Introduction to Labor Studies and Employment Relations
Rutgers University, School of Management and Labor Relations
Fall 2012

Instructor: Professor Francis Ryan
Class Time and Place: Thursday 3:55-6:55 Auditorium (Room 137) Labor Education Center, Cook/Douglass Campus
Office Location: Labor Center Building 114
Office Hours: Monday 1-3, Weds 1-2
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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 from the end of the Civil War 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.

Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*. Pine Forge Press. 2nd edition. Sage, 2013.

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 and other electronic devises must be turned off during class. This includes laptops. 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 will be collected at the beginning of class the day they are due. Out of respect to those who meet this expectation, all late papers will be subject to downgrading. Unless otherwise specified, it is expected that hardcopies of the paper be handed in, rather than by email attachment.

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.

Evaluation

Bargaining Exercise (10%)
Class Participation, attendance and quizzes (20%)
Written Assignment (20%) Due in class October 4
Midterm Exam (20%)
Final Exam (30%)

Weekly Class Summaries:

Week 1, September 6: 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: *I Love Lucy, "Job Switching."* (1952)

Week 2, September 13: Exploring American Working Life: The "Old Economy" and Industrialism.

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

In Class reading: Walt Whitman, *Manhatta.*

Film: *New York*: "The Power and the People," section on Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. (2001)

Week 3, September 20: Class Politics in the United States

Readings: Zweig, Michael (2000) *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret,* ILR Press, 9-37 (The Class Structures of the United States)

Scott, J. and Leonhardt, D. (2005), "Shadowy Lines That Still Divide," in *Class Matters*, Henry Holt and Company, 1-26.

Jefferson Cowie and Lauren Boehm, "Dead Man's Town: "Born in the U.S.A.," Social History, and Working Class Identity," *American Quarterly* (June 2006): 353-378.

In-class Presentation: Bruce Springsteen: Finding the New Jersey experience in Working Class Culture.

Week 4, September 27: Income and Social Mobility

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.

Boushey, H. and Fremstad, S (2008), "The Wages of Exclusion: Low-wage Work and Inequality," *New Labor Forum*, 17 (2): 9-19.

Zweig (2000) *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret,* ILR Press, 77-93, "Looking at the Underclass."

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

Week 5, October 4: Power Dynamics, the New Economy and the Future of Work

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

Selections from Jeffery L. Kidder *Urban Flow: Bike Messengers and the City* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Francis Ryan, "Journal of a Retail Worker" (1996-97)

Film: *The Big One* (1997)

<u>Paper Due in Class</u>

Week 6, October 11: Midterm Exam

Week 7, October 18: 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."

Michael Yates, *Why Unions Matter?* pp. 11-82.

"Union Members 2010," Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, January 21, 2011.

Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000). Getting to 1959, 17-57.

Film: *Sit Down and Fight: Walter Reuther and the Rise of the UAW* (1993)

Week 8, October 25: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality

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

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle,* Chapter 3.

Steve Striffler, "Inside a Poultry Processing Plant: An Ethnographic Portrait," *Labor History* 43:3 August 2002 305-314.

Roger Waldinger, et al., "Helots No More: A Case Study of the Justice for Janitors Campaign in Los Angeles." (Los Angeles., California: Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, Working Paper No. 15, April 1996): 1-19.

Film: *At the River I Stand* (1993)

Week 9, November 1: Work, Gender, Equality

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

Ehrenreich, Barbara, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000): Selling in Minnesota.

Gatta, Mary and Yasemin Besen-Cassino, Gender Pay Gap in New Jersey, A Report of the American Association of University Women, 2010.

Janice Fine, "Worker Centers and Immigrant Women," in *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor*, ed. Dorothy Sue Cobble (Cornell University Press, 2007): 211-230

Film: *Bread and Roses* (2000)

Week 10, November 8: Work and Family

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, "Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy, Chapter 5, "A Fair Day's Work."

Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," *The Atlantic*, July/August 2012 85-102

Netsy Firestein and Nicola Dones, "Unions Fight for Work and Family Policies—Not For Women Only," in *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor,* ed. Dorothy Sue Cobble, 140-154.

Week 11, November 15: Unions and Collective Bargaining Today

Readings: Yates, Michael (2009) *Why Unions Matter*, "Collective Bargaining," 83-110.

Michael Mauer, *The Union Members' Complete Guide*, Union Communication Services, Inc. 41-65, 67-85

Strom, A. (2006) "U.S. Labor Law," in *Current Economic Issues*, edited by the Dollars and Sense Collective, Economic Affairs Bureau, 17-21.

Week 12, November 20: Collective Bargaining Simulation

Week 13, November 29: Immigration Old and New

Readings: Gracie Chang, "Disposable Domestics: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy," Chapter 3, "Undocumented Latinas: The New Employable Mother," 55-92.

Immanuel Ness, *Immigrants, Unions and the New U.S. Labor Market* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005): Chapter 2, "The Political Economy of Transnational Labor in New York City: The Context for Immigrant Worker Militancy," 13-39.

John Schmitt and Kris Warner, "The Changing Face of U.S. Labor, 1983-2008," *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society,* 13:2 June 2010 263-279

Film: *Amreeka* (2009)

Week 14, December 6: Recent Topics: Debating the Public Sector

Readings: Joseph A. McCartin, "A Wagner Act for Public Employees:" Labor's Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism, 1970-1976, *Journal of American History* (June 2008): 123-148.

Joseph A. McCartin, "Convenient Scapegoats: Public Workers Under Assault," *Dissent* Spring 2011, 45-50

Selections from Michael D. Yates, *Wisconsin Uprising: Labor Fights Back* (2010)

Final Exam as scheduled by Rutgers during the final exam period.