Introduction to Labor Studies and Employment Relations
Rutgers University, School of Management and Labor Relations
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Spring 2014

Instructor: Professor Rebecca Givan
Class Meets: Wednesdays, 7:15-10:05pm, 137 Labor Education Center
Office Location: Labor Center Building 147
Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Overview: This course gives a basic introduction to the field of Labor Studies and Employment Relations, focusing on an interdisciplinary approach to understanding work in a national perspective. Incorporating sociology, labor and working class history, literature, art, media studies and employment relations, we will analyze the ways that work has evolved into the twenty-first century. In this course, we will also focus on the experiences and perspectives of working people and their institutions, particularly unions and other forms of emerging community organizations that address workplace issues.

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 rubrics applied to written assignments and items on exams.

Required Book. The following required book is available for purchase at the Rutgers University Bookstore, operated by Barnes and Noble. It may also be purchased online.


All readings, except for the text, are available on Rutgers Sakai, which you may access at http://sakai.rutgers.edu

Once you are registered for the course, you will be granted access to the site. It is your responsibility to access course materials, including the reading assignments. Here is how you access Sakai:

1. Go to http://sakai.rutgers.edu
2. Enter your Rutgers NetID and password at the top right corner
3. Click tab (get course number)
4. Please note: You will need Adobe Acrobat or a similar program to download and print out material that has been posted on Sakai.

The syllabus, schedule and assignments are subject to change as the course evolves.

**Course Requirements**

*Class attendance:* You are expected to attend each class session, and to be on time. An attendance sheet will be passed out during each class; it is your responsibility to sign the sheet. Be punctual and plan to stay for the entire class. Students who repeatedly arrive late and leave at break will have their grades lowered. If you need to leave early, see me before class; otherwise you are expected to remain until the class is over.

*Participation:* This class will utilize a variety of formats, with weekly discussion sessions one of the more important of these. You are expected to have completed the readings assigned before coming to class each week and be ready to take an active role in these discussions. Class participation includes active, respectful listening and well as talking. Cell phones etc must be turned off during class. I allow laptops in class unless or until they become a distraction. I ask that you do not use any recording devices in this class.

The class may also have periodic, unannounced quizzes based upon assigned readings. These grades will be evaluated as part of the overall participation grade.

*Missed Exams:* All students are expected to take the scheduled in-class exams (midterm and final) at the designated times.

All writing assignments should be uploaded to Sakai **before class** the day they are due.

*Disability Statement:* This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirement for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of disability should refer to the Rutgers Office of Disability Services and then contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible.

*Statement on Academic Freedom:* Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. This class will introduce an array of sometimes conflicting ideas and interpretations of U.S. history, and all who partake in the course should feel encouraged to express their views in an open, civic forum.

*Academic Integrity:* You are responsible for understanding and following the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity. Information on the policy is available here: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/policy-on-academic-integrity](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/policy-on-academic-integrity). Written assignments will be submitted via Sakai and processed through Turnitin.
Evaluation - Note: you must complete all assignments to receive credit for the course.

Bargaining Exercise (10%)
Class Participation, attendance, quizzes and news assignments (25%)
Written Assignment (20%)
First Exam (20%)
Second Exam (20%)

Weekly Class Summaries

Week 1, January 22: Introduction to the Course and Course Requirements

In this first meeting, we will have a chance to introduce ourselves, and to get a sense of what this semester’s class will entail. We will discuss our past experiences as workers, and talk about our hopes for satisfying employment. What is a good job? What types of issues currently center on work in America today? How does labor studies, as field, contribute to and help us understand these issues?

Film: At the River I Stand (1993)

Week 2, January 29: The “Old Economy” and Industrialism.

Read the syllabus and complete the syllabus quiz on Sakai (Tests and Quizzes Tab), due before class. You can take the 5 question quiz an unlimited number of times - I suggest you repeat it until you have all the questions right.

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 1, Mapping the Contours of Work.


Film: A Job at Fords (1993, from PBS’ The Great Depression, 51 minutes)
http://laborfilms.com/2013/07/02/a-job-at-fords-pbs-great-depression-series-1993/
or http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjH4pCatx0I

Week 3, February 5: Class Politics in the United States

Ross, Andrew. (2014) “We are all Revolvers” from *Creditocracy and the Case for Debt Refusal*, New York, NY OR Press, 30-67.

**Week 4, February 12: Income and Social Mobility**

**News assignment due.**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 2, New Products, New Ways of Working and the New Economy, Chapter 3, Economic Inequality, Social Mobility and the New Economy.


Film (in class, excerpts): *Inequality For All* (2013)

**Week 5, February 19: The New Economy and the Future of Work**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 4, “Whose Jobs Are Secure?”

Bryant Simon, “Consuming Lattes and Labor, or Working at Starbucks,” *International Labor and Working Class History* (Fall 2008): 193-211.


Film: *The Big One* (1997)

Review for midterm

**Paper topics due**

**Week 6, February 26 Exam 1**
**Week 7, March 5: The Role and Function of Unions**

Readings: Stephen A. Sweet and Peter Meiksins, “Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy, Chapter 8, “Reshaping the Contours of the New Economy.”


**Week 8, March 12: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 7, “Race, Ethnicity and Work: Legacies of the Past, Problems of the Present.”


**Paper Due in Class**

**Week 9, Spring Break**

**Week 10, March 26: Work, Gender, Equality**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 6, “Gender Chasms in the New Economy.”


Film: Maid in America

**Week 11, April 2: Work and Family**

**News assignment due**


Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All,” The Atlantic, July/August 2012 85-102


**Week 12, April 9: Unions and Collective Bargaining Today**


**Week 13, April 16: Collective Bargaining Simulations**

Readings related to the simulation.

**Week 14, April 23: Globalization of labor, globalization of capital**


Planet Money T-Shirt (read and watch the whole thing) http://apps.npr.org/tshirt/

Week 15, April 30: Exam 2
News Assignment

The specific news issue will be announced in class 1-2 classes before the assignment is due.
You must come to class with one page of notes including the following information:
Who are the key players in this issue (unions, employees, consultants, mayors, shareholders, etc.)?
What are the major issues?
What are the major points of agreement and disagreement?
Are there key laws determining what is happening?
Is one side clearly right (or wrong)?
What are the likely outcomes of this situation to be?
What is the impact on the general public?
Are there any intra-organizational issues here?

Your notes should be based on research you do using reliable news sources, other labor research resources, press releases etc from the interested parties. You should try to relate what is going on to the material we have discussed in class.
We will discuss the issue in class on the assigned date, and you should upload your notes to Sakai before class.

This material will be covered on the exams.