INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY 37:575:100:02
SPRING 2013

Instructor: Carla A. Katz
Monday 12 noon to 1:20 p.m. and Thursday 12 noon to 1:20 p.m.
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Office Hours by appointment.

Course Overview: The class is designed to give you an overview of various aspects of
labor and employment relations, including the perspective of working people and their
labor organizations. We will also study the changing nature of work, workers and
workers’ institutions and organizations; the impact of technological change, the economic
cycle, social class, immigration, race, ethnicity and gender; the role of government in
labor policy; the history of unions, the role of unions in politics and challenges the labor
movement faces today; and collective bargaining and workers rights issues.

Class will include lectures, small group discussions, simulations, in-class assignments,
and media presentations. Students are encouraged to freely express their views. Respect
for the appreciation of different viewpoints will be a guiding principle in this class.

Text: Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and

All readings, except for the text, are available on Rutgers Sakai, which you may access at
http://sakai.rutgers.edu. To log on, enter your Rutgers ID and password in the upper right
hand corner. Click on the tab: 37:575:100:03 Click on modules on the menu on the left
hand side of the page.

The syllabus, schedule and assignments are subject to change as the course evolves.

Course Requirements

1. Read entire syllabus and make sure you understand it. This is your contract with the
instructor.

2. Be prepared for class. Always read the material assigned for a class before the class.
Bring the material to class with you in case you need to refer to it (for instance, for an
open-book quiz or for a discussion). Check your email regularly for class
announcements.

3. Be present and be on time. Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect
to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website
https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An
email is automatically sent to me. Please note: My attendance policy is that students
begin with an “A” for attendance However, the grade for attendance will decline each
time a student is absent, late, or leaves early. If you are late or leave early, you will be
charged with ½ class absence. If you have a legitimate reason for your absence, lateness
or need to leave early, it must be provided to me in writing in advance or immediately
after the occurrence. Even excused absences must be reported via the University absence
reporting website indicated above.

4. Participate in discussions and group activities. Students will be divided into groups
for breakout sessions and projects. The teaching assistants will supervise the groups.
Your participation in these group situations goes to your participation grade. Explain
your views. Ask questions. Listen – don’t monopolize the discussion or ignore other
views. Do your share of the work in simulations and in-class group activities. Texting,
talking on your phone, FB and Twitter are prohibited in class (unless part of the group
activity).

5. Take careful lecture notes. Copies of any power points will be posted on Sakai. You
should obtain lecture notes from another student if you miss a class. These are not
provided by the instructor or by teaching assistants.

6. Academic Integrity: Academic integrity requires that all academic work be the
product of an identified individual or individuals. Join efforts are legitimate only when
the assistance of others is explicitly acknowledged and permitted by the assignment.
Ethical conduct is the obligation of every member of the university community, and
breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses. Students must assume
responsibility for maintaining honesty in all work submitted for credit and in any other
work designated by the instructor of this course. Students are also expected to report
incidents of academic dishonesty to the instructor or dean of the instructional unit.

Evaluation
For purposes of grading, there are four components of the course:

- Family Interview Exercise (5%)
- Bargaining exercise (10%)
- Class preparation, attendance and participation (20%)
- Written OPED assignment (15%)
- Exams (50%):
  - There will be two (2) exams that are predominantly “objective” – a combination
    of short-answer, objective, and short essay items given in class. Both closed
    book but you may bring one note card or sheet of paper no larger than 4x6 inches
    with notes on it. (25%). The second exam will be similar in nature to the first
    exam but cover material since the first exam. (25%)

Attendance Grade: You start with 100 points and points will be deducted for each class
missed.
**Learning Objectives:** This is a social science course; the following SAS learning objectives are particularly relevant:

**h. Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.** One learning objective involves understanding how U.S. workers have reacted to the changing nature of work, to their class position in American society, and to particular contingencies like immigration. You will gain an overview of the history of the American labor movement, how it fits into a global context, and how race, ethnicity and gender affect workers. You will demonstrate knowledge through writing assignments and examinations.

**m. Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.** A second objective involves understanding theories regarding the relationship between economic organization (e.g., the extent of economic markets and corporate structures) and the type of worker organization and public policy responses that are needed to improve the lives of workers. You will demonstrate this knowledge through writing assignments and examinations.

**n. Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations.** A third objective will be for you to apply these theories to current policy debates. You will demonstrate this through participation in class debates and through participation in a collective bargaining exercise based on current situations.

**Collective Bargaining Exercise:** The entire class will participate in a collective bargaining game spanning a couple of weeks. Students will be assigned to union team or to a management team and will be required to negotiate a contract by a set date and time. You will be graded as a team on this exercise.

**Written Assignment--Due in Class on October 31, 2012**
Write a 500-word Op-Ed piece 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 expert in a subject area or industry writes an Op-Ed. Generally, the goal of the 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, you should 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.
I. JANUARY 24, 2013: Introduction to the Class and Course Requirements

- Review Syllabus and discuss expectations. Assignment of groups
- What is Labor Studies and why is it important?
- Discussion of work, family, how job and income security affect workers and their families. Relate the Great Depression and decline of manufacturing in the late 1970’s/early 1980s to the recession and globalization today
- Introductory analysis of the jobs that you have held and those of your close friends or family.

**Week One Assignment:**

- Family Member Interview: Interview at least one family member and come to the next class prepared to discuss your family’s economic history over the past three generations, including: occupations they had, how did they get their jobs and how long did they keep them, did they experience periods of unemployment, has your family wealth increased or decreased over the generations, to what factors does your family attribute their financial or professional success (eg. talent, ambition, persistence, connections, education, mentors…) how you would feel about following in your parents’ work path. Bring your written notes to hand in.

- Read this syllabus thoroughly. Learn how to use Sakai and locate readings.
- Complete all Week 2 readings.

II. JANUARY 28, 2013--FAMILY HISTORY

- Group discussion of family histories related to class and social inequality

III. JANUARY 31, 2013--Class, Income and Social Mobility

Class, family and the centrality of work: What does it mean to say we are in a ‘new economy’; Young workers, the new economy and the economic recession

**READINGS:** Sweet and Meiksins, Chapter 1


Class, family and the centrality of work: What does it mean to say we are in a ‘new economy’; Young workers, the new economy and the economic recession
IV. FEBRUARY 4, 2013--Class, Income and Social Mobility

READINGS: Sweet and Meiksins, Chapter 3


V. FEBRUARY 7, 2013-- Power Dynamics, the New Economy and the Future of Work

FILM: “The Big One”, Directed by Michael Moore

READINGS:


VI. FEBRUARY 11, 2103--Power Dynamics, the New Economy and the Future of Work

READINGS:

Sweet and Meiksins, Chapter 2


GROUP BREAKOUT DISCUSSION: Based on the readings and class materials discussed thus far, discuss and defend your view of class in America. Is our system a “power pyramid” as suggested by G.W. Domhoff or is our system based on egalitarian principles where everyone has the equal chance at making it big? Be prepared to support your argument based on facts and the readings.

VII. FEBRUARY 14, 2013—Power Dynamics, the New Economy and the Future of Work

VIII. FEBRUARY 18, 2013--Labor’s History of Collective Action/ Organizing the Unorganized

READINGS:


“The Risk of Dismissal for Union Organizing and the Need to Modify the Process”, Testimony by Dean Baker, Co-Director, Center for Economic and Policy Research.

AFL-CIO Fact Sheets: Unions 101; Union Advantage by the Numbers
IX. FEBRUARY 21, 2013: Organizing the Unorganized

FILM: BREAD AND ROSES
READINGS:


X. FEBRUARY 25, 2013: Employment Rights in the U.S.

DISCUSSION: Employment at-will; exceptions to the doctrine; the NLRA and state bargaining laws: the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

READINGS:
Sweet and Meiksins, Chapter 4


XI. FEBRUARY 28, 2013: Employment Rights in the U.S. and the NLRA

READINGS:
Basic Guide to the National Labor Relations Act: General Principles of Law Under the Statute and Procedures of the National Labor Relations Board.

Sloan Work and Family Research Network, Selected U.S. Labor Laws and Regulations Timeline, July 2004

PowerPoint on OSHA and FLSA

XII: March 4, 2013—MIDTERM EXAMINATION

XIII. MARCH 7, 2013: Unions and Collective Bargaining Today

DISCUSSION: What unions do, types of unions; other elements in the labor movement; process of collective bargaining; public sector vs. private sector unions


XIV. MARCH 11, 2013: Unions and Collective Bargaining

READINGS:

DISCUSSION: Why have public worker unions and members been under siege across the country in the past couple of years? In what ways has the collective bargaining process for public workers suffered as a result of legislative changes being made in numerous states, including New Jersey?

XV. MARCH 14, 2013—Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality

DISCUSSION: Race, ethnicity and inequality in the workplace

FILM: “At the River I Stand” (1993 documentary on Martin Luther King and 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike)

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

SPRING BREAK: MARCH 18 AND MARCH 21, 2013

XVI. MARCH 25, 2013—Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality

Charlie LeDuff “At a Slaughterhouse Some Things Never Die” (pp. 96-114)
Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”

Upton Sinclair, “The Jungle”, Chapter #3


GROUP BREAKOUT DISCUSSION: Read Upton Sinclair's The Jungle and the article by Charlie LeDuff entitled "At the Slaughterhouse Some Things Never Die. Compare the situation for meat workers now and when Sinclair's novel was published. How are they similar? How are they different? Has the situation improved? Why or why not? Would you want to work in a meat packing plant or slaughterhouse? Why or why not?

XVII. MARCH 28 2013—Work and Gender

DISCUSSION: Gendered Work and Inequality and the gender pay gap

READINGS: Sweet and Meiksins, Chapter 6.
GROUP BREAKOUT DISCUSSION: Based upon reading sections of “Nickel and Dimed” and other material, do you think Ehrenreich’s experiment was a fair representation of the life of a low-wage worker in America? Ehrenreich asserts that her experience would have been radically different had she been a person of color or a single parent. Do you agree? Ehrenreich found that some low-wage workers are reluctant to form labor organizations. Discuss.

XVIII. APRIL 1, 2013—Collective Bargaining Exercise #1

XIV. APRIL 4—Work and Family

DISCUSSION: Challenges of integrating work and life; Work hours and ‘overwork’; Family leave; Role of gender and socio-economic class

READINGS: Sweet and Meiksins, Chapter 5


Sarah Fass, “Paid Leave in the States”

XV. APRIL 8, 2013—Work and Family continued

XVI. APRIL 11, 2013—Immigration Old and New

DISCUSSION: Is immigration good for the American economy and workers?

READINGS:


XXVII. APRIL 15, 2013— Immigration Old and New

FILM
READINGS:


XXVIII. APRIL 18, 2013---Collective Bargaining Simulation Prep

XXIII. APRIL 22—Collective Bargaining Simulation

XXIV. APRIL 25—Collective Bargaining Simulation (Continued)

XXV. APRIL 29—Collective Bargaining Simulation (Final); Final Exam Review

XXV. MAY 6, 2013---FINAL EXAMINATION