

38:578:500

Introductory Seminar in Labor and Employment Relations
Spring 2018 Syllabus

Monday, 7:20 to 10 PM, LEC 130/131

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DESCRIPTION: This course is designed to introduce Master's students to research and findings in the fields of labor studies, employment relations and human resources, and to raise significant philosophical questions that lie at the core of the discipline. It is also designed to help students strengthen their analytical and writing skills; and it will provide students with an opportunity to engage a number of SMLR faculty in discussions about their areas of interest.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students who successfully complete this course will meet the following official learning objectives of SMLR and MLER:

- Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry level professional. (Goal I)
- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background of a particular work situation (Goal IV)

In addition, successful students will also meet the following course specific goals:

1. Deepen their understanding of key historical and current workplace and social issues through exposure to a variety of research topics and methods;
2. Explore the ethical implications of alternative employment systems and relationships;
3. Develop and improve analytical and writing skills;
4. Be introduced to a number of faculty and through them to the scope of the MLER program so that they can make more informed choices about future course work and research sponsors;
5. Create a culture of open discussion, constructive criticism and active collaboration between and among faculty and students.

THEMES:

In addition to the topics to be covered by the presentations from other Rutgers faculty described below, the course will also address questions and concerns that illuminate key professional issues in the area of labor studies and employment relations. These continuing conversations will help to tie the different parts of the course together and accustom students to asking the most searching questions possible about the material under discussion.

A. SHOULD UNEMPLOYMENT BE CONSIDERED A PUBLIC EMERGENCY?

1. Water-borne diseases (e.g., cholera) are deadly. They are also preventable with appropriate public health measures and investments.
2. Any case of water-borne disease is therefore unacceptable and properly triggers an immediate emergency response.
3. Unemployment, too, is deadly (if not as much so) and preventable with appropriate public policies and investments.
4. Should any unemployment therefore also be considered unacceptable and its appearance trigger an immediate emergency response?

B. IS WAGE THEFT A CRIME?

1. Theft (armed or unarmed robbery) is a taking or appropriation that occurs either without consent or with coerced consent. (Surrendering your wallet at gun- or knife point would be an example of coerced consent.)
2. Any theft is a crime and intolerable: every theft is one theft too many.
3. Is wage theft also a crime, which should be investigated as such?

C. DO UNFAIR WAGES ALWAYS INVOLVE SOME DEGREE OF WAGE THEFT?

1. A fair price for goods or services is the price at which they can be bought or sold in a competitive market (i.e., a market in which both buyers and sellers have a reasonable range of providers and products from which to choose).
2. A fair wage is the price at which labor services can be hired in a competitive labor market (i.e., a labor market in which both wage earners and wage payers have a reasonable range of opportunities and willing workers from which to choose).
3. Where such preconditions are not met, the wages paid will be to some extent coerced, therefore unfair and, by definition, involve some degree of theft.
4. In uncompetitive corners of the labor market, where employment or unemployment is forced, the wages paid in that corner can be considered presumptively unfair, etc.
5. Preventable unemployment is therefore a cause of some number of unfair employment contracts and some degree of coerced wages or wage theft.

D. IS A BAD EMPLOYER A THREAT TO GOOD EMPLOYERS?

1. Creating productive organizations that are acceptable and, if possible, exemplary places of employment is the primary goal of “human resource management” and “employment relations.”
2. When a significant number of employees are forced to work for bad employers (i.e., those who do not provide acceptable terms and conditions of employment), then it is hard for other employers to be good. (Bad employers drive out the good, just as bad money drives out good money.)

E. IS INVOLUNTARY UNEMPLOYMENT A THREAT TO GOOD EMPLOYERS?

1. Restricted choices in the labor market forces people to take whatever jobs they can get, even bad ones. Restricting employees’ labor market choices therefore encourages and rewards bad employers, which threatens and undermines good employers.

PROCESS: This course does not rely on only two instructors. In addition to its coordinating and writing instructors, other faculty from the Labor Studies and Employment Relations program will make short, focused presentations about an aspect of their research or work in the field. They have also suggested one or more articles to read (about 25 to 30 pages) on the topic of their presentation, about which students are required to post short summary responses on the course Sakai site before they come to class. ***These posts are very important.*** The regularity and punctuality of the posts is an index of the degree of your *PREPARATION* for *PARTICIPATION* in the course, both of which are significant determinants of the final grade. (The other elements are *APPLICATION* and *MASTERY*. There is more information about grades and grading below.)

Each class will consist of: (a) an opening summary of the prior week's session (about 15 minutes), which will serve as a bridge and introduction to the day's speaker and themes; (b) a visiting presentation and discussion (about 60 minutes); (c) student-led discussions and presentations to small and large groups of the class, where student papers are "workshopped" and shared (about 75 minutes); and other activities as described below.

REQUIREMENTS: Successfully to complete this course, students must:

- (a) Attend class.
- (b) Read and post summaries of each week's reading before the start of class.
- (c) Complete three acceptable short papers as described below.
- (d) Participate in the in-class writing workshops and discussion circles with other students.

To document your preparation or engagement with the themes of the course, you are required to write brief summaries of each week's assigned material.

To document your participation fully in the course you need to attend class and contribute actively to each of its segments.

To demonstrate your final mastery of the material, you are required to prepare two brief personal essays and one slightly longer presentation, as described below, which engage with the themes of the course.

Required Reading: There is no single assigned text for the class. Each week's readings are available on the Sakai website. 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 Intro Sem in LER SP 18"
4. Click on "Resources" at the left
5. Click on the folder titled "38:578:500:01 Intro Sem in LER SP 18 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. You can download the reader for free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. For problems, contact Laura Walkoviak at lawalkoviak@smlr.rutgers.edu or (848) 932-9503.

There will also be short videos on writing, announcements, and additional readings posted. You should bring hardcopies of the readings to class.

Class Preparation: To prepare adequately for a class, you must carefully read the assigned texts and come prepared to discuss them intelligently. To facilitate your participation, you are urged to keep a reading journal containing notes, summaries, queries and ideas about each text. There is no standard length or format for these entries. They need only be long enough, and specific enough, to assist your efforts to comprehend the main ideas in the assigned readings.

Class Notes and Queries: Each week you are required to post a short summary of your relevant reading journal entries, as well as any problem sets, for me to see on Sakai by the morning of each scheduled class. (The location for the posting is the Assignments tab on the course web page.)

Class Attendance: Students are expected to attend class regularly. Plan to arrive on time and stay the full class session. Often important information is communicated at the beginning and at the end of the class. Usually I set the broader frame for the class discussion at the beginning of class. At the end of class, I try to save time to introduce the topic for the next week.

If you anticipate a problem with attendance or timeliness, you should discuss the matter with me *before* signing up for the class. Your grade for participation will suffer if your attendance is irregular and/or you repeatedly arrive late and/or leave early. Your overall grade will suffer as well, since it is based largely on the persistence and quality of your preparation, as well as on your mastery of the material.

In case of an absence, you are encouraged to talk with other students in the class about the material covered in class; you may talk with me before or after class about anything you may have missed. I will not respond to e-mail requests to repeat material presented in class, however. Class handouts will be posted on Sakai.

Class Participation: Students are expected to participate actively in class discussion. You should read carefully all the required readings *before* the class meets and be prepared to speak about them in class. You should strive to be able to articulate the main ideas of each text, and to offer your own assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. Please bring an accessible copy of the assigned readings with you to the class in which they are to be discussed.

The quality of your comments is as important as their frequency. The best comments are informed by the week's readings or other relevant evidence and examples. Your personal experiences are important, especially as they shed light on the themes of the class. Active, respectful listening is also as important to class participation as talking. Students will be expected to help raise the level of class discussion by contributing their own informed responses and by interacting with others in ways that help them to help clarify and extend their comments.

The posted brief summaries of your reading journal entries or completed problem sets (as required) are used to measure your class participation. Each may receive up to 10 points, *but only if you attend the relevant class*. Each class may also consist of one or more small-group activity, during which you will be asked to develop with others a perspective on questions raised by the assigned texts. Your participation in these activities will also be taken into account.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES AND WEIGHTS:

1. **Weekly Summaries and responses (up to 100 points):** weekly short summaries of and responses to the assigned readings, which are to be posted on Sakai before the start of each class and evaluated as accomplished (10 points), adequate (5) or unacceptable (0).

2. **Autobiographical Intellectual History Essay**: An in-class essay about the most important idea or ideas you have learned in college or graduate school to this point. The essay must include a description of both (1) the specific facts and perspective that have influenced you the most; and (2) the texts or experiences from which you learned the most. It should also include a brief description of how your beliefs or actions were changed by the learning.

Think of this assignment as a letter to the rest of the class or personal statement that might accompany an application to graduate school, which conveys a sense of who you are and where you are coming from. It should be clear, specific and chatty.

In-Class Writing Assignment: Monday, January 29, 2018

3. **Autobiographical Work Experience Essay (50 points)**: An autobiographical essay on your own personal work (or search-for-work) experiences, which includes (1) a description of what, in your opinion, are the best and worst practices, programs or institutions you have encountered in your career so far; and (2) specific suggestions about how you think the worst of these practices or institutions might be improved.

Think of this assignment as a report to a think tank or legislative body focused on issues related to employment and work. It needs to be autobiographical to establish your standing or experience with the issue; and thoughtful and informed about the issue to ensure that your suggestions for improvement are constructive. The writing should be clear, serious and fresh.

Title/Abstract/Sources Due (10 points): Sunday, February 4 by midnight on Sakai

Argument/Plot/Points Due (10 points): Sunday, February 11 by midnight on Sakai

First Draft Due (15 points): Sunday, February 18 by midnight on Sakai

Final Draft Due (15 points): Sunday, March 4 by midnight on Sakai

4. **Persuasive Policy Speech/Essay (50 points)**: A short written speech (as if to the membership of an organization), presentation (as if to the leadership of an organization) or testimony (as if to a legislative committee), the purpose of which is to secure support for a specific policy proposal. You can focus on the same problem and solution you discussed in your autobiographical essay. But in this version, you need to go beyond your own experience to support your proposal with credible scientific research or similar authority. The essay, presentation or testimony needs to: (a) define the problem that the proposed policy or program is supposed to address; (b) describe the proposed solution; and (c) provide factual evidence to support the claims that your proposal warrants the group's attention and support.

Think of this assignment as a presentation to a legislative committee, corporate lobbying firm, public interest organization or union political action committee. This piece should have the best qualities of the other two, as well as being, if possible, inspiring.

Title/Abstract/Sources Due (10 points): Sunday, March 25 by midnight on Sakai

Argument/Plot/Points Due (10 points): Sunday, April 1 by midnight on Sakai

First Draft with Bibliography Due (15 points): Sunday, April 8 by midnight on Sakai

Final Draft with Bibliography Due (15 points): Sunday, April 23 by midnight on Sakai

The third essay must include a bibliography and relevant citations. The second can be more free form.

PLAGIARISM: The extensive use of another person's ideas without proper citation is plagiarism and unacceptable. It can result in a failing grade and disciplinary action through

University channels. The same is true for any other form of cheating. For information about proper citation of written and web-based material, please read, "Documenting Sources" and "Correct Forms for Citation," which is available on the Sakai web page for this course.

GRADING SCALE: Grades will be awarded on the basis of the following schedule:

A = 199 to 190 points	(A+ = 200
B = 189 to 175 points	(190 > B+ > 185;
C = 174 to 150 points	(175 > C+ > 170;
D = 149 to 140 points	(150 > D+ > 145;
F < 140 points	

There are fourteen class sessions January 23 through May 1, for thirteen of which there will be required readings. Points may be earned as follows:

Posted Summaries: Up to 10 points per post, up to 130 points overall

Work Experience Essays: Up to 50 points based on instructor evaluation

Persuasive Speech/Essay: Up to 50 points based on instructor evaluation

Class Participation: Attending class = 1, not attending = 0, up to 15 points

Final Grade = $\sum_{p=(1 \rightarrow 10)}(\text{Posts}_p \times \text{Attendance}_d) + \text{Essays} + \text{Presentation}$

Thus, if you miss a class, you will get no points for anything you post on that day. But as there are thirteen opportunities to post, you can miss up to two classes or two postings without penalty; and anyone who attends and posts for more than 10 times will earn extra credit.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: (January 22) – INTRODUCTION & INFORMATION LITERACY (Julie Peters)

A brief overview of the themes of the course and its requirements, as described in the syllabus. Also, a presentation by SMLR librarian Julie Peters on information literacy and LSER literature and resources available in the Carey Library.

Week 2: (January 29) – CAPITALISM AND POLITICAL ECONOMIES (Michael Merrill)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

In-Class Writing Assignment: An intellectual autobiography

Week 3: (February 5) – INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS FRAMEWORKS (Paula Voos)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

Title/Abstract/Sources of Work Experience Essay Due: These elements of your work experience essay must be posted before class.

Week 4: (February 12) – LABOR & EMPLOYMENT HISTORY (Dorothy Sue Cobble)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

Argument/Plot/Points of Work Experience Essay Due: These elements of your work experience essay must be posted before class.

Week 5: (February 19) – RACE, CLASS AND IDENTITY (Tamara Lee)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

First Draft of Work Experience Essay Due: The first draft of your work experience essay must be posted before class.

Week 6: (February 26) – EMPLOYMENT LAW (Lisa Schur)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

Week 7: (March 5) – ACTION RESEARCH (Sue Schurman)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

Final Draft of Work Experience Essay Due: The final draft of your work experience essay must be posted before class.

-- SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS MARCH 12 --

Week 8: (March 19) – COLLECTIVE BARGAINING (Rosemarie Cipparulo)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

Collective Evaluation of Work Experience Essays: We will spend a portion of this class reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of your work experience essays.

Week 9: (March 26) – EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS IN SPORTS (Rebecca Givan)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

Title/Abstract/Sources of Persuasive Policy Essay Due: These elements of your persuasive policy essay must be posted before class.

Week 10: (April 2) – ENFORCING WORKERS RIGHTS (Janice Fine)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

Argument/Plot/Points of Persuasive Policy Essay Due: These elements of your persuasive policy essay must be posted before class.

Week 11: (April 9) – THE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE (Anne-Michelle Marsden)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

First Draft of Persuasive Policy Essay Due: A first draft of your persuasive policy essay must be posted before class.

Week 12: (April 16) – ASIAN AMERICAN WORKERS (Juhi Verma)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

Week 13: (April 23) – THE FUTURE OF WORK (Charles Heckscher)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

Final Draft of Persuasive Policy Essay Due: The final draft of your persuasive policy essay must be posted before class.

Week 14 (April 30) – CLIMATE CHANGE (TBA)

Resources: The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

Post Due: The first required post is due on Sakai before this Monday's dawn.

Collective Evaluation of Persuasive Policy Essays and Class: We will spend a portion of this class reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of your persuasive policy essays and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the class as a whole.

Revised: January 20, 2018