

Introductory Seminar in Labor and Employment Relations
Spring 2012
Wednesdays 7:20-10:00 pm
Labor Education Center room 130/131
Syllabus

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This Masters course is designed to deepen our understanding of the main paradigms or systems of employment relations that co-exist in the United States today and to explore some of the major issues and challenges these systems and the workers within them, confront. The course will be taught by core members of the SMLR faculty who will take turns each week presenting in their area of expertise.

We will begin the semester with overviews of the individual employment rights regime as embodied in employment law, the collective employment rights regime as embodied in our system of industrial and labor relations and the American welfare state regime or system of public social provision embodied in our unemployment, pension, disability and health insurance policies. We will then explore six key strategic areas these systems engage including: union organizing and collective bargaining, human resource management (HRM), inequality, employee ownership and human capital or education of the U.S. workforce. With these main ideas and concepts under our belts, we will turn to a consideration of how different groups of workers—women, African-Americans, immigrants, the disabled and low income people—are experiencing these systems in their day to day working lives.

The goals of the course will be to:

1. Develop students' abilities to understand and critically analyze systems of employment relations and current workplace issues
2. Develop students' analytical and writing skills
3. Orient students to the field and the program and introduce students to a number of faculty to help them make informed choices about future course work and research sponsors
4. Establish a deliberative community in the classroom and on-line

There is no text. Each week, all students will access the articles that are posted on the sakai website for the course and one or two students will be assigned to formally present and comment on the readings and lead off a discussion with the presenter. Please bring hard copies of the articles to class. You can retrieve and print out the readings by doing the following:

1. Go to <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>
2. Enter your Rutgers ID and password in the upper right corner
3. Click on the tab that says “38:578:500:01 S10”
4. Click on “Resources” at the left
5. Click on the folder titled “38:578:500:01 S010 Resources”
6. Click on the folder for the week you want, then the file you want to download. Many of the readings are in Adobe Acrobat format. If your computer doesn’t have it, you can download the reader for free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

Course Requirements:

1-Class Attendance and Participation in Class as well as the On-line Forums(30%):

Be prepared for class. Always read the assigned material before the class so that you can fully participate in class discussions and more easily follow the lecture. Bring the week’s reading material to class with you so that you can refer to it during lectures and group discussions.

In a course like this, attendance and class participation are absolutely essential. Unexcused absences *will* affect your grade.

Everyone must read the material and be prepared to discuss it in class and pose thoughtful questions to the presenters. For the first 15 minutes of class, you will be assigned to a small group to discuss your reactions to the readings and formulate one question for the night’s presenter. I expect everyone to participate in class and I will be grading you on class participation.

On-Line Forums

Students will be required to participate in regular online discussions of the course readings prior to attending class. You will be broken into 3 groups after the first class for the purposes of creating an on-line community with which you will be

carrying on discussions of the readings and class sessions. Questions to be addressed in the online discussion will be posted on the site weekly. These discussions are an integral part of the course and will constitute 25% of your total grade.

You must make at least two postings including one posting by midnight on Monday prior to class on Wednesday. Your initial post should be your individual response to the questions posed in the assignment. It may include a response to others in the group who have already posted their response, but it should be more than “I agree”: it should add something substantive and show a good understanding of the reading. You are best served by not waiting until Sunday night to write your first post. Rather, timelier posts enhance the group discussion and ensure completion of the week’s assignment. **You must make at least one further posting responding to a member of your on-line community before the start of class.**

These online discussions are an important part of the learning experience for this course. You will need to plan your schedule accordingly as failure to participate will negatively affect your final grade. Because these discussions are designed to foster interaction among students, missed discussions cannot be made up. No contributions posted after the assignment deadline will be counted. You must participate in the discussion by posting a certain number of messages (at least 2 as explained above) over more than one day but the actual days and times that you participate will be up to your schedule.

Evaluating Online Postings

One of the advantages to an asynchronous conversation is that participants have the luxury of time to reflect on what they propose to say. You can use this time to craft a thoughtful, meaningful contribution; to check out your premise with course material or independent research; and to edit your writing so that it “says what you mean.”

Your online forum contributions will be evaluated on comment quality, participation, and how well you express your ideas and thoughts. Improvement over time will be rewarded. The matrix below is a guide for how submissions will be graded. To earn the maximum 4 points you will need to satisfy each of the elements below.

Forum Grading Matrix:

COMMENT QUALITY		PARTICIPATION		EXPRESSION	
Exhibits an overall understanding of the topic and critical thinking.		Provides a minimum of 2 comments per topic or question – one must be an original post* and at least 1 quality reply. The first comment is made prior to Sunday, 11:59 PM (4 days after forum opens)		Comments are well communicated. It is easy for peers to understand points being made.	
Are relevant to the topic the forum addresses.		Fosters learning community development through replies that acknowledge and then build on the thoughts of others.		Comments are presented using appropriate grammar, sentence structure and spelling.	
Are constructed so that citations of original work are available.		At least 1 comment offers an appropriate question or point for the learning community to consider.		Expression of ideas and thoughts is outstanding.	
		At least 1 comment offers an appropriate external resource for the learning community to consider. Improvement over time will be considered.		Comments are appropriate for an academic forum.	

**What is an original post? An original post is your post that answers the question in a way that demonstrates your overall understanding of the topic. It is often your first post, but doesn't have to be. The original post should give a good idea of what you learned from the lecture or assigned readings/viewings.*

Your forum grade is based on the following criteria:

- How often did you participate? Two posts per question is *minimally* adequate, whereas fewer than two posts will result in a deduction in points.

- Was your participation interactive? Remember, this is a discussion – it is better to demonstrate understanding of the ideas of others before going on to your own opinion.
- Were your comments thoughtful and based on the readings? Did they reflect an accurate understanding of the material being discussed or were they riddled with errors regarding the course material.
- Were your opinions backed by personal experience or other types of evidence? Did you draw on readings from other courses, current news, or online sources of information in a manner that contributes to the discussion?
- Were your comments expressed clearly and appropriately? Do they show mastery of persuasive written English?
- Were your comments civil? Questioning, debate and disagreeing can be done in a respectful and constructive way or they can be done with the intent to discredit or hurt others. Only the former is acceptable in a “learning community”.

2-Leading Class Discussions (10%): Each week, two of you will lead the discussion by presenting some of the main themes or ideas that were most compelling for you from the readings along with your critical reflections on those ideas. The total presentation should be 8-10 minutes. You will also develop two sets of discussion questions: at least two questions specifically for the speaker and at least two questions specifically for the larger class. To prepare, you and your teammate must read the articles for the week thoroughly, as well as the on-line posts of all students for that week and discuss together the questions you want to pose to the speaker and to the larger group. You may also contact the faculty presenter to discuss the format of the class.

2- Short Papers (35%): Each student will write two 3-5 page double-spaced reaction papers, each one based on a topic covered in class. Each paper should bounce off of the class presentation and the main arguments of the readings assigned for that week and provide some thoughtful reactions, evaluations and counter-arguments that relate the readings to your personal experience, current events, and additional readings you have done for this class or other classes (although you are not required to do outside readings for these short papers). The first short paper is due on February 22nd, the second short paper is due on April 11th.

Here is the rubric I will use to evaluate your papers:

- Is there a clear question/puzzle explored or thesis/argument posed?
- Is there sustained reference to and interaction with at least two of the readings and the class presentation?
- Quality of paper organization: Does the paper have an introduction that lays out the question or thesis clearly, a body that supports the question or thesis and a conclusion that summarizes what you have presented along with some final provocative questions or comments?
- Quality of writing: Is the paper stylistically smooth with few grammatical problems, no run-on sentences or sentence fragments, no super long paragraphs, correct spelling, no typos?

3-Long Paper (25%): Each student will write one 12-14 page paper on one of the topics covered in the syllabus or on another topic related to the course that you find especially interesting. I will distribute and post on sakai a number of tools related to how to write a paper.

For the long paper you will need to use **at least** four additional academic/scholarly sources (books or articles) beyond those discussed in class. You can use newspaper and magazine articles in the paper but they cannot be counted as scholarly sources. The long assignment may build on one of your short papers, but you cannot include the short paper as part of your long paper. I will post sample papers for you to get an idea of what I consider to be good papers.

You will do this assignment in three phases. First, on March 7th you will come to class with a short written proposal about what you intend to explore in your paper so that I can give you feedback along with a list of scholarly sources you will use to write the paper. I welcome you coming to meet with me ahead of time to help you think through your topic and to get suggestions for scholarly sources. You should also plan on consulting with Donna Schulman, SMLR librarian to help you with a literature review.

Your proposal need not be longer than a few sentences or a paragraph but should address the following question: If you are writing an analytical¹ or expository² paper: What is your question or puzzle? The idea here is not just to report on

¹ An analytical paper breaks down the issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluates the issue or idea and presents this breakdown and evaluation to the audience.

² An expository paper explains something to the audience.

something but to explore a question in a sophisticated, analytic way. If you are writing an argumentative³ paper: What is the claim you intend to make and how will you justify this claim? Second, you have the option of submitting a draft paper by April 11th so that I can provide feedback before your final draft. While submitting a draft is optional, it will be helpful to your final grade. Third, you will submit a final draft by midnight on May 2nd. Papers will be submitted to Turnitin.com to ensure that they are original and there is no plagiarism.

Here's the grading rubric I will be using:

- Is there a clear puzzle or a thesis?
- Is there sustained reference to and interaction with scholarly sources to explore this puzzle or to support this thesis?
- Are there at least four additional scholarly sources beyond class of reasonable length?
- Quality of paper organization: Clear introduction that states your puzzle or thesis and then provides a roadmap of how you intend to explore it, sub-headings for each section of the paper, conclusion that summarizes your findings or your argument and throws out final provocative questions or points
- Quality of writing including: Is the paper stylistically smooth with few grammatical problems, no run-on sentences or sentence fragments, no enormous paragraphs, no misspellings or typos?
- Does the paper reflect a serious effort on the student's behalf given that they have had two months to write it and that they had the opportunity to hand in a draft?

Class Norms:

- Read and think about all of the assigned readings before each class.
- Please participate actively, thoughtfully, and respectfully—listen and engage appropriately.
- Please be ready to begin at 7:00. Some lateness is inevitable but it is disruptive so please keep it to a minimum.

³ An argumentative paper makes a claim about a topic and then justifies this claim with specific evidence.

- Please minimize absences—this is a class that depends on participation. If you must miss class please call or email me in advance.
- Please turn in assignments when they are due. There will be a penalty for late papers.

Class Schedule:

Class 1 January 18th

Introduction to the Course/Introduction to each other

Paradigms of Employment and Critical Issues in Industrial Relations

Thinking About Labor Standards Enforcement: Janice Fine

Class 2 January 25th

How to Be an Informed Consumer of Social Science Research (get articles from Sue)

Prof Sue Schurman

Overview on writing an academic paper

Proper Research Sources (and plagiarism)

Donna Schulman, LSER Librarian

Class 3 February 1st

The Collective Employee Rights Regime: Philosophical and Historical Underpinnings of Industrial Relations

Prof. Paula Voos

Class 4 February 8th

The Individual Employment Rights Regime/Employment Law/Employment at Will

Prof. James Cooney

Class 5 February 15th

Human Resource Management: A Critical Appraisal

Prof. Jeff Keefe

Class 6: February 22nd

Social Media and other hot topics in Employment Law

Prof. Barbara Lee

First Short Paper due

Class 7: February 29th
TBA

Class 8: March 7th
Inequality, Labor Economics, Public Policy and the Employee/Employer
Relationship
Prof. Doug Kruse

Proposal for Long Paper Due

Class 9: March 21st
Human Capital: Education and the U.S. Workforce
Rutgers Vice President David Finegold

Class 10: March 28th
Employee Ownership
Prof. Joseph Blasi

Class 11: April 4th
Race and Gender and Working Class Empowerment
Prof. Joan Meyer

Class 12 April 11th
Immigration and Employment Issues, Alternative Forms of Organization Among
Immigrant Workers
Prof. Janice Fine, LSER

Second Short Paper Due

Class 13: April 18th:
International Comparative Labor and Employment Relations: China
Prof. Mingwei Liu

Class 14: April 25th
What is the relevance of unions for professional and managerial employees?
Prof. Adrienne Eaton

Class Evaluation

Final Paper due May 2nd midnight