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

Spring 2013
Professors David Bensman and Paula Voos

Contact information:
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

Professor Bensman: Office phone: 848-932-1745. Cell phone: 973-951-8589. He is available in his office (145 Labor Education Center) by appointment. Email is dhbensman@gmail.com

Teaching aide Michelle Lawrence: Cell phone: 609-752-5272. She prefers to be reached by email mlawrence06@comcast.net

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:

- Saturday Feb 9 or Sunday Feb 10 from either 1:00-3:00 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 at least a first and second choice of times on these two days.

- Sat. April 13 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. or
  Sun. April 14 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. or
  Sun. April 14 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 at one of these days/times.

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.

Equipment needed: Headset with a microphone (USB connected works best); personal computer with broadband connection. (Otherwise you will to 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:
- 4 Threaded Discussions (Forums) at 9% each (36%)
- Op. Ed. Writing assignment (10%)
- Bargaining exercise (12%)
- 3 Quizzes at 12% each (36%)
- Introductory exercises (Personal information sheet; pre-test participation; negotiate the syllabus exercise participation; rights check) (6%)

Unit I. The Situation Working People Face Today (Jan. 22- Feb. 10)

Week 1: Introduction (Jan. 22 - 27)
- 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 (Jan. 28 – Feb. 3)
- 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

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” (Feb 4 – Feb 10)

- 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 either Saturday Feb. 9 or Sunday Feb 10. Instructions will be sent in the weekly message for this week.

Week 4: Social Class in the U.S. (Feb. 11- 17)

- 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 (Feb. 18-24)**

- 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.

**Due Thursday Feb. 21 in Week 5: 500 word Op. Ed. Upload your Op. Ed. into the dropbox as a Microsoft Word attachment.**

**Assignment:** Write a 500 word Op-Ed. on social class and inequality. You can choose any one of the following three suggestions for a central theme (Op-Eds advocate an idea or a public policy).

(a) “Social class is real in the United States.” These Op-Eds are typically built around the personal experience of the author, their family, and/or people they know. See the New York Times website on social class for several examples.
(b) “Widening economic inequality is a big problem in the United States.” This type of Op-Ed needs to be built on facts (the Domhoff reading has many) but must be written in a way that is readable, convincing, and often illustrated by either personal experience or that of others.

(c) “We should reduce economic inequality in the United States by passing the following law.” Here you would need to choose a public policy that would help reduce economic inequality and advocate convincingly for its effectiveness. Explain why it would reduce this current problem.

Take Online Quiz on Unit 1: Sunday Feb. 24 or Monday Feb. 25

Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights (Feb. 25-March 31)

Week 6: Employment Rights in the U.S. (Feb. 25 – March 3)
- 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: (March 4-10)
- 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.

**Week 8: The New Immigration (March 11-15)**

• 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.

**SPRING BREAK March 16 – March 24**
Week 9: Gender, Work and Family (March 25 – March 31)
- 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

Take Online Quiz on Unit II: Sunday March 31 or Monday April 1

Unit III Improving Working People’s Lives (April 1 – May 5)

Week 10: The Legacy: The New Deal and Labor (April 1-7)
- 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: Participate in Forum 3 on New Deal Public Policy. The first post involves research on laws enacted as part of the New Deal and is due on Thursday. Additional posts are due by Sunday evening.

Also happening: 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.

Week 11: Unions Today, Part 1 (April 8-14)
• 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
  Materials for collective bargaining exercise posted online

Watch:
  (1) Reverend Jim Wallis, Sojourners, Testifying on unions and economic inequality, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.
  (2) Professor Jeff Keefe, Rutgers.
  (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 in Week 11: Start interacting with others in your group about your collective bargaining strategy.

Week 12: Continue preparation for bargaining (April 15-21)

Due in Week 12: Bargaining preparation materials from your team due on Thurs (Initial proposals; bottom line, etc.).

Then, engage in bargaining a new contract with your team in the time you are assigned (Saturday or Sunday).

• 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

Week 14: Public Policy and the Future of Work (April 29 – May 5)

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”

Forum 4 Public Policy Debate

Due in week 14: Take Online Quiz on Unit III: Sunday May 5 or Monday May 6