

GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS TODAY

Labor Studies and Employment Relations 38:578:562:01/90
Spring 2026, merged/hybrid

SYLLABUS

Class Meetings:

Room 106, Janice Levin Building
and online via Zoom
Wednesday, 7:20-10:00pm

Instructor:

Prof. Tobias Schulze-Cleven, PhD
Labor Education Center, Room 171
50 Labor Center Way
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Email: tobias.schulzecleven@rutgers.edu
Phone: 848-932-1740

Course Overview:

This course introduces you to the comparative analysis of shifting employment relations around the world. Not only will you learn about different countries and continents, the course will also acquaint you with theories and concepts that help you better understand how the regulation of work has evolved. We will pay particular attention to the role of institutions in mediating diverging interests at the workplace and channeling the universal politics of work into unique patterns. This focus includes reflections on how labor relations actors can engage with institutions in multiple ways. By taking the class, students will gain a better appreciation of global differences and commonalities in employers' strategies for human resource management, workers' modes of collective organization, and the approaches used by state authorities to regulate labor markets.

SMLR Learning Objectives:

- V. Understanding Context: Evaluate the context of workplace issues, public policies, and management decisions.

Instructor's Learning Objectives:

After taking the course, the student will be able to:

- Explain and distinguish different theories and their core concepts in the field of global employment relations today.
- Apply these theories to contemporary employment relations around the world and match conceptual tools to specific analytical purposes.
- Compare and contrast employment relations systems in a variety of countries and discuss transnational trends.
- Use knowledge about theoretical approaches and empirical developments to make arguments for/against particular policies.

Course Requirements (details at the end of the syllabus):

This is a graduate-level course, and there will be a focus on reading and discussion. Each time we meet, there will be plenty of opportunity for you to share the outcome of your own engagement with the material and learn further through interaction.

Your grade in this class will be made up of the following components:

In-Class Participation (& Attendance)	20% of the course grade
Discussion Board Entries	20%
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Essay	30%

The course outline below includes the basic set of readings we will cover in class. There will be some substitutions, and I might supplement these assigned materials with the occasional news article on the most recent developments.

COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE

SECTION 1 Introduction

The first section introduces students to the comparative analysis of employment relations. We begin by exploring basic features of the employment relationship and probing the purpose of comparison. We get an initial taste for comparison by turning to employment relations in neighboring Canada. We ask ourselves what is different from and similar to the US.

Module 1 (January 21): Welcome and Agenda for the Course

Colling, Trevor and Michael Terry. 2010. "Work, the Employment Relationship and the Field of Industrial Relations." In Trevor Colling and Michael Terry, eds. *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice*. Chichester: Wiley, 3-25.

Module 2 (January 28): Comparisons, including with Canada

Eidlin, Barry. 2015. "Class vs. Special Interest: Labor, Power, and Politics in the U.S. and Canada in the Twentieth Century." *Politics & Society* 43(2): 181-211.

Taras, Daphne G. and Scott Walsworth. 2020. "Employment Relations in Canada." In Greg J. Bamber, Russell Lansbury, Nick Wailes and Chris F. Wright, eds. *International & Comparative Employment Relations: Globalization and Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 75-105.

Simmons, Erica S. and Nicholas Rush Smith. 2021. "Rethinking Comparison: An Introduction." In Erica S. Simmons and Nicholas Rush Smith, eds. *Rethinking Comparison: Innovative Methods for Qualitative Political Inquiry*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1-27.

Supplemental:

Card, David and Richard Freeman. 1994. "Small Differences that Matter: Canada vs. the United States." In Richard Freeman, ed. *Working under Different Rules*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 189-222.

Schaffer, Frederic Charles. 2021. "Two Ways to Compare." In Erica S. Simmons and Nicholas Rush Smith, eds. *Rethinking Comparison: Innovative Methods for Qualitative Political Inquiry*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 47-63.

Katz, Harry C and Alexander J. S. Colvin. 2020. "Employment Relations in the United States." In Greg J. Bamber, Russell Lansbury, Nick Wailes and Chris F. Wright, eds. *International & Comparative Employment Relations: Globalization and Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 49-74.

SECTION 2

Evolving National Employment Systems

The second section introduces students to traditional ways of analyzing labor and employment relations, which frequently revolve around the concept of a "national industrial relations system." After presenting three distinct frameworks for analysis and establishing their important conceptual distinctions (module 3), the course will explore national institutions in two European countries (modules 4 and 5). This is then followed by a session that examines the power of comparative analysis through engaging with contemporary academic research on evolving labor relations across the wealthy democracies (module 6).

In exploring labor and employment relations across these economically advanced countries, class discussions will highlight such features as patterns of wage-formation, linkages between national-level regulations and firm-level practices in labor management, as well as social cleavages in countries' labor movement. Together, the four modules of section 2 will introduce students to important cross-national trends. A midterm exam (module 7) allows you to show what you have learned in the first half of the course.

Module 3 (February 4): Three Frameworks for Comparative Analysis

Katz, Harry C., Thomas A. Kochan and Alexander J. S. Colvin. 2015. "A Framework for Analyzing Labor Relations." In Harry C. Katz, Thomas A. Kochan and Alexander J. S. Colvin. *Labor Relations in a Globalizing World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 3-26. [IR]

Martin, Cathie Jo. 2014. "Getting Down to Business: Varieties of Capitalism and Employment Relations." In Adrian Wilkinson, Geoffrey Wood and Richard Deeg, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Employment Relations: Comparative Employment Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 65-85. [VoC]

Arnholtz, Jens and Bjarke Refslund. 2024 “Power Resource Theory for Contemporary Society: A Research Framework.” In Jens Arnholtz and Bjarke Refslund, eds. *Workers, Power and Society: Power Resource Theory in Contemporary Capitalism*. London: Routledge, 1-31. [LPR]

Supplemental:

IR Approach:

- Dunlop, John T. 1958. “An Industrial Relations System.” In *Industrial Relations Systems*. New York. Henry Holt, 43-62.
- Kochan, Thomas A., Harry C. Katz, and Robert B. McKersie. 1994 [1986]. “A Strategic Choice Perspective on Industrial Relations.” In *The Transformation of American Industrial Relations*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 3-20.

VoC Approach:

- Hall, Peter A., and David Soskice. 2001. “An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism.” In Peter A. Hall and David Soskice, eds. *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1–70.

LPR Approach:

- Schmalz, Stefan, Carmen Ludwig and Edward Webster. 2018. “The Power Resources Approach: Developments and Challenges.” *Global Labour Journal* 9(2): 113-134.
- Schulze-Cleven, Tobias. 2017. “Collective Action and Globalization: Building and Mobilizing Labour Power.” *Journal of Industrial Relations* 59(4): 397–419.

Module 4 (February 11): Employment Relations in Germany

Schulze-Cleven, Tobias. 2017. “German Labor Relations in International Perspective: A Model Reconsidered.” *German Politics & Society* 35(4): 46-76.

Reisenbichler, Alexander and Kimberly J. Morgan. 2012. “From ‘Sick Man’ to ‘Miracle’: Explaining the Robustness of the German Labor Market During and After the Financial Crisis 2008-09.” *Politics & Society* 40(4): 549-579.

Keller, Berndt K. and Anja Kirsch. 2020. “Employment Relations in Germany.” In Greg J. Bamber, Russell D. Lansbury, Nick Wailes and Chris F. Wright, eds. 2015. *International & Comparative Employment Relations: National Regulation, Global Changes*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 179-207.

Supplemental:

Rothstein, Sidney A. 2018. “Unlikely Activists: Building Worker Power Under Liberalization.” *Socio-Economic Review* 17(3): 573-602.

Diessner, Sebastian, Niccolo Durazzi and David Hope. 2022. "Skill-Biased Liberalization: Germany's Transition to the Knowledge Economy." *Political & Society* 50(1): 117-155.

Rothstein, Sidney A. and Tobias Schulze-Cleven. 2020. "Germany After the Social Democratic Century: The Political Economy of Imbalance." *German Politics* 29(3): 297–318.

Module 5 (February 18): Employment Relations in Denmark

Alderman, Liz and Steven Greenhouse. 2014. "Living Wages, Rarity for U.S. Fast-Food Workers, Served Up in Denmark." *New York Times*, October 27.

Daemmrich, Arthur and Thomas Bredgaard. 2012. "The Welfare State as an Investment Strategy: Denmark's Flexicurity Policies." In Ashok Bardhan, Cynthia A. Kroll and Dwight M. Jaffee, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Offshoring and Global Employment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 159-179.

Madsen, Jørgen Steen, Jesper Due and Søren Kaj Andersen. 2015. "Employment Relations in Denmark" In Greg J. Bamber, Russell D. Lansbury, Nick Wailes and Chris F. Wright, eds. 2015. *International & Comparative Employment Relations: National Regulation, Global Changes*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 208-236.

Supplemental:

Ibsen, Christian Lyhne, and Kathleen Thelen. 2017. "Diverging Solidarity: Labor Strategies in the New Knowledge Economy." *World Politics* 69(3): 409–47.

Ibsen, Christian Lyhne. 2025. "Denmark – Innovative Organising Strategies for Engaging Employers and Young People." In Kurt Vandaele and Bianca Luna Fabris, eds. *When Trade Unions Learn to Innovate: Case Study Evidence from Across Europe*. Brussels: ETUI, 131-147

Module 6 (February 25): Comparing National Trajectories

Baccaro, Lucio and Chris Howell. 2011. "A Common Neoliberal Trajectory: The Transformation of Industrial Relations in Advanced Capitalism." *Politics & Society*, 39(4): 521-563.

Hassel, Anke, Jette Steen Knudsen and Bettina Wagner. 2016. "Winning the Battle or Losing the War: The Impact of European Integration on Labour Market Institutions in Germany and Denmark." *Journal of European Public Policy* 23(8): 1218-1239.

Thelen, Kathleen. 2019. "The American Precariat: U.S. Capitalism in Comparative Perspective." *Perspectives on Politics* 17(1): 5–27.

Supplemental:

Schulze-Cleven, Tobias and J. Timo Weishaupt. 2015. "Playing Normative Legacies: Partisanship and Employment Policies in Crisis-Ridden Europe." *Politics & Society* 43(2): 269–299.

Ornston, Darius and Tobias Schulze-Cleven. 2015. "Conceptualizing Cooperation: Coordination and Concertation as Two Logics of Collective Action." *Comparative Political Studies* 48(5): 555–585.

Diessner, Sebastian, Niccolo Durazzi, Federico Filetti, David Hope, Hanna Kleider and Simone Tonelli. 2025. "The Transition to the Knowledge Economy in Advanced Capitalist Democracies: A new Index for Comparative Research." *Socio-Economic Review* 23(4): 2223-2252.

Schulze-Cleven, Tobias. 2017. "A Continent in Crisis: European Labor and the Fate of Social Democracy." *Labor Studies Journal*, online first.

Module 7 (February 26 - March 4): Midterm Exam

SECTION 3
Shifting Actor Strategies

The third section explores shifting strategies by employers, unions and public authorities.

Module 8 (March 11): Shifting Employer Strategies

Lazonick, William. 2016. "Stock Buybacks and Executive Pay." Video (21:37 min.)

Appelbaum, Eileen, Rose Batt and Ian Clark. 2013. "Implications of Financial Capitalism for Employment Relations Research: Evidence from Breach of Trust and Implicit Contracts in Private Equity Buyouts." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 51(3): 498-518.

Kuruvilla, Sarosh and Ernesto Noronha. 2016. "From Pyramids to Diamonds: Legal Process Offshoring, Employment Systems, and Labor Markets for Lawyers in the United States and India." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 69(2): 354-377.

Supplemental:

Reddy, Niall. 2025. “‘Downsize and Distribute’ or ‘Merge and Monopolize’: A Critique of Corporate Financialization Theories” *Review of International Political Economy* 32(6): 2147-2182.

Rahman, K. Sabeel, and Kathleen Thelen. 2019. “The Rise of the Platform Business Model and the Transformation of Twenty-First-Century Capitalism.” *Politics & Society* 47(2): 177–204.

Jackson, Jason. 2025. “Introduction.” In *Traders, Speculators, and Captains of Industry: How Capitalist Legitimacy Shaped Foreign Investment Policy in India*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1-15.

Module 9 (March 25): Shifting Worker/Union Strategies

Hassel, Anke. 2015. “Trade Unions and the Future of Democratic Capitalism.” In Pablo Beramendi, Silja Häuserman, Herbert Kitschelt and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds. *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 231-256.

Benassi, Chiara and Lisa Dorigatti. 2015. “Straight to the Core – Explaining Union Responses to the Casualization of Work: The IG Metall Campaign for Agency Workers.” *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 43(3): 533-555.

Doellgast, Virginia and Ines Wagner. 2022. “Collective Regulation and the Future of Work in the Digital Economy: Insights from Comparative Employment Relations.” *Journal of Industrial Relations* 64(3): 438-460.

Supplemental:

Hyman, Richard and Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick. 2020. “Collective Representation at Work: Institutions and Dynamics.” In Carola M. Frege and John E. Kelly, eds. *Comparative Employment Relations in the Global Economy*. London: Routledge, 282-313 (chapter 11).

Sneiderman, Marilyn and Secky Fascione. 2017. “Going on Offense during Challenging Times.” *New Labor Forum*, online first.

Module 10 (April 1): Shifting State Strategies

Howell, Chris. 2016. “Regulating Class in the Neoliberal Era: The Role of the State in the Restructuring of Work and Employment Relations.” *Work, Employment and Society* 30(4): 573-589.

Mabbett, Deborah. 2016. "The Minimum Wage in Germany: What Brought the State In?" *Journal of European Public Policy* 23(8): 1240-1258.

Agarwala, Rina. 2022. "Introduction." In Rina Agarwala. *The Migration-Development Regime: How Class Shapes Indian Emigration*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1-22.

Supplemental:

Marginson, Paul. 2020. "Regional Regulation: The European Union." In Carola M. Frege and John E. Kelly, eds. *Comparative Employment Relations in the Global Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 314-339 (chapter 12).

Arnholtz, Jens and Søren Kaj Andersen. 2017. "Extra-Institutional Changes under Pressure from Posting." *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, online first.

SECTION 4 Global Frontiers of Change

The fourth section probes important developments for employment relations globally. A module each focuses on migration and authoritarianism in China (module 11), collective action by informal workers in India (module 12), and global labor governance (module 13). A final essay (module 14) allows you to show what you have learned in the second half of the course.

Module 11 (April 8): Migration and Authoritarianism in China

Chan, Anita. 2017. "Migrant Workers' Fight for Rights in China." In *Current History* 115(782): 209-213.

Gallagher, Mary. 2017. "Authoritarian Legality at Work: The Workplace and China's Urbanization." In *Authoritarian Legality in China: Law, Workers, and the State*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1-20.

The New York Times. 2013. "In China, a Staggering Migration." Video. (2:24 min.)

Supplemental:

Wang, Dang and Arthur Kroeber. 2025. "The Real China Model: Beijing's Enduring Formula for Wealth and Power." *Foreign Affairs*, Sep/Oct.

Liu, Mingwei. 2020. "China." In Carola M. Frege and John E. Kelly, eds. *Comparative Employment Relations in the Global Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 611-648 (chapter 23).

Module 12 (April 15): Collective Action of Informal Workers in India

Agarwala, Rina. 2008. "Reshaping the Social Contract: Emerging Relations between the State and Informal Labor in India." *Theory & Society* 37(4): 375-408.

Badigannavar, Vidu and Dona Ghosh. 2020. "India." In Carola M. Frege and John E. Kelly, eds. *Comparative Employment Relations in the Global Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 585-610 (chapter 22).

Cobble, Dorothy Sue. 2016. "Worker Mutualism in an Age of Entrepreneurial Capitalism." *Labour & Industry* 26(3): 179-189.

Module 13 (April 22): Global Labor Governance

Hassel, Anke. 2008. "The Evolution of a Global Labor Governance Regime." *Governance* 21(2): 231-251.

Donaghey, Jimmy and Juliane Reinecke. 2017. "When Industrial Democracy Meets Corporate Social Responsibility – A Comparison of the Bangladesh Accord and Alliance as Responses to the Rana Plaza Disaster." *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, online first.

Rianfrancos, Thea. 2021. "From Cases to Sites: Studying Global Processes in Comparative Politics." In Erica S. Simmons and Nicholas Rush Smith, eds. *Rethinking Comparison: Innovative Methods for Qualitative Political Inquiry*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 107-125.

Supplemental:

Fichter, Michael. 2020. "International Regulation: Standards and Voluntary Practices." In Carola M. Frege and John E. Kelly, eds. *Comparative Employment Relations in the Global Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 340-369 (chapter 13).

Baccaro, Lucio, and Valentina Mele. 2012. "Pathology of Path Dependency? The ILO and the Challenge of New Governance." *Industrial & Labor Relations Review* 65(2): 195-224.

Module 14 (April 23 – 29): Final Essay

Appendix: Further Information on Course Assignments & Class Rules

IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE

Be prepared for class and always read the assigned materials before our meetings. You are expected to bring questions and comments about the course material so that you can participate in class discussions. With much of our time spent learning through discussion, it is necessary for everybody to participate. I might ask students to use their questions to stimulate discussions and will ensure broad participation. It is critical that we respect one another's thoughts and address our comments at others' ideas, not at people themselves. This course is not a forum for demeaning or threatening language. Rather than measuring the frequency with which you speak in class, your participation grade reflects how you balance reasoning, reading, and listening.

Students should plan to attend every course session. If for some unavoidable reason you must miss a class, please let me know in advance through the university's absence reporting website (<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>) so that your absence will not remain unexplained. If you are late or leave early repeatedly, and if you miss class unexcused, your participation grade will suffer.

In-class discussion leadership: Each student is asked to choose one week this semester to prepare particularly well and act as a resource for class discussions, including preparing questions to serve as possible prompts. Your performance in this role will become part of your in-class participation grade.

DISCUSSION BOARD

Each student is expected to post to the discussion board on canvas during eight of the twelve weeks with new content during the semester. Students can decide which weeks they do so. There is no definite prescribed length for these posts. Please write 1-2 paragraphs reflecting on the readings, which can take many forms, including drawing connections between them, linking them to readings from previous weeks, commenting on the arguments made in the readings, formulating questions, or simply pointing out areas where you yourself seek more clarity. I will not give any prompt, not least to discourage the use of AI tools. These postings are required to encourage your engagement with the readings and make sure that you are prepared for class. The postings **are due by 4pm on the day of the seminar**, so that I have sufficient time to read them before we meet.

MIDTERM EXAM

Students will complete a midterm exam. The exam will consist of essay questions on themes and topics from reading assignments, videos, and other course content. You will be asked to complete the exam at home during the week preceding the class. For module 7, we will not have a regular class. Instead, I will schedule 10-minute slots to talk with each one of you about your exam answers.

FINAL ESSAY

The final essay will follow the general format of the midterm, with you writing it during the week and talking with me during class time about your answer. Most likely, you will be asked to

write a critique of a newspaper article, giving you an opportunity to directly apply the knowledge you acquired.

PAPER OPTION

I am offering a paper option instead of the midterm exam/final essay combination. A paper proposal would count 10% toward your grade, and the paper would make up 50%. If you are interested (e.g., because you are eyeing to go on to do doctoral work), please be in touch. The proposal would be due at the time of the midterm.

COMMUNICATION

Students are expected to check their Rutgers email accounts regularly for class announcements. Students are responsible for all information communicated to them via email by the instructor. Feel free to contact the instructor via email with questions or concerns about the course. I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours. When emailing the instructor, always include “Global Employment Relations Today” in the subject line of your email.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university’s [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

As the instructor for this course, I have the responsibility to protect students’ right to privacy. Classroom recordings of students will therefore be treated as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the U.S. federal law that governs access to educational information and records. Instructors and students must provide notification if any part of sessions are to be recorded, and such recordings cannot be circulated outside the course.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Students are expected to generate and submit original, personally composed tasks for each assignment. The use of Artificial Intelligence to create and submit work under the guise of original work is not acceptable. Students feeling the need to consult an Artificial Intelligence site to generate ideas or to suggest alternative wording may do so by emailing the professor before submitting the work and explaining how and why the AI will be used. The student will then insert a footer to the assignment containing a statement noting the degree to which AI was used in the completion of the task.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

While I encourage students to work together to understand theories and concepts, all written work must be your own. If you cite an author or use his/her ideas, please cite properly. Plagiarized assignments or evidence of cheating will result in a failing grade in the assignment and possibly in the course. Moreover, plagiarism may result in disciplinary action by the university.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation.

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Helpdesk: Rutgers Office of Information and Technology

Email: <https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support>

Call: 833-OIT-HELP

LIBRARY RESOURCES

SMLR's James B. Carey Library is a great resource when researching your assignments, learning how to cite your sources, and generally using information to achieve your goals. Feel free to reach out to Library Director Julie Peters (jpeters@smlr.rutgers.edu) with any questions you may have or visit: <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/about-smlr/carey-library>.