



## School of Management and Labor Relations

### INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

Spring 2023

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Online

## Course Syllabus

*Draft subject to change- Updated January 23, 2023*

**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. However, in this section, you will then have a CHOICE as to do one of two things:*

1) A **synchronous (live at a particular time)** team-based collective bargaining exercise that requires planning with the team and then bargaining with the opposing union or management team online. I highly recommend this option. But if your internet connection is not fast and reliable or if you live in a different time zone, this probably won't work out well. **You must have a strong internet connection and a good personal computer with a microphone and camera to bargain online – a cell phone, Chromebook, or working in a student computing center won't be sufficient. See Appendix "A" (Below) for the dates.**

2) An individual paper of about five pages involving visiting one of a number of **labor-related museums** (see Appendix "B" below). A paper might be a better choice if your life makes a group activity difficult or if you do not have a strong internet connection.

**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.

**Grades:**

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

- Introductory exercises (Personal information/choice of exercise; pre-test participation) (3%)
- Threaded Discussions (Forums) (40%)
- Rights check and union knowledge check at 1% each (2%)
- Bargaining exercise or museum paper (10%)
- 3 Quizzes at 12% each (36%)
- Short take-home final (9%)

**Text:** Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*. **4th Edition**. Sage, 2021. (Please note: the second and third editions are similar to the 4<sup>th</sup>; although latter editions are more up to date. The first is very different – do not use it).

## Unit I. The Situation Working People Face Today (Jan 17 – Feb. 19)

### Week 1: Introduction (Jan. 17-22)

- Explore what the course is about and make note of what is required of you.
- Post information about whether/when you will do the bargaining exercise or the paper (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 (Jan. 23-29)

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

**Read:**

- Heather Long, "The Economy Isn't Going Back to Feb. 2020. Fundamental Shifts Have Occurred." *Washington Post*, June 21, 2021.

Start to think about longer-term changes in the economy

**Watch:**

- NBC News, "What Does the Future of Work Look Like in a Post-COVID-19 World Look Like?" May 22, 2020.
- 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 once by Sunday evening (29<sup>th</sup>), and then another two times by next Sunday evening (5<sup>th</sup>). Both quantity and quality count, so you may want to post beyond this minimum. (Check Rubric)

### Week 3: Corporations & Work in the "New Economy" (Jan.30- Feb.5)

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

**Read:**

- Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 2
- 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:**

- Parts 1 and 2 of *The Corporation*.
- 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 Sunday evening. Both quantity and quality count, so you may want to post beyond this minimum. You cannot post after 11:59 pm on Sunday. No exceptions.

**Week 4: Social Class in the U.S. (February 6-February 12)**

- 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:

- the Overview article, ‘Shadowy Lines That Still Divide’
- Tamar Lewin “Up from the Holler” Click on Day 3
- David Leonhardt “The College Dropout Boom” Click on Day 5
- at least two other articles/blogs from the site.
- Also read Bob Herbert’s Op. Ed. ‘Mobility Myth’ click under ‘Readers Opinions’

**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> [Links to an external site.](#) The rest is optional viewing.

**Read:**

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

**Due in week 4 – Participate in Forum 2.** The first response is due Thursday evening before 11:59pm. The second before Sunday evening at the same time. The forum closes and you cannot participate after Sunday evening.

### Week 5: Economic Inequality Today (February 13-February 19)

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

#### Read:

- 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
- Fresh Proof That Strong Unions Help Reduce Income Inequality

#### Watch:

- Richard Wilkinson's, TED Talk, on the impact of inequality globally
  - Robert Reich, "How Corporations Crush the Working Class"
- \* **Take Online Quiz on Unit 1: Sat. February 18 or Sun. February 19**

## Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights (February 20 – March 26)

### Week 6: Employment Rights in the U.S. (February 20-February 26)

- 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

**First: Take the rights check.** This is a quiz that you can take and retake over the course of the week until you get a perfect score and the full number of points (10). After the week is over, the rights check ends – so be sure to do it this week.

#### Read:

- Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 4
- Steven Greenhouse, Low-Wage Workers are Often Cheated. Study Says, September 1, 2009, *New York Times*.
- Josh Edelson, "Most Americans Can Be Fired for No Reason at Any Time, But a New Law in New York Could Change That," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, June 21, 2021.
- 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:**

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

**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 other posts and respond to other students comments.**

**Week 7: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality: (February 27-March 5)**

- 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.

**Watch:**

- One is an excerpt from the movie, *At the River I Stand*, about the Memphis Garbage workers strike and Dr. Martin Luther King
- The second is a YouTube video that continues the story of the Memphis garbage strike.
- 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:** 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 other posts and respond to other students comments.

**Week 8: The New Immigration (March 6-March 10, Short Week)**

- Effects of immigration on wages and work
- Public policy debates regarding immigration policy for the U.S.

**Read:**

- *New York Times*, 1/27/2007, "Study of Immigrants Links Lighter Skin and Higher Income
- 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.

**Watch:**

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

Due in Week 8: Participate in Forum 4 – there are two parts. The first is due by Thursday (March 9) at 11:59 pm. The second is due at the same time on Monday, March 20 (after spring break). After that, you cannot participate in Forum 4.

- » **Spring Break March 11-19**

**Week 9: Gender, Work, and Family (March 20-March 26)**

- 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
- *Washington Post*, "Nearly 40 Percent of Mothers Are Now the Family Breadwinners Report Says," 5/28/2013.
- \* **Take Online Quiz on Unit II: Saturday, March 25 or Sunday, March 26**

**Unit III Improving Working People's Lives (March 27 – April 30)****Week 10 The Legacy: The New Deal & Labor (March 27-April 2)**

- 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:**

- Professor Paula Voos, Speaking about the New Deal, WWII and Labor (3 sections)
- 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.
- Optional: A short You-Tube video regarding the early 1930s and the San Francisco General Strike:

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

**Those participating in the bargaining exercise should read the materials for the exercise starting this week.**

**Due week 10:** 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 11: Unions Today in the U.S., Part 1 (April 3-April 9)**

- 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 2020."
- Optional: "Learn about Unions" on the AFL-CIO website. This site contains a lot of information from an obviously pro-union perspective.

#### **Watch:**

- Reverend Jim Wallis, Sojourners, Testifying on unions and economic inequality, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.
- Professor Paula Voos, Rutgers, Testifying about the economic effects of unions, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.
- Professor Carla Katz, Rutgers, "Unions and Individual Voice"

#### **Due in week 11:**

- Nothing for those who chose to write a paper
- Collective Bargaining Group I meet on the same day they bargain to discuss the case & plan strategy. This is a planning session. You only need to read the case and the secret information before attending.

### **Week 12: Unions Today Part 2: Union Organizing & Membership (April 10-April 16)**

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

**First: Take the union knowledge check. This is a quiz that you can take and retake over the course of the week until you get a perfect score and the full number of points (10).**



**Read:**

- “The Fight for \$15,” from Steven Greenhouse, Beaten Down, Worked Up. NY: Knopf, 2019, pp. 232-248
- Karen Weise and Michael Corkery, “Amazon Workers Vote Down Union Drive at Alabama Warehouse,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2021.

**Watch:** Q&A videos on union organizing:

- 3 Videos, Professor Carla Katz
- Watch for an example of how employers combat union organizing campaigns: Target anti-union employee orientation video on YouTube

**Optional videos:**

Watch for an understanding of where contemporary unions are strong and where they are struggling, and why:

- Professor Jeff Keefe on unions in the public sector and among low-wage service workers
- Two videos on unions today by Professor Adrienne Eaton. One is about the challenges posed by contingent and non-standard work. The other is about unions among athletes, actors, professors, and other “stars.”

**Due in Week 12:**

- Union Knowledge Check
- Group I Bargaining strategy due Thursday, April 13)
- Collective Bargaining Group II meet on the same day they bargain to discuss the case & plan strategy. This is a planning session. You only need to read the case and the secret information before attending.

**Week 13: Bargaining or Paper (April 17- April 23)**

- Bargaining between union and management teams occurs this week
- Those writing a paper have a chance to finish it up this week.

No Additional Reading or assignments this week.

**Group II Bargaining strategy due Thursday, April 20****Week 14: Public Policy and the Future of Work (April 24- April 30)****Read:**

- Sweet and Meiskins, Chapter 8
- Nitasha Tiku, “Google Workers Launch Unconventional Union with help of the Communication Workers of America,” Jan. 4, 2021, *Washington Post*.

**Watch:**

- Paul Krugman, May 17, 2012, "End This Depression Now: Paul Krugman Urges Public Spending, Not Deficit Hysteria," on *Democracy Now*.
- Adrienne Eaton, Professor, Labor Studies Department, Rutgers, Unions and Informal Work
- Dr. Teresa Boyer, Executive Director, Center for Women and Work, Rutgers, on Work and Family Policy

**Due in Week 14:**

- Participate in an Extra Credit Forum (optional)
- The Museum paper is due Tuesday at 11:59 pm for those who chose that.
- Collective Bargaining Agreement for those who selected that option.
- Take Online Quiz on Unit III: Saturday, April 29, or Sunday, April 30

**Week 15 and Final Exam Period: WRAP UP:**

- \* A short take-home final will be distributed Monday, May 1. It is due Sun. May 7 at 11:59 pm.

**Due in Week 15:**

- Museum paper to be submitted by Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, by 11:59 pm.

## Appendix "A"

A **synchronous (live at a particular time)** team-based collective bargaining exercise that requires planning with the team and then bargaining with the opposing union or management team online. I highly recommend this option. But if your internet connection is not fast and reliable or if you live in a different time zone, this probably won't work out well. **You must have a strong internet connection and a good personal computer with a microphone and camera to bargain online – a cell phone, Chromebook, or working in a student computing center won't be sufficient.**

Meet **ONLINE** Thursday, April 6; Bargain Thursday, April 20 -- both from 7:00-10:00 p.m.

Meet **ONLINE** Sat. April 15; Bargain Sat. April 29 - both from 9:00 am-12:00 noon.

## Appendix "B"

### Labor-related Museum Visit and Paper.

- Visit one of the following locations listed below. **Take a picture of yourself at the location or scanned program from the location to document you were physically there. You will upload this separately.**
- Write a five-page (double-spaced) paper in which you describe your experience and the content of the museum exhibit. In your essay, address some of the following questions:

Why did you choose to visit that place?

What did you learn from your visit?

What did you like most about the museum?

What did you like most about the exhibits? What would you have changed if you could?

How is the location connected to the course or a specific part of the course?

How did your knowledge and background of labor studies change the lens in which you viewed the exhibits?

What readings from this course were helpful for viewing and understanding the exhibits?

Would you recommend visiting to other students in the class? Why or why not?

Please feel free to comment on other aspects of the visit that may not be addressed in the above questions.

#### **Locations to visit (choose any one):**

1. The Tenement Museum in NYC. Go to <http://www.tenement.org/>(Links to an external site.) [Links to an external site.](#) for information. There are a variety of tours and you may need to sign up in advance.
2. The American Labor Museum at the Botto House in Patterson, NJ. Go to <http://www.labormuseum.net/>(Links to an external site.) [Links to an external site.](#) for information. There are also good walking tours in Patterson.
3. Ellis Island. Go to [http://www.ellisland.org/genealogy/ellis\\_island\\_visiting.asp](http://www.ellisland.org/genealogy/ellis_island_visiting.asp)(Links to an external site.) [Links to an external site.](#) for information.
4. Roebing Museum in Burlington County -- <http://roebingmuseum.org/>(Links to an external site.) [Links to an external site.](#) If you go to this one be sure to also investigate the big strikes that occurred in this company town.
5. Seabrook Museum -- in far South Jersey near Vineland - <http://www.seabrookeducation.org/>(Links to an external site.) [Links to an external site.](#)

- [site](#). The history of Seabrook includes a united black/white Communist-influenced 1934 strike, battles with the Klan, the owner's use of every group possible to keep down labor costs (Japanese internees, Estonian refugees, German POWs, etc.).
6. Philadelphia History Museum (formerly the Atwater-Kent) in downtown Philly - <http://www.philadelphiahistory.org/>(Links to an external site.) Links to an external site. -- A general history museum, but includes ethnic and worker-related exhibits. They have a lot of the material objects (most not displayed) from the late great Balch Ethnic Institute and some suggested walking tours of city neighborhoods. Visit a part of the museum related to labor studies. (This museum may be closed... see #8 and #9 for other museums close to Philadelphia).
  7. Nearer to the Lehigh Valley Area, Pennsylvania, the Bethlehem Steel Stacks, in Pennsylvania, runs tours. If you do this one, also investigate the history of the union there. Go to <http://www.historicbethlehem.org/>(Links to an external site.) Links to an external site. for information.
  8. Camden Shipyard Maritime Museum is more promising: <https://www.camdenshipyardmuseum.org/exhibits>(Links to an external site.) Links to an external site.. The Camden museum seems to have limited hours, but it should be open (it is a relatively new museum): <https://www.camdenshipyardmuseum.org/exhibits> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.
  9. (Links to an external site.) Links to an external site.The African American Museum in Philadelphia also has a permanent exhibit on African Americans in Philadelphia from 1776-1876, which would of course touch on the themes of race, civil rights, and social class: <https://www.aampmuseum.org/current-exhibitions.html>