INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY 37:575:100:05
Fall 2014

Classroom: Room 211, Murray Hall, College Avenue Campus
Course schedule: Wednesdays, 9:50 a.m. to 12:50 p.m., September 3 – December 10, 2014.
Final Exam: TBD

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Course Overview: The course 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 course. Note: this syllabus may be changed or modified as the course proceeds.

Textbook: Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy, Second Edition. Sage 2013. The text is available at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore on the College Avenue Campus. IMPORTANT! The second edition of this book is quite different from the first – it has a new chapter and other chapters have been renumbered.
All readings, except for the textbook, 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: 37:575:100:05 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. For instance, complete the reading for week 2 before our class meets on September 10, complete the reading for week 3 before we meet on September 17, etc. Bring the reading 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 and I 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. You should obtain lecture notes from another student if you miss a class. These are not provided by the instructor or by the teaching assistants.

6. Academic Integrity: Academic integrity requires that all academic work be the product of an identified individual or individuals. Joint 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. For more information on the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, see http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_2013.pdf

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

- Family Interview Exercise (5%)  
- Class preparation, attendance and participation (20%)
Introduction to Labor Studies and Employment Relations – Fall 2014 Syllabus – Prof. Brucher

- Written Op-Ed assignment (15%)
- Bargaining exercise (10%)
- 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 are 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 exercise spanning a couple of weeks. Students will be assigned to a 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 1, 2014.
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.

Detailed instructions for the Op-Ed and possible topics will be on the assignment sheet and on the course Sakai site.
Unit I: The Situations Working People Face Today, September 3 – October 1, 2014

Adults work. They may work solely in the home, in a family business or on a family farm. Most commonly in the U.S. today, they are paid employees in the market economy. They may be part-time or full-time, secure or temporary, legal employees or paid “under the table.” They may be temporarily unemployed or out of the labor force due to something like illness. They may be managers, professionals, or public servants. But fundamentally, most Americans are employees at some point in their lives.

Work shapes our lives and our conceptions of self, and at the same time it provides us with income. When work is insecure, low-paid, or the employee is not accorded dignity on the job, they and their family suffer. On the other hand, when work is rewarding, it enlarges our capacities, allows us to connect to others, and enables us to contribute to the community at large.

In this unit, you will have a chance to ponder your family's history of work, consider how work (and large organizations) has changed in the last 100 years, and explore the relationship of work and social class. A major topic is the increase in inequality in the United States today.

I. Week 1, September 3, 2014: Introduction and Course Requirements

- Review syllabus and discuss expectations.
- What is Labor Studies and why is it important?
- Discussion of work, the economy, society, and culture.
- Introductory analysis of the jobs that you have held and those of your close friends or family.

Week 1 Assignments:

- Read the syllabus thoroughly. Learn how to use Sakai and locate readings.
- Complete all Week 2 readings.
- Family Member Interview: See Family Interview assignment sheet (also posted on Sakai).

II. Week 2, September 10, 2014: Work and Our Lives

- Lecture and class discussion of readings on inequality and stratification in the U.S.
- Video: Interview with Richard Florida on Big Think.
- Group assignments.
- Group discussions on family history assignment and report back on experiences.

READINGS:

Sweet and Meiksins, Changing Contours of Work, chapter 1

Paul Krugman, End This Depression Now (W.W. Norton, 2012), chapter 1 (Sakai)


Gene Denby, “Young People Want Equality but also Struggle to Discuss Bias,” NPR website, http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2014/05/15/312532393/young-people-want-equality-but-struggle-
Week 2 Assignment:

- Complete all readings and watch the videos for Week 3.

III. Week 3, September 17, 2014: Corporations and Work in the “New Economy”

- Lecture and class discussion on the history of corporations and how they have transformed the organization of work.
- Watch and discuss *The Big One* (directed by Michael Moore, 1997).
- Discussion of what it means to work in the “new economy.”

READINGS and VIDEOS:

Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 2

Peter Capelli et al., excerpts from *Change at Work*, “The Employment System that Died” and “How the World Began to Change” (Sakai)

Watch clips from *The Corporation* available on YouTube:
Part 1: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pin8fbdGV9Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pin8fbdGV9Y)
Part 2: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SuUzmqBewg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SuUzmqBewg)
Part 3: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkvgXc91M5U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkvgXc91M5U)
Part 4: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCGTD5Bn1m0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCGTD5Bn1m0)

Watch the PBS documentary, *A Job At Ford’s*, part of *The Great Depression* series: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjH4pCatx0I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjH4pCatx0I)

Week 3 Assignment:

- Complete all readings and watch the video for Week 4.
- Begin work on Op-Ed writing assignment, due in class on Week 5 (see assignment instructions).

IV. Week 4, September 24, 2014: “Social Class in the United States”

- Lecture and class discussion on the theories, ideologies, structures, and experiences of class in the U.S.
- Review and discussion of data about social mobility and income inequality.
- Group discussions on whether class has faded in American culture.

READINGS and VIDEO:

1. Overview article, "Shadowy Lines That Still Divide" and Interactive Graphic, "A Closer Look at Income Mobility"
2. Day 3: Marriage (Tamar Lewin, "Up from the Holler")
3. Day 5: Education (David Leonhardt, "The College Dropout Boom")
4. Bob Herbert's “Mobility Myth” Op-Ed linked to the site; (See Readers Opinions Box on the right)
5. Two other articles/blogs from the site (minimum); and
6. Interactive exercise in the website which you should do using your family of social origin: "Interactive Graphics: Where do you fit in" (top middle, in between Slide Show and Income and Education)


Watch Kate Picket on the Big Think website discuss “Why Inequality is Bad for Your Health,” http://bigthink.com/videos/why-inequality-is-bad-for-your-health

**Week 4 Assignment:**
- Complete all Week 5 readings.
- Finish work on Op-Ed writing assignment, due in class on Week 5 (see assignment instructions).

**V. Week 5, October 1, 2014: Economic Inequality Today**
- *Op-Ed assignment due in class.*
- Lecture and class discussion on economic inequality in the U.S. and around the world.
- Review of slides on the rise and consequences of inequality.
- Group debates: Are workers better off or worse off today than they were thirty years ago?

**READINGS:**

Sweet and Meiksins, Changing Contours of Work, chapter 3

G.W. Domhoff, “Wealth, Income, and Power” (Sakai)

**Week 5 Assignment:**
- Complete all readings for Week 6
- Begin studying for mid-term exam on October 15 (Week 7)

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**Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights: October 8 – November 5, 2014**

Employment law is the fundamental law of the workplace. It is essential for you as a future employee to know something about your rights at work, or lack thereof. And obviously, future managers need to recognize both their own rights and how they can, and cannot, treat employees.

Employment law is mutable -- it has changed in the past and can change in the future. One of the things we ask you to consider is how it should be changed given the changing nature of employment.

The biggest change in American employment law occurred in the 1960s in the face of demands for greater equality by race, color, national origin, religion and gender. Employment opportunities for persons of different races have become more equal since then. We review what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done. Because whatever our ideals, we are still not a post-racial society. And this affects new ethnic groups that have been coming to the U.S. in what is sometimes called "The New
Immigration."

Gender also still matters for employment outcomes, although again, the workplace is much more equal today than it was in 1964 when the Civil Rights Act was passed. As more women have entered the workplace on a full-time basis, families are increasingly juggling the demands of two (or more) jobs along with the desire to care for their families. Hence one of the big issues of our time is how to improve work-family balance for both men and women.

VI. Week 6, October 8, 2014: Employment Rights and Job Security in the United States

- “Know Your Rights” – in class quiz and discussion.
- Lecture and discussion of major workplace labor laws and regulations, including the at-will doctrine and its exceptions, antidiscrimination, and workplace safety.
- Video and discussion: Can’t Take No More, OSHA film from 1980.
- Overview of mid-term exam format.

READINGS:

Sweet and Meiksins, Changing Contours of Work, chapter 4

Excerpts from Lewis Maltby, Can They Do That? on “Wrongful Discharge and Employment at Will” and “The Rights You Have” (Sakai)

Steven Greenhouse, “Low Wage Workers are Often Cheated, Study Says,” New York Times, September 2, 2009 (Sakai)


Week 6 Assignment:
- Study for mid-term exam on October 15 (Week 7)

VII. Week 7, October 15: Mid-Term Exam (In Class)

Week 7 Assignment:
- Complete all readings and listen to the audio story for Week 8.

VIII. Week 8, October 22, 2014: Work, Race, Ethnicity, and Equality

- Short lecture on race, employment discrimination, and the labor movement.
- Watch and discuss At the River I Stand (directed by David Appleby, Allison Graham, and Steven Ross, 1993).
- Discussion of the legacies of the Memphis Strike.

Readings and Audio Story:
Sweet and Meiksins, Changing Contours of Work, chapter 7.

Week 8 Assignment:
Complete all readings for Week 9

IX. Week 9, October 29, 2014: The New Immigration
- Lecture and discussion of the history of immigration, immigration policy, and labor issues surrounding immigration.

Readings:

“Study of Immigrants Links Lighter Skin and Higher Income,” *New York Times*, January 1, 2007 (Sakai)

Review the Immigration Timeline and accompanying information on which nationalities immigrated when, from the Ellis Island website, [http://www.ellisisland.org/immexp/wseix_4_3.asp](http://www.ellisisland.org/immexp/wseix_4_3.asp)

Optional: if you are interested learning more about immigration policy debates, read Ray Marshall, “Getting Immigration Reform Right,” EPI Briefing Paper #186, March 15, 2007 (Sakai)

Week 9 Assignment:
Complete all readings for Week 10.

X. Week 10, November 5, 2014: Gender, Work, and Family
- Lecture and discussion of how gender affects employment, working conditions, and work/life balance issues for women and men.
- Overview of bargaining simulation and team preferences.

Readings:
Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapters 5 and 6


Week 10 Assignment:
- Complete all reading and watch the video for Week 11.
- Read bargaining simulation handouts in preparation for group work.

**Unit III: Improving Working People’s Lives: November 12 – December 10, 2014**

In the 1930s, during the New Deal of President Franklin Roosevelt (FDR), there was a sharp change in the relationship of government and working Americans, as the federal government struggled to revive the economy in
the face of the Great Depression. New Deal measures involved a larger role for government in managing the economy to promote higher employment and earnings, improve job security, and provide a social safety net for those who could not work. Public policy, which earlier had been anti-union in large part, first became neutral and then insured that employees would have the right to form and join unions.

Union membership exploded -- and workers militancy and self-organization was an important reason for the passage of pro-union and pro-worker legislation in the middle 1930s. In this week, you will first review some of the main events in labor history in the 1930s and 1940s. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the sit-down strike are a central part of this history. You will also review "the New Deal System's" achievements and limitations.

Obviously, it is only possible to hit some high points and generalizations about labor history in this introductory course. Development of the Labor Movement I (before 1900) and Development of the Labor Movement II (after 1900) are courses that you might take to learn more about U.S. labor history. They can be taken in any order.

XI. Week 11, November 12, 2014: The Legacy: The New Deal and Labor
- “Union knowledge” in class quiz and discussion.
- Lecture and discussion of the New Deal, the resurgence of the labor movement, and the creation of labor laws and modern labor relations.
- Assignment of bargaining teams into labor and management sides.
- Bargaining team preparation in groups.

Readings and Video:

Excerpt from Jack Metzgar, Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered (Sakai)

Watch the PBS documentary, Mean Things Happen, part of The Great Depression series (this relates to Jack Metzgar’s family’s experiences in the Steelworkers’ union): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4RRf5T-bMM

Week 11 Assignment:
- Work with your bargaining team to prepare for bargaining simulation in Week 12.

XII. Week 12, November 19, 2014: Collective Bargaining
- Collective bargaining simulations in teams.

Week 12 assignment:
- Complete all readings for Week 13

XIII. Week 13, November 26, 2014: Unions Today, Part 1
- Short lecture and discussion on the role of unions and their impact on workers and the economy.
- Watch and discuss Bread and Roses (directed by Ken Loach, 2000).

Readings:
Sweet and Meiksins, Changing Contours of Work, chapter 7
Excerpt from Michael Yates, *Why Unions Matter* (Sakai)

**Week 13 assignment:**
- Complete readings for Week 14.
- Begin studying for final exam.

XIV. Week 14, December 3, 2014: Unions Today, Part 2
- Lecture and discussion on union organizing, union representation, concerted activity, employer resistance, and similarities and differences between private sector and public sector unions.
- Group exercises on organizing methods and concerted activity.

**Readings:**


**Week 14 assignment:**
- Complete readings for Week 15.
- Continue studying for final exam.

XV. Week 15, December 10, 2014: Public Policy and the Future of Work
- Discuss how themes from this course tie together.
- Discuss how new public policies could address work and employment-related problems.
- Discuss the challenges facing unions and the changes the labor movement needs to consider.
- Discussion of ways young students and workers (like yourselves!) can get involved.
- Overview of final exam.

**Readings:**
Sweet and Meiksins, chapter 8

Bill Fletcher, Jr., *Reimaging Labor Unions: Busting Myths, Building Unions* (Sakai)

**Week 15 assignment:**
- Continue studying for final exam.

**FINAL EXAM DATE AND LOCATION TO BE DETERMINED…**