

MLER Introductory Seminar 38:578:500:01

Prof. Charles Heckscher

Spring 2013

Thursdays 7:20-10

Labor Education Center, rm 130 / 131

This syllabus is subject to change!

The seminar will provide a general introduction to the field of employment relations by engaging SMLR faculty in discussions about their current research interests. The goals are:

1. to introduce a range of research topics and approaches in order to get an overview of the field;
2. to introduce MLER students to School faculty so they can make informed choices about future course work and research sponsors;
3. to establish a culture of open discussion and criticism between and among faculty and students.

The course will build on three general points about Industrial Relations, with a focus on America:

- *from the 1930s through the mid-1960s a clear and well-organized system of Industrial Relations was developed;*
- *in the last three decades that system has been thrown into increasing disarray;*
- *various solutions have been proposed, but none has yet proved itself.*

Thus we will try to understand the traditional system, the causes of its decline, and some possible ways of rebuilding or changing it. The course will be organized as follows:

1. (classes 1-3): the basis of the field of Employment Relations, including its major concepts, its relation to Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management, and its historical development.
2. (classes 5-8): the changing environment at work and in the wider society, and how those changes have impacted traditional Employment Relations theory and practice.
3. (classes 10-13): an analysis of union strategies and the future of unionism.

(Class 14 will be a wrap-up.)

In each of these blocks of 3-4 weeks, there will first be several presentations by outside faculty members; at the end we will take a week to discuss among ourselves, without an outside presenter, to make some sense of the different perspectives.

The course is unusual in that it will not be based on any single point of view; you will get a lot of diversity from the different people who speak. It may be confusing, and we will have to work hard to bring it together.

Course requirements:

1. For classes involving “outside” presenters, the assignment will normally consist of reading plus a brief writing assignment. This will usually involve either a short summary of the readings or participation in an online discussion.
2. There will be three in-class quizzes – one at the end of each section, 30-45 minutes long – in which I will ask you to explain a few concepts from the section and explain your views on a key argument.
3. There will be one paper at the end of the course, submitted in two drafts. The first draft will be due on April 5; I will return them by April 12; and the final drafts will be due on April 26.

The paper should take an argument made by one or more of the faculty presenters, assess its validity, and develop your own response to it.

4. There will *not* be a final exam.
5. Grades will be based 30% on the final paper, 30% on the three quizzes, 15% on class participation (including openers), and 25% on your weekly written assignment. Grades will be updated (more or less) weekly in the Post’Em section of Sakai.

Mechanics:

1. My regular office hours will be before class, on Thursday afternoons from 6:30 to 7:15, at the Labor Education Center, room 141. I will also generally be available on Tuesday afternoons. If you cannot meet in those times, talk to me and we can find another time.
2. There is no course text; readings will be posted online from week to week.
3. You may email me at intro@heckscher.us.
4. Please submit all written assignments on the course’s Sakai site.
5. Some norms:
 - a) I expect all assignments to be done, even when you are absent from class. Written assignments submitted late will get credit after assessment of a lateness penalty.
 - b) This course requires regular attendance: there will be considerable open discussion. People who arrive late or leave early are disruptive to the class and their teams. You are expected to attend all classes, to arrive on time, and to stay until the end.

If you must miss a class, arrive late, or leave early, or if you have trouble completing an assignment, let me know as soon as possible, preferably beforehand. I will excuse absences for good cause. I will *not* accept explanations that are not timely.

Tentative schedule:

	Date	Presenter and topic	
1	Jan 24	Introduction	
2	Jan 31	Charles Heckscher (unions: a historical overview)	
3	Feb 7	Paula Voos (Industrial Relations theory)	
4	Feb 14	Our discussion	Quiz
5	Feb 21	Carla Katz or Lisa Schur (law, diversity)	
6	Feb 28	Rebecca Givan (international unions)	
7	Mar 7	Dana Britton (diversity)	
8	Mar 14	Tobias Schulze-Cleven (international unions)	
9	Mar 28	Our discussion	Quiz
10	April 4	Janice Fine (organizing day laborers)	
11	April 11	<i>To be determined</i>	Final paper, first draft
12	Apr 18	<i>To be determined</i>	
13	Apr 25	Jeff Keefe (What drives HRM employment & earnings)	
14	May 2	Mini-quiz Wrapup discussion	Quiz Final paper