INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS  
Labor Studies 37:575:100 online: Section 90  Draft subject to change

Fall 2014  
Professors Maureen Sheridan and Paula Voos

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Contact information for 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 it's 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

Please copy both professors when you email about the course. That way one of us can be sure to get back to you.

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 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:

- Participation on two Saturdays 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. If you can give us more choices, that would really help. If Saturday is not good realize, please, that you enrolled in the wrong section. Other sections meet on different days.

  Saturdays Sept. 20 and 27 from 10-11 a.m, or  
  Saturdays Sept. 20 and 27 from 11 a.m. – noon, or  
  Saturdays Sept. 20 and 27 from 1-2 p.m., or  
  Saturdays Sept. 20 and 27 from 9-10 p.m.

- Sat. Nov. 22nd from
  9:30am- 12:30pm, or  
  7:00pm- 10:00pm

  We would truly appreciate it if you could give us a choice of either time because we realize some students will be limited to one particular schedule and we need to have good teams for all.

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.

Text: Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy. 2nd Edition. Sage, 2013. (Please note: the second edition of this book is quite different from the first – it has a new chapter and other chapters have been renumbered).

Equipment needed: USB Headset with a microphone (other types don’t work well); please do not attempt to use an “open” microphone built into a person al computer because it leads to feedback that will bother other students. You also need a personal computer with broadband connection. An Ipad, other tablet, or a smart-phone will not be sufficient.

Evaluation (Subject to change via the “negotiate the syllabus” exercise):
For purposes of grading, there are five components of the course:

- Introductory exercises (Personal information sheet; pre-test participation; audio test and computer information) (3%)
- Negotiate the syllabus exercise (4%)
- 3 Threaded Discussions (Forums) at 10% each (30%)
- Op. Ed. Writing assignment (8%)
- Rights check and union knowledge check at 1% each (2%)
- Bargaining exercise (8%)
- 3 Quizzes at 12% each (36%)
- Short take-home final (9%)

Unit I. The Situation Working People Face Today (Sept. 2 - Oct. 5)

Week 1: Introduction (Sept 2 - 7)
- 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 0.5% 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 Week 1: Interview at least one parent or grandparent about your family’s work history (preferably more). You do not need to write anything about the interview. It will form the basis of an online discussion next week.
Also if you do not have a computer headset with a microphone, please get it this week. A USB connection is best. You will need to test it next week with an audio program next week. This piece of equipment is needed to reduce “feedback” in group discussions online.

Week 2: Work and Our Lives (Sept. 8-14)

- 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


The Pew Charitable Trust, “A Third of Americans Now Say They Are in the Lower Classes” and watch the accompanying short video on absolute vs. relative income mobility (link in the online course shell).

Gene Demby, “Young People Want Equality but Struggle to Discuss Bias,” National Public Radio, 5/15/14 (link in the online course shell).

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. Both quantity and quality count so you may want to post beyond this minimum.

Also due in week 2: Test of audio and computer equipment needs to be completed, and information about your computer system uploaded as an attachment to the dropbox by Sunday evening.

Week 3: Corporations & Work in the “New Economy” (Sept. 15-21)

- 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: Begin “negotiate the syllabus exercise” on Saturday at your scheduled time. Instructions will be sent in the weekly message for this week and also posted in the Announcement area.

Week 4: Social Class in the U.S. (Sept. 22-28)
- 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 – Finish Negotiate the Syllabus Exercise on your day/time.

You also 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. 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 in week 5 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.

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 an 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.*

**Week 5: Economic Inequality Today (Sept. 29-Oct. 5)**
- 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

Review:
Power-point slides by Alan Kruegar, Chairman, Council of Economic Advisors of the President of the U.S., Jan 2012, “The Caucuses and Consequences of the Growth of Income Inequality.”

Watch:
Professor Jeff Keefe, LSER Department, Rutgers, speaking about economic inequality. There are two videos.

Richard Wilkinson’s, TED Talk, on the impact of inequality globally.


**Take Online Quiz on Unit 1: Saturday Oct. 4 or Sunday Oct. 5**

**Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights (Oct. 6 – Nov. 2)**
Week 6: Employment Rights in the U.S. (Oct. 6 - 12)

- 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

First: Take the rights check. This is a quiz that you can take and retake over the course of the week until you get a perfect score and the full number of points (10). After the week is over, the rights check ends – so be sure to do it this week.

Read:
Sweet & Meskins, Chapt. 4


Center for American Progress, “10 Things to Know about the Employment Non-Discrimination Act,” from their website.

Watch: Videos on Employment at Will and the common law exceptions from Professor Carla Katz

Due Week 6: Participate in the forum on employment rights. At a bare minimum, the first comment is due by Thursday and the second by Sunday on each of the two scenarios.

Week 7: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality: (Oct. 13 - 19)

- 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

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.


**Week 8: The New Immigration (Oct. 20-26)**
- 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.

Watch: Two videos

Professor Janice Fine, LSER Department, Rutgers, speaking about immigration issues.

Review:
Ellis Island Web site, “Immigration Timeline.” Be sure to review information about the predominant nationalities of immigrants in various periods.

**Week 9: Gender, Work and Family (Oct. 27 – Nov. 2)**
- 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, and


Take Online Quiz on Unit II: Sat. Nov. 1 or Sun. Nov. 2

Unit III Improving Working People’s Lives (Nov. 3 – Dec. 10)

Week 10: The Legacy: The New Deal and Labor (Nov. 3 -9)
   • 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 week 10: Participate in Forum 3. The first post is due by Thursday evening; additional posts are due by Sunday evening.

Week 11: Unions Today, Part 1 (Nov. 10-16)

   • What do unions do?
   • Collective bargaining
   • Are unions good or bad for the economy?

First: Take the union knowledge check. This is a quiz that you can take and retake over the course of the week until you get a perfect score and the full number of points (10). You cannot take it after the week is over so do it this week.
Review: Power-point on what American unions do.

Read:
- Collective Bargaining Exercise material.

Explore: “Learn about Unions” on the AFL-CIO website. See various pull down items, but be sure to review “Collective Bargaining,” and “The Union Difference” at the bottom of the bargaining page.

Watch:
- (1) Reverend Jim Wallis, Sojourners, Testifying on unions and economic inequality, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.
- (2) Professor Paula Voos, Rutgers, Testifying about the economic effects of unions, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.
- (3) Professor Carla Katz, Rutgers, “Unions and Individual Voice”

**Due in Week 11:** You have been assigned a role (union or management team) and should read background materials you need to read for the exercise. Your team should schedule an initial meeting this week because you have material due on Sunday (initial proposals; bottom line, etc.).

**Week 12:** (Nov. 17-23) *Collective Bargaining Exercise.* Prepare for bargaining, and then bargain as part of your union or management team. Contract bargaining with your team in the time you are assigned.

**Due in Week 12:** Summary of final contract settlement; your evaluation of all team members.

**Week 13:** Unions Today Part 2: Union Organizing and Union Membership (Nov. 24 – Dec. 4. Note that this period includes Thanksgiving and ends on Thursday.)

- How unions are formed
- Union membership trends over time

Read:

Posted materials for the bargaining exercise.
Watch Q&A videos on union organizing:

3 Videos, Professor Carla Katz

Watch for an overview of how employers combat union organizing campaigns:

(1) Target anti-union employee orientation video on YouTube

(2) Levitt, Confessions of a Union Buster Video on YouTube

Watch for an understanding of where contemporary unions are strong and where they are struggling, and why:

(3) Professor Jeff Keefe on unions in the public sector and among low-wage service workers

(4) Two videos on unions today by Professor Adrienne Eaton. One is about the challenges posed by contingent and non-standard work. The other is about unions among athletes, actors, professors and other “stars.”

Review: Power-point on union membership

Week 14: Public Policy and the Future of Work (Dec. 5 – 10. Note that period starts on Friday and goes through the last day of scheduled classes).

Read:

Sweet and Meiskins, Chapter 8.

Watch the following videos:


(2) Adrienne Eaton, Professor, Labor Studies Department, Rutgers, Unions and Informal Work

(3) Dr. Teresa Boyer, Executive Director, Center for Women and Work, Rutgers, on Work and Family policy

(4) Sattik Deb, Director of Student Services, Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department “How you can get involved”

Week 15: Wrap Up (Dec. 13-16)

Take Online Quiz on Unit III: Sat. Dec. 13 or Sunday Dec. 14
A short take home final will be distributed on the last day of class and can be handed in any time over these 4 days.