent work

Read: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 2, and

Peter Capelli et al. Change at Work (New York: Oxford, 1997), subpart “The Employment System that Died,” and “How the World Began to Change,” pp. 15-29, and “The Restructuring of Organizations,” pp. 44-51.

Watch: 4 Video excerpts from *The Corporation* on You-tube.

PBS video, “A Job at Fords” from the series, *The Great Depression*

Due week 3: Finish Forum 1: You need to post at least twice by Sun. evening. Both quantity and quality count so you may want to post beyond this minimum. You cannot post after 11:59pm on Sunday so do not ask for that or send us posts by email – this is like a class discussion.

Week 4: Social Class in the U.S. (Sept. 21-27)

- Class and opportunity in the U.S.
- Class and social mobility
- Relationship between wealth and power
- Has class faded in American culture?

Read: NYTimes website on Social Class:
<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/class/>

Be sure to read on this site:

- (1) The Overview article, ‘Shadowy Lines That Still Divide’
- (2) Tamar Lewin “Up from the Holler” Click on Day 3
- (3) David Leonhardt “The College Dropout Boom” Click on Day 5
- (4) at least two other articles/blogs from the site.
- (5) Also read Bob Herbert’s op. ed. ‘Mobility Myth’ click under ‘Readers Opinions’
- (6) You should also be sure to do the interactive exercise on the *NYTimes* site using your family of social origin.**

Watch:

Professor Francis Ryan, Rutgers Labor Studies & Employment Relations Dept. speak about the history of the ideal of social mobility in the U.S. and the reality today.

Kate Pickett, Big Think Interview, “Why Inequality is Bad for Your Health”
<http://bigthink.com/katepickett>. The rest is optional viewing.

Read: Serkez, Yeryna, “Who is Mostly Likely to Die from the Coronavirus,” *New York Times*, June 4, 2020.

Nick Bunker, “5 Charts that Show How Increasing Income Inequality Leads to Less Opportunity,” Center for American Progress (link in shell).

Read: The Pew Charitable Trust, “A Third of Americans Now Say They Are in the Lower Classes” and watch the accompanying short video on absolute vs. relative income mobility (link in the online course shell).

Due in week 4 – Participate in Forum 2 – Part is due on Thurs at 11:59pm; part is due on Sunday at 11:59pm.

Week 5: Economic Inequality Today (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)

- Class, race, and gender inequality
- Health and other effects of income inequality

Read:

The Pew Charitable Trust, “A Third of Americans Now Say They Are in the Lower Classes” and watch the accompanying short video on absolute vs. relative income mobility (link in the online course shell).

Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 3,

Review two *New York Times* articles on the reasons for lagging wage growth and rising inequality

David Leonhardt and Yaryna Serkez, “The U.S. is Lagging Behind Many Rich Countries. These Charts Show Why,” July 2, 2020

Unions role - July 6, 2018

Watch:

Richard Wilkinson’s, TED Talk, on the impact of inequality globally.

Take Online Quiz on Unit 1: Sat. Oct. 3 or Sun. Oct. 4

Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights (Oct. 5 – Nov. 1)

Week 6: Employment Rights in the U.S. (Oct. 5-11)

- Employment at-will
- Exceptions to employment at-will
- The NLRA (Wagner Act) and state bargaining laws
- The Fair Labor Standards Act & the Occupational Safety and Health Act

Read:

Sweet & Meiksins, Chapt. 4

Steven Greenhouse, Low-Wage Workers are Often Cheated. Study Says, September 1, 2009, *New York Times*.

Lewis Maltby, Can They Do That? (New York: Portfolio, 2009). Chapter 4, “Wrongful Discharge and Employment at Will,” pp. 57-67 and a portion of Chapter 13, “The Rights You Have,” pp. 196-203.

Watch:

3 short Videos on Employment at Will and the common law exceptions from Professor Carla Katz

Station CBSDFW news story, Nov. 2, 2016, “How Social Media Can Cost Someone Their Job.”

Due Week 6: Participate in the forum on employment rights (parts 3A and 3B). At a bare minimum post your original contribution on each by Sunday. **To earn more than the minimum passing grade of C, comment on others posts and respond to other student comments.**

Week 7: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality: (Oct. 12-18)

- Race, ethnicity and inequality in the contemporary workplace
- Discrimination and Fairness
- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- The Memphis Garbage Workers Strike and Martin Luther King

Read: Sweet and Meiksins, Chapter 7, “Race, Ethnicity and Work.”

Charlie LeDuff, “At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die: Who Kills, Who Cuts; Who Bosses Can Depend on Race,” New York Times, June 16, 2000.

“Whites Account for Under Half of Births in the U.S.,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2002, p. 1.

Los Angeles Times, June 27, 2020, “California Latino, Black Residents Hit Harder by Coronavirus,”notice also the evidence on Asian Americans in the story.

Watch: Three videos

(1) One is an excerpt from the movie, *At the River I Stand*, about the Memphis Garbage workers strike and Dr. Martin Luther King

(2) The second is a YouTube video that continues the story of the Memphis garbage strike.

(3) Mr. Wade Henderson, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Testimony to U.S. Senate Subcommittee, 2009 about the relationship between union rights and civil rights.

Due Week 7: Participate in the forum on HRM policy (parts 3C and 3D). At a bare minimum post your original contribution on each by Sunday. **To earn more than the minimum passing grade, comment on others posts and respond to other student comments.**

Week 8: The New Immigration (Oct. 19-25)

- Public policy debates regarding immigration policy for the U.S.
- How immigration relates to issues of diversity and inequality

Read:

New York Times, 1/27/2007, “Study of Immigrants Links Lighter Skin and Higher Income, and

Immanuel Ness, *Immigrants, Unions, and the New U.S. Labor Market* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005). Chapter 2, “The Political Economy of Transnational Labor in New York City: The Context for Immigrant Worker Militancy,” pp. 13-39.

An optional reading by Ray Marshall is also available online.

Watch:

Professor Janice Fine, LSER Department, Rutgers, speaking about immigration issues.

Review:

Ellis Island Web site, “Immigration Timeline.” Be sure to review information about the predominant nationalities of immigrants in various periods.

Due in Week 8: Participate in Forum 4. Part is due before Thurs midnight and part is due before Friday midnight.

Week 9: Gender, Work and Family (Oct. 26-Nov. 1)

- Women’s participation in the paid labor force
- Gender inequalities and discrimination
- Work/family policies and the law

Read: Sweet and Meiksins, Chapters 5 and 6, and

Washington Post, “Nearly 40 Percent of Mothers Are Now the Family Breadwinners Report Says,” 5/28/2013.

Take Online Quiz on Unit II: Sat. Oct. 31 or Sun. Nov. 1

Unit III Improving Working People's Lives (Nov. 2-Dec. 6)

Week 10 (Nov. 2-8) Workers & Social Change

- How ordinary people – workers and their families -- pressure elites for change
- The labor movement as a vehicle for social change
- Some contemporary examples of this in the U.S.: Fight for \$15; Oklahoma Teachers' Strike; Labor in the Pandemic

Watch: Various short videos

History Channel, "The Labor Movement,"

BBC News, "Oklahoma Teachers Strike"

CNN, "Unions Pushes to Designate Grocery Workers as First Responders"

Read:

Alia Wong, "The Larger Concerns Behind the Teachers' Strikes," *The Atlantic*, April 3, 2018.

Katie Reilly, "The Oklahoma Teachers' Strike Has Ended – Here is What They Got and What They Didn't," *Time*, April 13, 2018.

"The Fight for \$15," from Steven Greenhouse, *Beaten Down, Worked Up*, NY: Knopf, 2019, pp. 232-248.

Stephanie Goldberg, "Why the Pandemic Has Energized Hospital Unions," *Modern Healthcare*, June 15, 2020.

Week 11 The Legacy in the U.S.: The New Deal & Labor (Nov.9-15)

- A new relationship between government and working Americans in the 1930s
- Union growth and consolidation in the 1930s-40s
- The CIO and the sit-down strike
- The "New Deal System's" achievements and limitations

Read:

Andrew Leonard, "Lessons for Obama from the New Deal," *Salon*, 2011.

Jack Metzgar, Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000). "Getting to 1959," first part pp. 17-39.

Watch: Various videos.

(1) Professor Paula Voos, Speaking about the New Deal, WWII and Labor (3 sections)

(2) A feature video (54 min.), "Mean Things Happening: The Great Depression, Part 5" from PBS also on You-Tube. Please pay particular attention to the second half of the video on steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania.

(3) A short You-Tube video regarding the early 1930s and the San Francisco General Strike: OPTIONAL

(4) A short You-Tube video on the sit-down strike and its use by the CIO Autoworkers union in the 1930s: OPTIONAL

Due week 11: Participate in Forum 5. The first post is due by Thursday evening; additional posts are due Sunday evening. **Also upload a copy of your first post to demonstrate that it is not copied but is your own writing.**

Week 12 Unions Today in the U.S., Part 1 (Nov. 16-22)

- What do unions do?
- Collective bargaining
- Are unions good or bad for the economy?

Review: Power-point on what American unions do.

Read:

Kim Kelly, "What a Labor Union is and How it Works," *Teen Vogue*, March 12, 2018.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Union Members 2019."

Explore: "Learn about Unions" on the AFL-CIO website. This site contains a lot of information from an obviously pro-union perspective.

Watch:

(1) Reverend Jim Wallis, Sojourners, Testifying on unions and economic inequality, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.

(2) Professor Paula Voos, Rutgers, Testifying about the economic effects of unions, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.

(3) Professor Carla Katz, Rutgers, "Unions and Individual Voice"

Week 13: Unions Today Part 2: Union Organizing & Membership (Short week Nov. 23-25).

- How unions are formed in the U.S.
- Union membership trends over time
- New tactics of contemporary unions – example, the Fight for \$15

Read:

“Biggest Gains in Union Membership in 2017 Were for Younger Workers,” by John Schmitt, EPI website, Jan. 25, 2018.

Watch Q&A videos on union organizing:

3 Videos, Professor Carla Katz

Watch for an overview of how U.S. employers combat union organizing campaigns:

(1) Target anti-union employee orientation video on YouTube

(2) Levitt, Confessions of a Union Buster Video on YouTube

Review: Power-point on union membership

Thanksgiving Break Nov. 26-29

Week 14: U.S. Public Policy and the Future of Work (Nov. 30-Dec. 6).

Read:

Sweet and Meiskins, Chapter 8.

Watch the following videos:

(1) Paul Krugman, May 17, 2012, “End This Depression Now: Paul Krugman Urges Public Spending, Not Deficit Hysteria,” on *Democracy Now*.

(2) Adrienne Eaton, Professor, Labor Studies Department, Rutgers, Unions and Informal Work

(3) Dr. Teresa Boyer, Executive Director, Center for Women and Work, Rutgers, on Work and Family policy

Due in Week 14: Participate in Forum 6

Take Online Quiz on Unit III: Sat.-Sun. Dec. 5-6

Week 15 and Final Exam Period: WRAP UP: Dec. 7-16

A short take home final will be distributed Dec. 7. It is due Sun. Dec. 13 at 11:59pm

Appendix:

Learning Objectives for this course follow. The student is able to:

Core Curriculum: SCL

- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems and other forms of social organization. (Goal SCL-1).

School of Management and Labor Relations:

- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation. (Goal IV)
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance. (Goal VI)

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations. (Goal 1).
- Apply those concepts, and substantive institutional knowledge, to understanding contemporary developments related to work. (Goal 2).

Additional course objective from the instructors:

- Students will be able to apply facts and concepts from the course to argue convincingly against common contemporary fallacies related to employment relations.

Disability

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.