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:

- 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 still in a precarious state 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.

All 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 assignment 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 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?)
- An on-line debate on another of the four policy issues listed above
- A creative presentation to the class taking an advocacy position on another of the four 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, Woodbridge school budget and Trenton public safety 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

Thursday, Jan. 20

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.

I. Class, Income and Mobility

Monday, January 24

LECTURE: Immigration, family and the centrality of work


Thursday, January 27

LECTURE: Class in America


Monday, January 31

LECTURE: Income and Social Mobility


GROUP BREAKOUT DISCUSSION: Insights from the family interview project

Thursday, February 3
LECTURE: The Struggle to Survive


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

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Family and immigration paper due

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

Monday, February 7

LECTURE: The Industrial Revolution, the Rise of Corporations, Craft Unions vs. the “One Big Union” Movement


Thursday, February 10

LECTURE: Mass Manufacturing, the Great Depression, the CIO, the New Deal and the Rise of the Middle Class


Monday, February 14

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


David Moberg, "Which Comes First: Growth or Clout?" In These Times, March 24, 2005.
III. Gender, Race and Ethnicity Issues in the Workplace

Thursday, February 17

LECTURE: Women and Work


Monday, February 21

CLASS EXERCISE I: First Debate and First Creative Presentations: Is the gender gap in pay and the glass ceiling justified? On-Line Debate follows during evening.

Thursday, February 24

LECTURE: African-Americans and Work in America

FILM: “At the River I Stand” (1993 documentary on Martin Luther King and 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike)


Monday, February 28

LECTURE: Hispanics and the New Immigrants


Thursday, March 3


Monday, March 7
Overview of first half of course/review for midterm

Thursday, March 10

In-class midterm exam

IV. Politics, Public Policy and the Role of Government

Monday, March 21

LECTURE: Labor and Politics: From Workingmen’s Parties to the Obama Campaign

FILM: “A Century of Progress” (2005 film on the history of New Jersey’s building trades unions)

READINGS: Jefferson Cowie, "The Enigma of Working Class Conservatism: From the Hard Hats to the NASCAR Dads" (New Labor Forum 13(3), Fall 2004 Queens College Labor Resource Center), pp. 9-17

Thursday, March 24

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


Monday, March 27

LECTURE: Hot Issues: Health Care, Economic Stimulus Measures and the Employee Free Choice Act


V. Collective Bargaining

Thursday, March 30

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


Monday, April 4

CLASS EXERCISE III: Collective Bargaining Session 1

Thursday, April 7

CLASS EXERCISE III: Collective Bargaining Session 2

Monday, April 11

CLASS EXERCISE III: Collective Bargaining Session 3

Thursday, April 14

CLASS EXERCISE III: Collective Bargaining Session 4

VI. Globalization and the New World Economy

Monday, April 18

LECTURE: Changing Technologies and the Challenge of Globalization


Thursday, April 21

LECTURE: The Way the Rest of the World Works: Public Policy, Labor Unions and the Potential for Cutting Edge Change

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Short papers on collective bargaining exercise

Monday, April 25

LECTURE: NAFTA, Free Trade and Protectionism


Thursday, April 28


Monday, May 2

LECTURE: Overview and review of course for final exam

FINAL EXAM date to be determined