

**INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY 37:575:100:03
Fall 2017**



Classroom: Janice Levin Building, Room 003, Livingston Campus
Course schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:40 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Final Exam: TBD

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Course Overview: The course is designed to give you an overview of various aspects of labor and employment relations, including the perspective of working people and their labor organizations. We will also study the changing nature of work, workers and workers' institutions and organizations; the impact of technological change, the economic cycle, social class, immigration, race, ethnicity and gender; the role of government in labor policy; the history of unions, the role of unions in politics and challenges the labor movement faces today; and collective bargaining and workers' rights issues.

Class will include lectures, small group discussions, simulations, in-class assignments, and media presentations. Students are encouraged to freely express their views. Respect for the appreciation of different viewpoints will be a guiding principle in this course. **Note: this syllabus may be changed or modified as the course proceeds.**

Textbook: Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*, Third Edition. Sage 2016. The text is available at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore on the College Avenue Campus. Note: The third edition contains updated chapters and information not in the second edition.

All readings, except for the textbook, are available on Rutgers Sakai, which you may access at <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>.

The syllabus, schedule, and assignments are subject to change as the course evolves.

Course Requirements

1. **Read the entire syllabus** and make sure you understand it. This is your contract with the instructor.

2. **Be prepared for class.** Always read the material assigned for a class before the class. **Bring the reading material to class with you** in case you need to refer to it (for instance, for an activity, quiz, or discussion). Check your Rutgers email regularly for class announcements.

3. **Be present and be on time.** Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, **please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence.** An email is automatically sent to us. Your grade for attendance and participation will decline each time you are absent, late, or leave early. If you have a legitimate reason for your absence, lateness or need to leave early, it must be provided in writing in advance or immediately after the occurrence. Even excused absences must be reported via the University absence reporting website indicated above.

4. **Participate in discussions and group activities.** Students will be divided into groups for breakout sessions and projects. Your participation in these group situations goes to your participation grade. Explain your views. Ask questions. Listen – don't monopolize the discussion or ignore other views. Do your share of the work in simulations and in-class group activities. Texting, talking on your phone, FB, Twitter, etc. are prohibited in class (unless part of the group activity).

5. **Take careful lecture notes.** You should obtain lecture notes from another student if you miss a class. These are not provided by the instructor.

6. **Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity requires that all academic work be the product of an identified individual or individuals. Joint efforts are legitimate only when the assistance of others is explicitly acknowledged and permitted by the assignment. Ethical conduct is the obligation of every member of the university community, and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses. Students must assume responsibility for maintaining honesty in all work submitted for credit and in any other work designated by the instructor of this course. Students are also expected to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the instructor or dean of the instructional unit.

The instructor for this course holds the copyright to the course teaching materials, including lecture slides, discussion questions, exams, and assignments. Students may not copy or distribute this material without the permission of the instructor. Unauthorized distributions of course materials are serious offenses. For more information on the Rutgers University Copyright Policy, see <http://policies.rutgers.edu/sites/policies/files/50.3.7-current.pdf>

Evaluation

For purposes of grading, there are five components of the course:

- Family Interview Exercise (5%)
- Class preparation, homework, attendance, and participation (20%)
 - Attendance will be taken in class. Completion of homework and participation in group activities and discussions will be tracked.
- Written assignments (20%)
 - There are two written assignments for this class. The first is a short response paper based on your family interview exercise and the second is a final reflection paper on course themes. Each paper is worth 10% of your course grade.
- Collective bargaining exercise (10%)
 - The entire class will participate in a collective bargaining exercise spanning a couple of weeks. Students will be assigned to a union team or to a management team and will be required to negotiate a contract by a set date and time. You will be graded individually and as a team on

this exercise.

- Exams (45%)
 - There will be two in-class exams (a midterm and a final) that are predominantly “objective” – a combination of short-answer and short essay items. Both are closed book. The final exam will cover material after the midterm. The midterm exam is worth 20% of your course grade and the final exam is worth 25% of your course grade.

Learning Objectives

Students in this course should achieve the following SAS, SMLR, and LSER learning objectives:

SAS Core Curriculum - Social Analysis (SCL):

- Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place (Goal h).
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political system and other forms of social organization (Goal m).
- Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations (Goal n).

School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR):

- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation (Goal IV).
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance (Goal VI).

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department (LSER):

- Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations (Goal 1).
- Apply those concepts, and substantive institutional knowledge, to understanding contemporary developments related to work (Goal 2).

Unit I: The Situations Facing Working People

Most people have to work. Work shapes our lives and our conceptions of self, and at the same time it provides us with income. When work is insecure, low-paid, or we are not accorded dignity on the job, we suffer. On the other hand, when work is rewarding, it enlarges our capacities, allows us to connect to others, and enables us to contribute to the community at large.

In this unit, you will have a chance to ponder your family's history of work, consider how work has changed in the last 150 years, and explore the relationship of work and social class. A major topic is the prevalence of economic inequality in the United States today.

Week 1, Sept. 5: Introduction and Course Requirements

- Review syllabus and discuss course expectations, assignments, and goals.
- What is a good job? What is a bad job?
- What jobs have you held? What are your hopes for the future?
- What is Labor Studies and how does it help us understand issues around work?

First class assignments:

- Read the syllabus thoroughly. Learn how to use Sakai and locate readings.
- Family Member Interview: See Family Interview assignment sheet (also posted on Sakai).
Assignment due in class Week 2.

Week 2, Sept. 12: Work and Our Lives

- Lecture and class discussion on the contours of work in the U.S.

- Assign discussion groups.
- Group discussions on your family interview assignments and how they relate to course themes.
- Family interview assignment due in class.

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 1.
- Studs Terkel, “Introduction,” “Mike Lefevre: Steelworker,” and “Dolores Dante: Waitress” from *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (1972) and *Studs Terkel’s Working: A Graphic Adaptation*, adapted by Harvey Pekar and edited by Paul Buhle (2009) (Sakai).

Week 3, Sept. 19: Class Politics in the United States

- Hand out and discuss written assignment #1 (due in class Week 5, Oct. 3).

READINGS:

- Michael Zweig, “The Class Structure of the United States,” *The Working Class Majority: America’s Best Kept Secret* (2000) (Sakai).
- G.W. Domhoff, “Wealth, Income, and Power (April 2005)
- Janny Scott and David Leonhardt, “Shadowy Lines That Still Divide,” *New York Times*, May 15, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/15/us/class/shadowy-lines-that-still-divide.html>
- Jefferson Cowie and Lauren Boehm, “Dead Man’s Town: “Born in the U.S.A.,” Social History, and Working Class Identity,” *American Quarterly* (June 2006): 353-378 (Sakai).

Discussion: Springsteen and Class Politics. Discussion: based on the readings and class discussion thus far, defend your view of “class” in America. Is our system a “power pyramid” as suggested by Domhoff or is it based on egalitarian principles where everyone has a chance at “making it big?”

Week 4, Sept. 26: Income and Social Mobility

- Lecture, discussion, and activity on class, economic inequality, and its effects on social mobility.

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 2
- Heather Boushey and Shawn Fremstad, “The Wages of Exclusion: Low-Wage Work and Inequality,” *New Labor Forum* 17 (2) 9-19 (Sakai).
- Michael Zweig, “Looking at the Underclass,” *The Working Class Majority: America’s Best Kept Secret* (2000) (Sakai).

Week 5, Oct. 3: Power Dynamics, the New Economy, and the Future of Work

- Film and discussion: *The Big One* (1997, dir. Michael Moore)
- Writing assignment #1 due in class
- Overview of midterm (Week 6, Oct. 10)

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 4
- Bryant Simon, “Consuming Lattes and Labor, or Working at Starbucks,” *International Labor and Working Class History* (Fall 2008): 193-211.
- Francis Ryan, “Journal of a Retail Worker” (1996-1997).



Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights

Employment law is the fundamental law of the workplace. It is essential for you to know something about your rights at work, or lack thereof. And obviously, future managers need to recognize their own rights and how they can, and cannot, treat employees.

Employment law is mutable—it has changed in the past and may change in the future. One of the biggest changes in American employment law occurred in the 1960s in the face of demands for greater equality by race, color, national origin, religion and gender. Employment opportunities for people of different races and national origins have become more equal under the law since then, but racial and ethnic divisions and discrimination still persist throughout the workforce.

Gender also matters for employment outcomes, although again, in some ways the workplace is much more accessible to women today than it was in 1964 when the Civil Rights Act was passed, with significant variances by race. As more women have entered the workplace on a full-time basis, families are increasingly juggling the demands of two (or more) jobs along with the need to care for their families.

Week 6, Oct. 10: Employment Rights and Job Security in the United States

- “Know Your Rights” – in class quiz and discussion.
- Lecture and discussion of major workplace labor laws and regulations, including the at-will doctrine and its exceptions, anti-discrimination, and wage and hour laws.
- Is it a violation? Group activity on the Fair Labor Standards Act.

READINGS:

- Excerpts from Lewis Maltby, “Wrongful Discharge and Employment at Will” and “The Rights You Have” from *Can They Do That?* (2009) (Sakai).
- Thomas MacMillan, “More Employees Sue Restaurants in Wage Disputes,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 17, 2015: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/more-employees-sue-restaurants-in-wage-disputes-1439856006>
- Winnie Stachelberg and Crosby Burns, “10 Things to Know About the Employment Non-Discrimination Act,” Center for American Progress website: <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2013/04/24/61294/10-things-to-know-about-the-employment-non-discrimination-act/>

Week 7, Oct. 17: MIDTERM EXAM (IN-CLASS)

Week 8, Oct. 24: Work, Race, Ethnicity, and Equality

- Film: *At the River I Stand* (directed by David Appleby, Allison Graham, and Steven Ross, 1993).
- Discussion of historical and contemporary issues surrounding race and employment.

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 7.
- Sonali Kolhatkar, “Black Lives Matter... and Black Jobs Matter, Too,” Common Dreams/Truth Dig, April 6, 2015: <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/04/17/black-lives-matter-and-black-jobs-matter-too>
- Listen to “Job Searching While Black: What’s Behind the Unemployment Gap?” NPR news story, May 25, 2013: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/05/25/186609052/for-black-americans-finding-work-an-uphill-battle>

Week 9, Oct. 31: Bargaining Exercise #1

Week 10, Nov. 7: Gender, Work, and Family

- Lecture and discussion on the relationships between gender, working conditions, and employment opportunities.

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapters 5 and 6.
- “Working Anything But 9 to 5,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2014: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/08/13/us/starbucks-workers-scheduling-hours.html>

Week 11, Nov. 14: Immigration and Labor

- Discussion of immigration and labor issues in the U.S.
- Film excerpts from *Bread and Roses* (directed by Ken Loach, 2000).
- Hand out and discuss written assignment #2 (due in class Week 13, Nov. 28).

READINGS:

- Immanuel Ness, *Immigrants, Unions, and the New U.S. Labor Market*, chapter 2 (Sakai)
- Waldinger et al., “Helots No More: A Case Study for the Justice For Janitors Campaign in Los Angeles,” Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies Working Paper #15 (Sakai)

Unit III: Improving Working People’s Lives: Collective Bargaining, New Forms of Organizing and Activism, and the Future of Work



Union membership grew rapidly in the 1930s-1950s. Collective bargaining between unions and employers in major industries helped raise the standard of living not only for union members, but also for the entire workforce. For the past 40 years, however, the labor movement has been in steep decline in the U.S.

In this final unit for the course we will try our hand at collective bargaining during an in-class simulation. We will also explore the reasons why the labor movement has been in decline, as well as some of the newest and most innovative efforts on the part of unions, worker centers, and community organizations to organize workers in the ever-changing economy. The course will end with a discussion of public policies that could reshape the future of work.

Week 12, Nov. 21: Unions and Collective Bargaining

- “Union knowledge” in class quiz and discussion.
- Presentation on the structure of the labor movement in the U.S. and New Jersey.
- The basics of collective bargaining under private and public sector labor laws.
- Mediation, arbitration, lock-outs, and strikes.
- Hand out Collective Bargaining simulation assignment guideline and assign bargaining teams.
- In-class preparation with your team: assign roles and begin contract proposals.
- Write first drafts of contract language proposals individually outside of class.

READINGS:

- “The Union Difference,” AFL-CIO website: <http://www.aflcio.org/Learn-About-Unions/What-Unions-Do/The-Union-Difference>
- “Union Members – 2013,” Bureau of Labor Statistics website: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>
- Excerpts from the National Labor Relations Act (Sakai).

Week 13, Nov. 28: Collective Bargaining Simulation

- Begin bargaining and reach a final settlement with the other side... if possible!
- Hand-in contract language bargained in class and notes from bargaining.
- Complete online peer, self, and team assessment for collective bargaining exercise (due Week 13, Nov. 28).
- Reminder: written assignment #2 due Week 13 also!

Week 14, Dec. 5: Organized Labor Today and Tomorrow

- Presentation and discussion on union organizing and activism
- Online peer, self, and team assessment for collective bargaining exercise due.

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 8
- Olivia Rosane, “Nursing Home Workers Strike Against Givebacks,” *Labor Notes*, July 16, 2012: <http://www.labornotes.org/blogs/2012/07/seiu-1199-nursing-home-workers-strike-against-givebacks>
- Adolph Reed, “Doubling Down in Atlantic City,” *Jacobin*, August 11, 2016: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/08/atlantic-city-trump-icahn-union-strike-bankruptcy/>
- Harold Meyerson, “If Labor Dies, What Next?,” *The American Prospect*, September 13, 2012: <http://prospect.org/article/if-labor-dies-whats-next>

FINAL EXAM – DATE AND TIME TBD