Introduction to Labor Studies
Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations
Course No. 37:575:100:H6, Index No. 01826
Tuesday/Thursday, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.
July 7-August 13, 2014
Murray Hall 114
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The purpose of this course is to provide students with an overview of the world of work and the lives of workers. Students will learn about:

1. the changing nature of work and the impact of technological change;
   - the economic cycle, income and unemployment;
   - social class, immigration, race, ethnicity and gender;
   - the impact of globalization on workers and unions in the United States and other countries, and the arguments over free trade and protectionism;
   - the role of government in labor policy and job creation, the social safety net, child labor laws and occupational safety and health issues;
   - the history of unions, the growth and changing nature of corporations, the role of unions in politics, and the challenges unions face today;
   - collective bargaining, worker rights and worker participation in management;
   - how work, income, benefits and labor movements in the United States compare to the rest of the world.

With the world economy being transformed by globalization and the United States muddling through a jobless recovery, we will pay special attention to how workers and their unions react to the fragility of workplace security in a rapidly changing world economy.

Students are expected to read the material assigned for each class and be prepared to discuss it. Midterm and final exams will be based both on the assigned readings and on in-class lectures, so attendance and good note-taking is important.

The assigned textbook for the course is Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins’ Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy. All other readings can be accessed and downloaded through the Rutgers "Sakai" website. Reading assignments may change occasionally during the semester. Changes will be announced in class and on email, so students must maintain an email account and check it.

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/or examinations.

k. 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/or examinations.

1. 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 two debates -- one in-class and one online -- and through participation in a collective bargaining exercise based on current situations.

Assessment and Grading

Students will be divided early in the semester into six groups of about 12 students each for breakout sessions and projects. Each group will be under the supervision of a Teaching Assistant.

Grades will be based upon the in-class midterm and final exams, attendance and participation in the following exercises and group projects:

- A family history/immigration paper and oral history project. In addition to writing the paper, students will make 5-minute oral presentations on their family background within their groups.
- A public in-class debate on a public policy issue (Each group will participate in a debate on one of the following: Is the gender gap in pay and the glass ceiling justified? Is immigration good for the American economy and American workers? Is free trade good for American worker?)
- A creative presentation to the class taking an advocacy position on another of the three policy issues. Options include, but are not limited to, a political ad, a video, a commercial, a live TV show, a skit or a song
- A multi-class collective bargaining exercise in which all of the groups will negotiate contracts based on current, high-profile issues. Previous classes have negotiated givebacks in the New Jersey state budget and Woodbridge school budget; the next National Football League, Major League Baseball and National Basketball Association contracts; and a new United Auto Workers-General Motors contract in the midst of GM’s bankruptcy.
Syllabus

Introduction

Tuesday, July 7

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE: What is Labor Studies and why is it important? Discussion of work, family, immigration and how the precariousness of job and income security affects workers and their families. Relate Great Depression and decline of manufacturing in late 1970s and early 1980s to the recession and globalization today.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT: Interview parents/grandparents/family about their jobs and immigration history.

FILM: "The Grand Army of Starvation"

I. Class, Income and Mobility

Thursday, July 9

LECTURE: Class, immigration, family and the centrality of work


Tuesday, July 14

LECTURE: Income, Social Mobility and the Struggle to Survive

READINGS DUE: Sweet and Meiksins, Ch. 3, “Economic Inequality, Social Mobility and the New Economy”


CLASS EXERCISE: How much do you need to live in New Brunswick?

II. Labor and Corporate History, and the Changing Nature of Work
Thursday, July 16

LECTURE: The Rise of the Corporations, the Industrial Revolution and the History of the Labor Movement

FILM EXCERPT: “We’re Going to Fight: The Paterson Silk Strike” (Magyar/Flores, 2011)


“Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor” at http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=2&psid=3193

“Homestead” at http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=2&psid=3194

“The Silk Strike of 1913” at http://www.patersongreatfalls.org/silkstrike.html


DUE: Family History Assignment

III. Gender, Race and Ethnicity Issues in the Workplace

Tuesday, July 21

LECTURE: Women and Work

READINGS: Sweet and Meiksins, Ch. 6, “Gender Chasms in the New Economy”


CLASS EXERCISE I: First Debate and Creative Presentations: Is the gender gap in pay and the glass ceiling justified? On-Line Debate to be scheduled.

Thursday, July 23

LECTURE: Minorities in the Workplace, and the New Immigrants
FILM: “At the River I Stand” (1993 documentary on Martin Luther King and 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike)

READING DUE: Sweet and Meiksins, Ch. 7, “Race, Ethnicity and Work:

OVERVIEW of first half of course/REVIEW for midterm

IV. Collective Bargaining, Politics and the Role of Government

Tuesday, July 28

IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

LECTURE: The Economic Cycle, Wage Determination and the Challenges of Collective Bargaining

READINGS DUE: Sweet and Meiksins, Ch. 4, “Whose Jobs Are Secure?”

Thursday, July 30

LECTURE: Labor, Public Policy and the Law: Private Sector and Public Sector Organizing, At Will Employment, and Worker Rights


Politics, Public Policy and the Role of Government

CLASS EXERCISE II: Start Collective Bargaining Exercise

Tuesday, August 4

CLASS EXERCISE II: Finish Collective Bargaining Exercises

V. The Changing Economy, Globalization and the New Technological Revolution

Thursday, August 6

LECTURE: The Technological Revolution, the Growth of the Service Sector, Globalization and Labor’s Dilemma


Excerpt from Thomas Friedman, "The World Is Flat," pages TBD.

Tuesday, August 11

CLASS EXERCISE III: Debate, Creative Presentations and On-Line Debate on Free Trade vs. Protectionism
LECTURE: Hot Issues: Health Care, Economic Stimulus Measures and the Employee Free Choice Act


REVIEW for Final Exam

Thursday, August 13

IN-CLASS FINAL EXAM

DISCUSSION: The Future of Labor and Work