Public Sector Employment Issues: 38:578:525:01
Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations
Spring 2023

Instructor: Professor Francis Ryan
Email: fr156@smlr.rutgers.edu
Class Meets Online, Wednesday, 7:20-10:00 pm

Course Overview: The current crisis of the public sector workplace—centered in part on such issues as pension defunding, contract impasses, school reform, civil service and debates over unionization, privatization, and taxation—is at the heart of our national political discussion. This class will introduce some of these important issues, place the contemporary debates in a historical, cultural, and sociological perspective, and define the trends in recent scholarship. While the clash over government services and the work structures that provide them seems new, the origins of this debate have deep roots in U.S. political theory and history. We will explore these matters in depth and examine how contemporary scholars in management and industrial relations have contextualized this dynamic.

Course Guidelines:

Class attendance: As a graduate-level course that meets online once a week, your attendance is critical. Please attend each class meeting, and if you are unable to make it, or need to leave early, please let me know ahead of time.

Participation: This class will utilize a variety of formats. Each week, I will provide an overview of the topic in the first part of the class and invite open dialogue during this process. For the bulk of the seminar meetings, we will engage in a discussion of the assigned readings. Please complete the readings before our Zoom meeting each week and be ready to take an active role. After each class, I will provide notes and a general review of our exchanges.

Weekly Forum Posts: A selection of readings have been prepared for each week. Please do all of the assigned reading and post a reflection on the Canvas threaded forum site that gives a general overview of what you gained from the readings, and perhaps a question that you would like to have addressed in class. This allows all of us to have a sense of what we found most interesting or perplexing about the topics for that week’s Zoom class. Please have your forum response posted by noon the day of our class meeting. The reports are worth 15% of the semester grade.

Unless otherwise specified, all writing assignments (midterm exam, the final exam and research paper) should be sent to me via email attachment the day they are due. Out of respect to those who meet this expectation, late reports and final papers will be subject to downgrading.

Research Paper: One of the major projects you will prepare in this seminar is a research paper that explores an issue of the public sector of your choice. Please send me a brief paper proposal that outlines your research topic by class time on February 8. The paper should be at least 15 pages in length and provide at least ten scholarly sources as part of the bibliography. Further details on what is expected will be provided.
**Supplementary Sources:** Each week I will provide you a list of supplementary readings on the syllabus. You are not responsible for reading any of these listed sources; I provide them merely to give you a fuller sense of the emerging historiography on the public sector, and to give you a sense of where my own lecture notes come from. You might also find these useful sources to refer to if your research paper topic aligns with the topics we cover.

**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.

**Canvass:** This course uses the web-based classroom management system. Please utilize Canvass to access each week’s readings. Other readings as specified can be downloaded via the Rutgers Library Journal website, or public access online.

**Grading:**

- Take Home Midterm: 20%
- Participation: 20%
- Take Home Final: 20%
- Paper: 25%
- Weekly Overviews: 15%

Please note that this syllabus may change during the course of the semester. Additional in-class readings will be handed out from time to time as related to developments in the issues we are exploring from week to week during the semester.

*Weekly Seminar Schedule*

**January 18: Introduction and Overview of the course.**

Introduction to the class. No assigned readings.

**January 25: Government Jobs, the Spoils System, and the Rise of Civil Service**

**Readings:**


Excerpt from J.T. Salter, *Boss Rule* (1935)

**Supplementary Sources:**


Jane Addams, “Problems of Municipal Administration.” (1904)


**February 1: Government Sector Employment: Conflicting Viewpoints**

**Readings:**


Milton Friedman, “Why Government is the Problem.” (Hoover Institute, 1993)

**Supplementary Sources:**


Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2020)


**February 8: The Federal Service: Spotlight: Federal Park Rangers**

**Readings:**


**Supplementary Sources:**


**February 15: The Crisis of the Federal Service: The Post Office**

**Readings:**


**Supplementary Sources:**


*The Great Postal Heist* (2019) Director: Jay Gallone

*The Mailman* (1946)

Philip F. Rubio, *There’s Always Work at the Post Office: African American Postal Workers and the Fight for Jobs, Justice, and Equality*


**February 22: Midterm Take Home**

**March 1: Blackboard Unionism: Teachers and the Education Sector**

**Readings:**


**Supplementary Sources:**


March 8: Charter Schools and the Future of Public Education

Readings:


Supplementary Sources:


March 15: Spring Break. No Class Meeting

March 22: At the Barricades: Police Unionism in the Twenty-First Century

Readings:


Supplementary Sources:

*Women in Blue* (2020) Director: Deirdre Fishel


March 29: “Angels at the Intersections:” School Crossing Guards, Women and Part Time Municipal Services

Readings:

Francis Ryan, “You’ll Never Walk Alone:” Crossing Guard Associations and Labor Feminism in Postwar America. (Labor, February 2023)


Supplementary Sources:


Katherine Turk, Equality on Trial: Gender and Rights in the Modern American Workplace (Philadelphia, Penn, 2019)

April 5: Sexuality and Quality of Work Life in the Federal Workplace

Readings:


**Supplementary Sources:**


**April 12: Recent Developments in Public Sector Labor Law**

**Readings:**


**Supplementary Sources:**


April 19: Reinventing Government, Labor-Management Cooperation, and the Future of Public Sector Employment

Readings:


Supplementary Sources:


Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf and Todd Swanson, Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-First Century (2001).


Final Paper due

April 26: Final Class Overview