Public Sector Employment Issues: 38:578:525:01
Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations
Fall 2021

Instructor: Professor Francis Ryan
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Office Hours: by appointment
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Classroom: Labor Education Center 130/131, Monday 7-10 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 in seminar once a week, your attendance is critical. You are expected to attend each class session, and to be on time. Please be punctual and plan to stay for the entire class. If you are unable to make it to class, or need to leave early, please let me know ahead of time.

Pandemic Preparation: This is an in person class, and all current expectations are that it will remain so. In the case that Rutgers University determines that classes need to resort to remote formats, we will do so through the Zoom link provided on the class Canvass site.

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. After the break period, the class will engage in discussion of the assigned readings for the week. At other times we will view films or documentaries about related topics. Of course, you are expected to have completed the readings assigned before coming to class each week and be ready to take an active role in these discussions. Class participation includes active, respectful listening and well as talking. Please keep notes of your readings and class discussions. I ask that you do not use any recording devices in this class.

Weekly Reflection Reports: A selection of readings have been selected for each week. Please do all of the assigned reading before our Monday seminar meeting and write up a brief reflection report that provides an overview of what you read and learned. The report should be one typed page, single-spaced, and should provide one comment or question that you would like to address in class. These reports are due to me in an email attachment no later than 5 pm on nights our seminar meets. The reports are worth 10% of the semester grade.
Unless otherwise specified, all writing assignments 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 October 4. 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. The final paper is due December 6.

Supplementary Sources: Each week I will provide you a list of supplementary readings on the syllabus. You are not responsible for readings 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.

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.

Statement on Academic Freedom: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. This class will introduce an array of sometimes conflicting ideas and interpretations of U.S. history, and all who partake in the course should feel encouraged to express their views in an open, civic forum.

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: 25%
Participation: 15%
Take Home Final: 25%
Paper: 25%
Weekly Overviews: 10%

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

Sept 8: Introduction and Overview of the course.


Discussion Theme: Cultural perceptions of government sector employment.

Sept 13: Government Jobs, the Spoils System and the Rise of Civil Service

Readings:

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

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


Supplementary Sources:


Sept 20: 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)


**Readings:**


**In class screening:** *The Mailman* (1946)

**Supplementary Sources:**


**Oct 4: The Crisis in Federal Service: The Post Office**

**Readings:**


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

**Supplementary Sources:**


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


**Oct 11: Midterm Take Home**

**Oct 18: Blackboard Unionism: Teachers and the Education Sector**

**Readings:**


**Supplementary Sources:**


**Oct 25: Charter Schools and the Future of Public Education**

**Readings:**


In class screening: *Waiting for Superman* (2010) Director: David Guggenheim

**Supplementary Sources:**


**November 1: At the Barricades: Police Unionism in the Twenty-First Century**

**Readings:**


In class screening: *Women in Blue (2020)* Director: Deirdre Fishel

**Supplementary Sources:**


**November 8: “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. (2021)


**Supplementary Sources:**


**November 15: Sexuality and Quality of Work Life in the Federal Workplace**

**Readings:**


Supplementary Sources:


**Nov 22: Recent Developments in Public Sector Labor Law**

Readings:


Supplementary Sources:


**December 6: Reinventing Government, Labor-Management Cooperation and the Future of Public Sector Employment**

**Readings:**


**Supplementary Sources:**


**Final Paper due**

**Dec 13: Final Class Overview**