INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Labor Studies 100 online

Fall 2012
Professors Carla Katz and Paula Voos

Contact information for Professor Voos:
Office phone: 848-932-1748. Cell phone: 732-261-5958. She is available in her office (140 Labor Education Center) most mornings but its best to call to be sure. Professor Voos prefers to answer substantive questions by phone, rather than email; her email is pbvoos@work.rutgers.edu

Contact information for Professor Katz: c Katz@work.rutgers.edu

This is an online course that is largely asynchronous. But you do need to be able to schedule an online activity on the following days/times, so plan your schedule accordingly:

- Sunday September 23 from 1:00-3:00 p.m., or 3:00-5:00 p.m., or 6:00-8:00 p.m. or 8:00-10:00 p.m. to negotiate the syllabus – this is an online exercise designed to make you familiar with how the negotiating room virtual reality software works and to insure you have suitable computer equipment for the bargaining exercise that takes place later in the course. You will need to give us a first and second choice of times on this day.

- Sat. Dec. 1 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. or
  Sun. Dec. 2 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. or
  Sun. Dec. 2 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
  You will need to give us a first and second choice in order to participate in the bargaining exercise online.

Schedule: The weeks in the course begin on Monday and end on Sunday evening at 11 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 course addresses the Social Analysis (SCL) Learning Objectives of SAS:
  h. Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.
  m. Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
  n. Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations.
Your progress toward understanding how work, workers, and forms of worker organization fit into these social science goals will be assessed through before/after test items and rubrics applied to written assignments.

Text: Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy. 2nd Edition. Sage, 2013. (Please note: the second edition of this book is quite different from the first – it has a new chapter and other chapters have been renumbered).
Equipment needed: Headset with a microphone (USB connected works best); personal computer with broadband connection. (Otherwise you will use campus computing centers… but here you will still need the headset).

Additional reading, viewing and listening materials are available online.

Evaluation (Subject to change via a collective negotiations exercise):
For purposes of grading, there are five components of the course:
• 3 Threaded Discussions (Forums) at 12% each (36%)
• Op. Ed. Writing assignment (12%)
• Bargaining exercise (12%)
• 3 Quizzes at 12% each (36%)
• Introductory exercises (Personal information sheet; pre-test participation; negotiate the syllabus exercise participation) (4%)

Unit I. The Situation Working People Face Today (Sept. 10 – Oct. 7)

Week 1: Introduction (Sept. 4-9)
• Explore what the course is about and make note of what is required of you.
• Learn how to use Pearson E-college and locate readings & other online resources. There are excellent instructional videos online about the use of the e-college system.
• Post information about yourself for the instructor and other students you will be working with (worth 1% of your grade)
• 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 1% of your grade)

Assignment for this week: Interview at least one parent or grandparent about your family’s work history (preferably more).

Week 2: Work and Our Lives (Sept. 10-16)
• You and your family’s history of work
• Intergenerational economic mobility and immobility
• Intergenerational transmission of resources (types of economic and social capital)

Read: Sweet & Meskins, Chapter 1 and
Paul Krugman, Chapter 1, End This Depression Now. New York: WW Norton, 2012.

Watch: Richard Florida interview on Big Think:
http://bigthink.com/ideas/18241

Due week 2: Participate in Forum 1: You need to post at least once by Thursday evening, and then a second time by Sunday evening.
Week 3: Corporations & Work in the “New Economy” (Sept. 17-23)

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

Read: Sweet & Meskins, Chapter 2, and


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

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

Due in Week 3: Participate in “negotiate the syllabus exercise” on Sunday September 23 from 1:00-2:00p.m., or 7:00-8:00 p.m., or 8:00-9:00 p.m. or 9:00—10:00 p.m online. Instructions will be sent in the weekly message for this week.

Week 4: Social Class in the U.S. (September 24-30)

- 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,
(2) Tamar Lewin “Up from the Holler” and
(3) David Leonhardt “The College Dropout Boom” and
(4) at least two other articles/blogs from the site.
(5) Also read Bob Herbert’s op. ed. linked to the site.
(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.

Due in week 4 – nothing. However, you should start working on the assignment that is due on Thursday next week.

Assignment: Write a 500 word Op. ed. on social class and inequality.

An Op-Ed is an opinion piece (named such because it is usually placed "opposite the editorials" in a publication) designed to offer an alternate position to what the media provides. Typically, an op-ed is written by an expert in a subject area or in industry. Generally, the goal of an op-ed is to educate the public on an issue. While the op-ed is largely an "opinion" piece, it must be based in fact and should be persuasive in style rather than a simple report. Take the time to edit, reedit and then reedit again. A clean, concise and compelling op-ed is your goal.

In the Op-Ed, discuss your experience and your family's experience with social class and economic inequality and whether or not those experiences reinforce the assertion that over the past few decades, social mobility is stagnating and economic inequality is increasing in the United States.

Week 5: Economic Inequality Today (October 1-7)

- Class, race, and gender inequality
- Does the U.S. have a power pyramid?
- Health and other effects of income inequality

Read:

Sweet & Meskins, Chapter 3, and


Watch: Professor Jeff Keefe, LSER Department, Rutgers, speaking about economic inequality. There are two videos.


Assignment: Write a 500 word Op. ed. on social class and inequality.

In the Op-Ed, discuss your experience and your family's experience with social class and economic inequality and whether or not those experiences reinforce the assertion that over the past few decades, social mobility is stagnating and economic inequality is increasing in the United States.

Take Online Quiz on Unit 1: Sunday October 7 or Monday October 8
Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights (October 8 – November 4)

Week 6: Employment Rights in the U.S. (October 8-14)
- 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 & Meskins, Chapt. 4

Watch: Videos on Employment at Will and the common law exceptions from Professor Carla Katz

Due Week 6: Take the survey about employment rights. Then participate in the forum on employment rights. At a minimum, the first comment is due by Thursday and the second by Sunday.

Week 7: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality: (October 15-21)
- 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.”
pp. 107-112,
pp. 158-164
pp. 192-197
pp. 202-206

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.

**Due week 7. Choose and inform us of your choice:** Which topic to investigate more deeply, either (1) Immigration or (2) Gender, Work and Family. You will be assigned an interest organization that takes policy positions in the area you select. You will be required to post two sets of comments. One advocates policies from the viewpoint of the assigned organization (due on Thurs). The other asks for their own opinions to proposals both from their organization and those of other organizations (by Sunday).

**Week 8: The New Immigration (October 22-28)**

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

Read:


An optional reading by Ray Marshall is also available online for those participating in the Immigration Forum.

Watch: Two videos

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

**Due week 8: Forum 3 (for those choosing immigration).**

**Week 9: Gender, Work and Family (October 29 – November 4)**

- Women’s participation in the paid labor force
- Gender inequalities and discrimination
- Work/family policies and the law
Read: Sweet and Meskins, Chapters 5 and 6

Due week 9: Forum 3 (for those choosing gender, work & family)

Take Online Quiz on Unit II: Sunday November 4 or Monday November 5

Unit III Improving Working People’s Lives (November 5 – December 9)

Week 10: The Legacy: The New Deal and Labor (November 5-11)
- 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:

Watch: Various videos.

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

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

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

(4) 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.

Due in week 10: Nothing

- What do unions do?
- Collective bargaining
- Strikes and other mobilization actions
- Are unions good or bad for the economy?
- Union membership trends over time

Read: BLS Union Members 2011.
AFL-CIO Fact Sheets: Unions 101; Union Advantage by the Numbers


Watch:

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

(2) Professor Jeff Keefe

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

(4) Carla Katz, Big Think Interview: http://bigthink.com/ideas/2676

Due week 11: Organization of students for collective bargaining exercise will begin this week. You will be assigned a role and begin to have access to background materials you need to read for the exercise. You will also choose a day/time for bargaining.

Sat. Dec. 1 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. or
Sun. Dec. 2 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. or
Sun. Dec. 2 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Week 12: Continue preparation for bargaining (November 19-25)

Read: Materials for the bargaining exercise posted online. Interact with others in your group.


• What is legally-protected concerted activity
• Organizing the unorganized today
• Is reform of labor law needed?

Read:


Watch:

(1) Two videos on unions today by Professor Adrienne Eaton

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

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

Due in Week 13: Bargaining preparation by your team due on Thurs (Initial proposals; bottom line, etc.). Contract bargaining with your team in the time you are assigned (Saturday or Sunday).

Week 14: Public Policy and the Future of Work (December 3 – 9)

Read:

Sweet and Meiskins, Chapter 8.

Watch the following videos:


(2) Adrienne Eaton, Professor, Unions and Informal Work

(3) Dr. Teresa Boyer, Executive Director, on Work and Family policy

(4) Sattik Deb, Director of Student Services, Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department “How you can get involved”

Due in week 14: Take Online Quiz on Unit III: Sunday December 9 or Monday December 10