Spring 2015

Tuesday 6:00 p.m. – 8:40 p.m.
Western Monmouth Higher Education Center
Instructor: Professor John Castella
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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).

Schedule: The schedule and the assignments are subject to change.

This course addresses the Social Analysis (SCL) Learning Objectives of SAS:

- Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
- 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.

(For purposes of grading, the components of the course are:

- 2 classroom Discussions (20%)
- Op. Ed. Writing assignment (10%)
• Bargaining exercise (20%)
• 3 Quizzes at 10% each (30%)
• One page take-home final (20%)

Unit I. The Situation Working People Face Today (January 20 – February 23)

Week 1: Introduction, January 20

• Explore what the course is about and make note of what is required of you.

Assignment for Week 1: Interview at least one parent or grandparent about your family’s work history (preferably more). Take notes as it will form the basis of a discussion next week.

Week 2: Work and Our Lives, Jan 27

• 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

Paul Krugman, Chapter 1, *End This Depression Now*. New York: WW Norton, 2012, and

The Pew Charitable Trust, “A Third of Americans Now Say They Are in the Lower Classes”

Gene Demby, “Young People Want Equality but Struggle to Discuss Bias,” National Public Radio, 5/15/14 (link in the online course shell).
Due week 2: Be prepared to discuss several questions posed in class based on the readings. Class interaction and quality counts towards your grade. You need to be prepared to be called on.

Week 3: Corporations & Work in the “New Economy” Feb 3

- Corporations – structure, power, and rights
- Old and new forms of work organization
- The rise of contingent work

Read: Sweet & Meskins, Chapter 2, and


Week 4: Social Class in the U.S. February 10

- 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.
Read: Joseph E. Stiglitz, “How Policy Has Contributed to the Great Economic Divide,”

Due in week 4 – You should start working on the assignment that is due 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 February 17

- 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


**Due Tuesday February 24 in Week 5:** 500 word Op. Ed. You must bring a hardcopy of your Op. Ed. to class on February 24. See week 4 (above) for details on the assignment.

**Quiz on Unit 1**

**Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights February 24 – March 30**

**Week 6: Employment Rights in the U.S. February 24**

- 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

Read:

Sweet & Meskins, Chapter 4


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

**Due Week 6:** Be prepared to discuss several questions posed in class based on the readings. Class interaction and quality counts towards your grade. You need to be prepared to be called on.
Week 7: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality: March 3

- 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

pp. 192-197

pp. 202-206


Week 8: The New Immigration March 10

- Effects of immigration on wages and work
- Public policy debates regarding immigration policy for the U.S.

Read:


Review:

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

Spring Recess: March 14- March 22

Week 9: Gender, Work and Family March 24

- 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


**Quiz on Unit II: March 31

Unit III Improving Working People’s Lives (March 31 – May 11)

Week 10: The Legacy: The New Deal and Labor March 31

- 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 video:

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.

**Week 11: Unions Today, Part 1 April 7**

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

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.

**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 Saturday (initial proposals; bottom line, etc.).**

**Week 12: Collective Bargaining Exercise April 14**
Prepare for bargaining, and then bargain as part of your union or management team.

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

Week 13: Unions Today Part 2: Union Organizing and Union Membership April 21

- How unions are formed
- Union membership trends over time

Read:


Week 14: Public Policy and the Future of Work, Wrap up and Review April 28

Read:

Sweet and Meiskins, Chapter 8.

Watch the following videos:


**Discuss Final**

Week 15: Final Exam May 5