Introduction to Labor Studies

Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations
Course No. 37:575:100:03, Index No. 30418
Monday/Thursday, 9:15 a.m. to 10:35 a.m.
Art History Building, Room 200, Douglass Campus
908-246-8468
publicpolicynj@aol.com

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.

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 examinations.*

l. 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, Sept. 1

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

Thursday, Sept. 8

LECTURE: Immigration, family and the centrality of work

READINGS: Stephen A. Sweet and Peter Meiksins, “Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press, an imprint of Sage Publications, 1998) ” Chapter 1, “Mapping the Contours of Work)

Studs Terkel, "Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do" (New York: Random House Inc., 1972), interviews with steelworker Mike LeFevre, pp. XXXI-XXXVIII, farm worker Roberto Acuna, pp. 7-13, and waitress Delores Dante, pp. 293-298.

Monday, Sept. 12

LECTURE: Class in America

READINGS: "Class in America: Shadowy Lines That Still Divide" by Janny Scott and David Leonhardt, *New York Times*, May 15, 2005, pp. 1-26.

Thursday, Sept. 15

LECTURE: Income and Social Mobility

READINGS: Michael Zweig, "The Working Class Majority: America's Best-Kept Secret" (Ithaca. N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), Chapter 3, "Why is Class Important?" pp. 61-73

GROUP BREAKOUT DISCUSSION: Insights from the family interview project

Monday, Sept. 19

LECTURE: The Struggle to Survive

READINGS: Ehrenreich, Barbara, "Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting By in America" (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), pp. 11-49

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

Thursday, Sept. 22

LECTURE; The Industrial Revolution, the Rise of Corporations, Craft Unions vs. the "One Big Union" Movement

FILM EXCERPT: "New Jersey Legacy: Technology in the Garden" (New Jersey Network, 2003)

READINGS: David Bensman, "The Practice of Solidarity: American Hat Finishers in the Nineteenth Century" (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1985), Chapters 4, "An Artisan Culture," pp. 45-67, and Chapter 5. "To Preserve a Man's Culture," pp. 68-88.

Monday, Sept. 26

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

FILM EXCERPT: "The American Experience: Sit Down and Fight: Walter Reuther and the Rise of the UAW" (Public Broadcasting System, 2004)

READINGS: Paula Voos and Michael Slott, "Outline of U.S. Labor History," Sections 1-8.

Thursday, Sept. 29

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

READINGS: Sweet and Meiksins, "Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy," Chapter 2, "How New is the New Economy?"

David Moberg, "Which Comes First: Growth or Clout?" In These Times, March 24, 2005.

III. Gender, Race and Ethnicity Issues in the Workplace

Monday, Oct. 3

LECTURE: Women and Work

READINGS: Randy Albelda and Chris Tilly, "Glass Ceilings and Bottomless Pits: Women's Work, Women's Poverty" (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 1997), pp. 1-11.

Virginia Valians, "Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women" (The MIT Press, 1999), Chapter I, "Gender Schemas At Work," pp. 1-22

Thursday, Oct. 6

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.

Monday, Oct. 10

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)

READINGS: LeDuff, Charles, "At a Slaughternouse, Some Things Never Die," The New York Times, June 16, 2000, 10 pp.

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

Thursday, Oct. 13

LECTURE: Hispanics and the New Immigrants

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

Monday, Oct. 17

CLASS EXERCISE II: Debate and Creative Presentations: Is immigration good for the American economy and American workers? On-Line Debate follows during evening.

Thursday, Oct. 20

Overview of first half of course/review for midterm

Monday, Oct. 24

In-class midterm exam

IV. Politics, Public Policy and the Role of Government

Thursday, Oct. 27

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

Monday, Oct. 31

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

READINGS: William Greider, "Work Rules," in Richard E. Miller and Kurt Spellmeyer, "The New Humanities Reader" (Wadsworth Publishing, 2004), pp. 251-269

Thursday, Nov. 3

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

READINGS: Politico.com, "Arena: The Case For and Against EFCA," March 15, 2008, see especially articles by Anna E. Burger of the Service Employees International Union, Paula Voos of Rutgers University and Thomas J. Donohue of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0309/20657.html)

Politico.com, "For Labor, There's Always Next Year," December 15, 2009 (http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1209/30598.html)

V. Collective Bargaining

Monday, Nov. 7

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

Bargaining

READINGS: Richard B. Freeman and Joel Rogers, "What Workers Want" (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 67-75, 81-92, 93-105, 109-117

“The Union Advantage: AFL-CIO Fact Sheets” (July 2007), 6 pp.

Michael D. Yates, “Why Unions Matter” (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009), Chapter 4, “Collective Bargaining,” pp. 53-80.

Thursday, Nov. 10

CLASS EXERCISE III: Collective Bargaining Session 1

Monday, Nov. 14

CLASS EXERCISE III: Collective Bargaining Session 2

Thursday, Nov. 17

CLASS EXERCISE III: Collective Bargaining Session 3

Tuesday, Nov. 22

CLASS EXERCISE III: Collective Bargaining Session 4

VI. Globalization and the New World Economy

Monday, Nov. 28

LECTURE: Changing Technologies and the Challenge of Globalization

READINGS: Thomas Friedman, “Hot, Flat and Crowded” (New York: Farrar, Straus an Giroux, 2008), pp. 23-48, 63-68.

Ralph Armbruster Sandoval, "Globalization and Transnational Labor Organizing: The Honduran Maquiladora Industry and the Kimi Campaign“ (Social Science History 27:4 Winter 2003), pp. 551-576.

Thursday, Dec. 1

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

Rieff, David, "Che's Second Coming?" *The New York Times Magazine*, November 20, 2005.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Short papers on collective bargaining exercise

Monday, December 5

LECTURE: NAFTA, Free Trade and Protectionism

READINGS: Robert E. Scott, "The High Price of 'Free Trade,'" Economic Policy Institute Briefing Paper No. 147, November 17, 2003, at www.epi.org/publications/entry/briefingpapers_bp147/

Thursday, December 8

CLASS EXERCISE IV: Debate and Creative Presentations: Is free trade good for U.S. Workers and the American Economy? On-Line Debate follows during evening.

Monday, December 12

LECTURE:

FINAL EXAM date to be determined