

PERSPECTIVES ON LABOR STUDIES

Fall 2011, September 1 – December 8

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Murray Hall, Room 212

Instructor: Teresa Poor

INTRODUCTION

Perspectives on Labor Studies is a senior level class that provides Labor Studies majors and other interested students with the opportunity to read and analyze some of the landmark theories in labor studies and employment/industrial relations. Students will read foundational scholarship from theorists like Adam Smith, Max Weber, Samuel Gompers, Karl Marx, Joseph Schumpeter, Frederick Winslow Taylor and others. These scholars from the late 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries set the terms of debate regarding issues like the meaning of labor and capitalism, the benefits of and problems with markets, the rights of labor, industrial democracy, and the strengths and weaknesses of rational management.

Students will then apply and compare this landmark scholarship to late 20th and early 21st century scholarship that defines some of the central debates in labor studies and industrial/employment relations. Students will consider whether the comparison indicates that we confront the same problems and issues defined by the late 18th, 19th, and early 20th century scholarship. Regardless of the conclusion, students will also consider what solutions make sense for today's workers.

CONTACT

I will hold "office hours" by email. On Fridays from September 1 to December 23, between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m., you may email your questions or concerns to me. You will receive an answer within 24 hours. Questions emailed outside of this time and day will be answered at my convenience.

You may email your questions to teresa.poor@aleph-naught.net.

READINGS

All readings will be posted on SAKAI or handed out during class.

CLASSES

1. September 1: INTRODUCTION

- Discuss Syllabus and Requirements
- Introduce the readings due next week, September 8.
- Group and Paper Assignments

2. September 8: INTRODUCING LABOR

- READINGS DUE

- (i) Bureau of Labor Statistics on Employment, Unemployment, and Wages
- (ii) “Lessons for Resisting Useless Vices”, in Upside Down: A Primer for the Looking Glass World, by Eduardo Galeano
- (iii) “Work”, “Groundskeeper Busted Reading in the Custodial Water Closet”, “Lose Yourself”, “Layoff”, and “Turn the Radio to a Gospel Station”, in Working Words: Punching the Clock and Kicking Out the Jams, ed. M.L. Liebler.

3. September 15: WHAT IS LABOR?

- READINGS DUE

- (i) Bureau of Labor Statistics on Productivity
- (ii) Chapters 4, 5, and 6, from Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1, by Karl Marx.
- (iii) “Work” from White Collar, by C. Wright Mills.

4. September 22: WHO IS LABOR?

- READINGS DUE

- (i) Review contemporary statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook.
- (ii) “The Echoes of Slavery: Recognizing the Racist Origins of the Agricultural and Domestic Workers Exclusion in the National Labor Relations Act”, by Juan Perea, in Ohio State Law Journal, Vol. 72:1.
- (iii) “*Kentucky River* at the Intersection of Professional and Supervisory Status: Fertile Delta or Bermuda Triangle”, by Marley S. Weiss

- GROUP 1 FACILITATES

5. September 29: IS LABOR PROPERTY?

- READINGS DUE

- (i) “Labor Shall Not Be Property: The Horizon of Workers’ Control in the United States”, by Michael Merrill, Labor Studies Journal, 1996.
- (ii) “Meanings of Free Labor” in The Meaning of Property: Freedom, Community, and the Legal Imagination, by Jedediah Purdy, 2010.
- (ii) Samuel Gompers v. Governor Allen Debate, 1920.

- GROUP 2 FACILITATES

7. October 6: LABOR’S PROPERTY AND OTHER PROPERTIES

- Movie: The Take

- READINGS DUE

- (i) “How American Workers Lost the Right to Strike, and Other Tales”, by James Gray Pope. Rutgers Law School, Faculty Papers. 2004, Paper 3.
- (ii) “Preface”, “Shutting the Door on Republic”, and “The Revolt”, in Revolt on Goose Island: The Chicago Factory Takeover, and What It Says About the Economic Crisis, by Kari Lydersen.
- (iii) Readings on the Boeing Complaint and Debate

5. October 13: LABOR AND MARKETS, Part 1

- READINGS DUE

- (i) Chapters 1, 2, and 3, from An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, by Adam Smith.
- (ii) “The Process of Creative Destruction”, in Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy, by Joseph Schumpeter.
- (iii) “Globalization: A Long-Term Trajectory of the World-System”, in The Decline of American Power, by Immanuel Wallerstein.

- GROUP 3 FACILITATES

6. October 20: LABOR and MARKETS, Part 2

- Movie: Commanding Heights, Part 3

- READINGS DUE

- (i) “The Economics of 1776 and Today”, and “The Value of Freedom”, in A Tolerable Anarchy: Rebels, Reactionaries, and the Making of American Freedom, by Jedediah Purdy.
- (ii) “Markets, State, and Social Opportunity” and “Social Choice and Individual Behavior”, in Development as Freedom, by Amartya Sen.

8. October 27: INSTITUTIONS AND THE LABOR OF MANAGING

- READINGS DUE

- (i) “Bureaucracy”, by Max Weber.
- (ii) “Scientific Management”, by Frederick Winslow Taylor
- (iii) “The Coming of the New Organization”, by Peter Drucker

- GROUP 4 FACILILITATES

9. November 3: MANAGED LABOR

- READINGS DUE

- (i) “The Assault on Middle Management” and “The Meaning of Loyalty” in White Collar Blues: Management Loyalties in an Age of Corporate Restructuring, by Charles Heckscher.

(ii) “Raising the Bar”, from White Collar Sweat Shop

- GROUP 5 FACILITATES

10. November 10: WORK SYSTEMS, Part 1

- READINGS DUE

(i) “Part 1: The Challenge” and “Part II: The Alternatives”, in The New American Workplace: Transforming Work Systems in the United States, by Eileen Appelbaum and Rosemary Batt

- GROUP 6 FACILITATES

11. November 17: WORK SYSTEMS, Part 2

- Movie: Office Space

- READINGS DUE

(i) “Shiftless of the World Unite”, in Race Rebels, by Robin Kelley.

(ii) Chapters 3 and 4, from Rivthead: Tales from the Assembly Line, by Ben Hamper.

(iii) “Where We Are Now” in How to Tell When You’re Tired: A Brief Examination of Work, by Reg Theriault.

(iv) “How Can Work on People Be Routinized”, in Fast Food, Fast Talk: Service Work and the Routinization of Everyday Life, by Robin Leidner.

13. December 1: REPRESENTING LABOR, Part 2

- READINGS DUE

(i) “Collective Bargaining in the United States”, in Labor and the Community, by Derek C. Bok and John T. Dunlop

(ii) “The Uses of Industrial Power” in Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the Twentieth Century Struggle, by David Brody

(iii) “Class Conflicts of Law I: Unilateral Worker Lawmaking versus Unilateral Employer Lawmaking in the U.S. Workplace”, by James Gray Pope, *Buffalo Law Review*, 2008.

- GROUP 6 FACILITATES

14. December 8: LABOR AS A MOVEMENT and REVIEW

- READINGS DUE

(i) “The Structuring of Protest” and “The Industrial Workers’ Movement” in Poor People’s Movements: How They Succeed and Why They Fail, by Frances Fox Piven and Howard A. Cloward.

- GROUP 7 FACILITATES

15. December 22: FINAL and PAPER RE-WRITE DUE

ASSIGNMENTS, GRADING, AND EXPECTATIONS

Attendance and Participation (*15% of your total grade*)

Rutgers University has an attendance policy:

Students are expected to attend all scheduled course meetings, although no special provisions are normally made for reporting occasional absences from class. It is the policy of the university to excuse without penalty students who are absent because of religious observance and to allow the makeup of work missed because of such absences. A student absent from an examination because of required religious observance will be given an opportunity to make up the examination without penalty.

You will, therefore, be expected to attend all scheduled classes unless you are absent due to religious observance. You will get one excused absence that does not hinge on religious observance. All other absences, excluding absences due to religious observances, will be unexcused unless you experience a serious, documentable, medical or family emergency. Your grade will be docked two points for each unexcused absence. Attendance will be taken at the end of each class.

To participate well you must first read all of the assigned materials and come to class prepared to discuss these readings. Connecting personal experience to the themes of the readings can aid learning. However, personal experience is limited. Therefore, participation that expands knowledge moves beyond personal experience to focus on the evidence and logic of the arguments. Your participation will be graded on your contributions to the discussions of the readings and your ability to avoid lingering too long on personal experiences.

Group Facilitation Assignment:

The Assignment

Students will be broken down into SEVEN (7) separate Groups on the first day of class. You will remain in these Groups throughout the semester. Each Group will help me to lead discussion once during the semester. The task of helping me lead discussion is as follows:

- a. Each group will help me facilitate once during the semester.
- b. Two weeks before the date of facilitation, I will provide the Group scheduled to facilitate with a list of questions related to the readings.
- c. Students must provide a written answer to each question and then give the written answers to each member of the group one week prior to the readings' due date, by email, and cc me at tpoor@aleph-naught.net.

- d. Each student will review the answers of the other students and provide a brief comment on the quality of the answers provided. I.e., each student will “grade” the answers of the other students in the group.
- e. A copy of the comments you write on the answers provided by other students in the group must be provided to the author of the answers on the Tuesday prior to the date the reading assignment is due. Send you comments by email.
- f. The comments must also be emailed to me on the Tuesday prior to the date the reading assignment is due. My email address, again, is tpoor@aleph-naught.net.
- f. On the date of facilitation, each student in the Group will provide me with a hardcopy of their answers and the comments on their answers.
- g. On the date of facilitation, members of the group will lead a small group discussion that will deal with the questions already posed to the Group.

Grading the Assignment (30% of your total grade)

Each student will be graded on the quality (not quantity) of the answer provided in response to each question, and on the quality of the comments provided to each student in your group. You will be docked 2 points for failing to timely provide your written comments to your fellow group members, and for failing to provide your emailed comments to me in a timely manner.

The final grade for this assignment will be based on the timeliness and on the hardcopy you provide to me on the date the reading is due, i.e. the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted, at all.

The Paper Assignment:

Each student will be expected to write one paper on one of the themes presented in class.

The first purpose of this paper is to provide you with the opportunity to explore in more depth a theme that you find interesting. For example, you may want to develop a better understanding of the relationship between labor and property, the representation of labor, or work systems, etc.

The second purpose of this paper is to help you improve your writing skills.

Implementation of the Paper

A. Theme Selection

- (i) Groups 1, 2, 3, and 4 must select a theme from the readings scheduled between September 8 and October 6.
- (ii) Groups 5, 6, and 7 must select a theme from the readings scheduled between October 6 and November 10.

B. Paper Draft Due Dates:

- (i) Each student from Groups 1, 2, 3, and 4 must submit a hard-copy draft of their papers to me and to the other members of your Group at the start of class on October 13, 2011.

(ii) Each student from Groups 5, 6, and 7 must submit a hard-copy draft of their papers to me and to the other members of your Group at the start of class on November 17, 2011.

C. Comments of the Draft Papers

(i) Students in each Group 1, 2, 3, and 4 must provide their comments on the draft papers to the author of the draft and to me at the start of class on October 27, 2011.

(ii) I will provide each student with my comments on their drafts at the start of class on October 27, 2011.

(iii) Students in each Group 5, 6, and 7 must provide their comments on the draft papers to the author of the draft and to me at the start of class on December 1, 2011.

(iv) I will provide each student with my comments on their drafts at the start of class on December 1, 2011.

D. Final Papers

If you would like to increase the grade on your paper you may submit a final draft at the end of the semester.

Grading the Paper Assignment (30% of your total grade)

I will grade each paper on the quality of the exploration of the theme, the structure, and grammar. Part of the grade will also factor in the comments you provide to other students.

Late draft papers and final papers will not be accepted unless the student is observing a religious holiday or has a documentable medical or family crisis. A very short extension of time will be granted in these cases.

The Final (25% of your total grade)

A short answer take-home final will be handed out during class on December 8, 2011. It is due by 11:30 p.m. on December 22, 2011. **LATE FINALS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED UNLESS THE STUDENT IS OBSERVING A RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY OR HAS A DOCUMENTABLE MEDICAL or FAMILY EXCUSE.** In these instances, a very short extension will be granted.