Introduction to Labor Studies and Employment Relations
Rutgers University, School of Management and Labor Relations
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Spring 2013

Instructor: Professor Francis Ryan
Class Time and Place: Monday 12 Noon-3 pm Livingston Residence Hall 110 A
Office Location: Labor Center Building 114
Office Hours: Wednesday 1-2; Thursday 2-4, and by appointment.
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Course Overview: This course gives a basic introduction to the field of Labor Studies and Employment Relations, focusing on an interdisciplinary approach to understanding work in a national perspective. Incorporating sociology, labor and working class history, literature, art, media studies and employment relations, we will analyze the ways that work has evolved from the end of the Civil War into the twenty-first century. In this course, we will also focus on the experiences and perspectives of working people and their institutions, particularly unions and other forms of emerging community organizations that address workplace issues.

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 rubrics applied to written assignments and items on exams.

Required Book. The following required book is available for purchase at the Rutgers University Bookstore, operated by Barnes and Noble. It may also be purchased online.


All readings, except for the text, are available on Rutgers Sakai, which you may access at http://sakai.rutgers.edu

Once you are registered for the course, you will be granted access to the site. It is your responsibility to access course materials, including the reading assignments. Here is how you access Sakai:
1. Go to http://sakai.rutgers.edu
2. Enter your Rutgers NetID and password at the top right corner
3. Click tab (get course number)
4. Please note: You will need Adobe Acrobat or a similar program to download and print out material that has been posted on Sakai.

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

Course Requirements

Class attendance: You are expected to attend each class session, and to be on time. An attendance sheet will be passed out during each class; it is your responsibility to sign the sheet. Be punctual and plan to stay for the entire class. Students who repeatedly arrive late and leave at break will have their grades lowered. If you need to leave early, see me before class; otherwise you are expected to remain until the class is over.

Participation: This class will utilize a variety of formats, with weekly discussion sessions one of the more important of these. You are expected to have completed the readings assigned before coming to class each week and be ready to take an active role in these discussions. Class participation includes active, respectful listening and well as talking. Cell phones and other electronic devises must be turned off during class. This includes laptops. I ask that you do not use any recording devices in this class.

The class may also have periodic, unannounced quizzes based upon assigned readings. These grades will be evaluated as part of the overall participation grade.

Missed Exams: All students are expected to take the scheduled in-class exams (midterm and final) at the designated times.

All writing assignments will be collected at the beginning of class the day they are due. Out of respect to those who meet this expectation, all late papers will be subject to downgrading. Unless otherwise specified, it is expected that hardcopies of the paper be handed in, rather than by email attachment.

Disability Statement: This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirement for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of disability should refer to the Rutgers Office of Disability Services and then contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible.

Statement on Academic Freedom: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. This class will introduce an array of
sometimes conflicting ideas and interpretations of U.S. history, and all who partake in the course should feel encouraged to express their views in an open, civic forum.

**Evaluation**

Bargaining Exercise (10%)
Class Participation, attendance and quizzes (20%)
Written Assignment (20%) Due in class October 8
Midterm Exam (20%)
Final Exam (30%)

**Weekly Class Summaries:**

**Week 1, January 28: Introduction to the Course and Course Requirements**

In this first meeting, we will have a chance to introduce ourselves, and to get a sense of what this semester's class will entail. We will discuss our past experiences as workers, and talk about our hopes for satisfying employment. What is a good job? What types of issues currently center on work in America today? How does labor studies, as field, contribute to and help us understand these issues?

Film: *I Love Lucy*, “Job Switching.” (1952)

**Week 2, February 4: Exploring American Working Life: The “Old Economy” and Industrialism.**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 1, Mapping the Contours of Work.

In Class reading: Walt Whitman, *Manhatta*.


**Week 3, February 11: Class Politics in the United States**


In-class Presentation: Bruce Springsteen: Finding the New Jersey experience in Working Class Culture.
Week 4, February 18: Income and Social Mobility

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 2, New Products, New Ways of Working and the New Economy, Chapter 3, Economic Inequality, Social Mobility and the New Economy.


Bryant Simon, “Consuming Lattes and Labor, or Working at Starbucks,” International Labor and Working Class History (Fall 2008): 193-211.

Week 5, February 25: Power Dynamics, the New Economy and the Future of Work

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 4, “Whose Jobs Are Secure?”


Francis Ryan, “Journal of a Retail Worker” (1996-97)

Film: The Big One (1997)

Paper Due in Class

Week 6, March 4: Midterm Exam

Week 7, March 11: The Role and Function of Unions

Readings: Stephen A. Sweet and Peter Meiksins, “Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy, Chapter 8, “Reshaping the Contours of the New Economy.”

Michael Yates, Why Unions Matter? pp. 11-82. (Continued on Next Page...)


Week 8, March 18: Spring Break

Week 9, March 25: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 7, “Race, Ethnicity and Work: Legacies of the Past, Problems of the Present.”


Film: *At the River I Stand* (1993)

Week 10, April 1: Work, Gender, Equality

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 6, “Gender Chasms in the New Economy.”


Film: *Bread and Roses* (2000)

Week 11, April 8: Work and Family


Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All,” *The Atlantic*, July/August 2012 85-102

Week 12, April 15: Unions and Collective Bargaining Today


Michael Mauer, *The Union Members’ Complete Guide*, Union Communication Services, Inc. 41-65, 67-85


Week 13, April 22: Collective Bargaining Simulation

Week 14, April 22: Immigration Old and New


Film: *Amreeka* (2009)

Week 15, April 29: Contemporary Debates


Final Class Meeting and Overview: May 6

Final Exam as scheduled by Rutgers during the final exam period.