

Work and Labor Today

## **RUTGERS UNIVERSITY– SYLLABUS FALL 2024**

### **INTRODUCTION TO WORK AND LABOR**

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#### Course Description:

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 study the changing nature of work due to technological change, the economic cycle, social class, immigration, race, ethnicity and gender. We will also study the past and present of unions and the role collective bargaining plays in addressing labor issues.

Class will include lectures, small group discussions, and in-class assignments. Students are encouraged to freely express their views. Respect for the appreciation of different viewpoints will be a guiding principle in this course.

In addition to a substantial reading load, you will be writing essays based on primary source materials. Participation and engagement in class discussion is vitally important; the expectation is that every one of you has something to contribute, and the more you engage in the work of the class, the richer the class discussions will be. To that end there will be weekly reading responses, in class discussion sessions, two argumentative essay assignments, and one final exam.

Finally, if we are to succeed in our goals for this course we must work together to create a collaborative, inclusive and respectful learning culture. I look forward to getting to know you and working together this year.

#### Goals

##### **Core Curriculum: SCL**

- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems and other forms of social organization. (Goal SCL-1).
- Employ tools of social scientific reasoning to study particular questions or situations, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments. (Goal SCL-2)

##### **School of Management and Labor Relations:**

- 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:***

- 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).

### ***Additional course objective from the instructors:***

- Students will be able to apply facts and concepts from the course to argue convincingly against common contemporary fallacies related to employment relations.

### Life Under Covid

This school year as in past years, we face the additional challenge of life under the coronavirus. I want to make special allowances for you all if you're struggling with mental health, dealing with life outside of the classroom, or just need a break given the pace and severity of events unfolding around us. You must contact me \*in advance\* and get an agreement in writing for these allowances, and they will be made on a case by case basis. Additionally, if you need help or want advice I'm here for you. Please reach out to talk anytime.

The covid challenge also means that we are going to have to work extra hard to create a fun, friendly, and harmonious class. This will take work from me, but also extra work from you, to be friendly and respectful, to get to know your fellow classmates and instructors, to be bold and to share together in our class sessions. We are all getting through this together, let's talk about it and support one another as we work towards our own learning development.

### Essays

There will be two short essays over the course of the term. Each essay will ask you to craft a unique argument using class readings. All work will be completed in class including rough drafts and peer reviews. An essay is not a solitary endeavor. The process of editing, revising, and rethinking can and should involve colleagues and teachers. More information about the essays will be provided during the term.

There will also be a final exam in the form of a final in class essay. Details to be discussed later in class.

### Weekly Analysis and Argumentation Assignments

A central component of this course is discussion. It is important that our conversations revolve around your own questions and not just mine. As you are reading the material, not only should you be sorting through the ideas in the text, the way in which those ideas are expressed, and in general coming to an understanding of the text, but you should also be asking questions: what is the central argument or idea from a text? How does this writer's ideas compare with another's? What does the author's argument reveal about the values and attitudes of the time? What is confusing about this text, what is problematic, what is beautiful? How does this text inform our understanding of the historical period we are studying? Bringing one or two of those questions to the table in class

discussion is your responsibility as a member of our community of scholars. To help facilitate this process, you will have weekly reading and discussion assignments to be completed in class

Finally, in all of our class time the use of all electronic devices is not allowed, this includes laptops, tablets, and cellphones. The only exception to this policy is documented medical or learning needs.

### Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Please note, I do not accept late work.

The process of learning is hard, and sometimes students are tempted to take shortcuts in the form of plagiarism. However, any student who uses words, ideas, or sources without proper citation will be given a failing grade and reported for further action in line with the University's policies. This includes using the work of AI generated essay content in any way, including brainstorming, drafting, or writing by AI technologies. We will talk more about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it.

### Use of the Canvas site

We will be making use of Canvas, an on-line system that allows for easy transmission and organization of assignments and other materials. You will be sent an invitation to join the site, and thereafter will have access to the History Canvas. You will turn in work and check the site for information. However, most of our communication will be via email or in person.

### Assignments and Grading Policies

- 10% Reading Quizzes
- 15% In Class Analysis
- 20% Essay 1
- 25% Essay 2
- 30% Final Essay

### Textbooks

Course Packet available as pdf on the Canvas site

### Class Schedule and Assignments

#### **Week 1**

#### Course Introduction: From Labor to Class

Central Question: What is history? What is labor, work, and class?

Readings:

Active Reading and Notation Guides

Giordano, Lizz. "As Teen Employment Rises in WA, so Do Youth Labor Violations - InvestigateWest," August 27, 2024. <https://www.invw.org/2024/08/27/as-teen-employment-rises-in-wa-so-do-youth-labor-violations/>, <https://www.invw.org/2024/08/27/as-teen-employment-rises-in-wa-so-do-youth-labor-violations/>.

## **Week 2**

### Philosophy of Labor

Central Question: What explains the variety of ways to think about work and labor?

Readings: John Locke, excerpts from *Two Treatises on Government*, (Course Reader)

Cholbi, Michael. "Philosophical Approaches to Work and Labor." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Summer 2023. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2023. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/work-labor/>.

## **Week 3**

### Slavery as System of Labor

Central Question: What is the legacy of chattel slavery and why?

Readings:

Rosenthal, Caitlin. "Slavery's Scientific Management: Masters and Managers." In *Slavery's Capitalism*, edited by Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, 62–86. A New History of American Economic Development. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1dfnrs7.5>.

The Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition. "Legacies of American Slavery," April 28, 2022. <https://glc.yale.edu/legacies-american-slavery>.

## **Week 4**

### Labor Markets

Central Questions: What is a labor market? What explains its use in today's society?

Readings:

Kalleberg, Arne L., and Aage B. Sorensen. "The Sociology of Labor Markets." *Annual Review of Sociology* 5 (1979): 351–79.

Marx, Karl, "Wage Labour and Capital," December 1847

## **Week 5**

### Race and Labor Markets

Central Question: What explains the importance of race in today's work world?

Readings:

Excerpts from Reagan, Michael Beyea. *Intersectional Class Struggle: Theory and Practice*. AK Press, 2021.

Excerpts from Marable, Manning, and Leith Mullings, eds. *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: An African American Anthology*. Second edition. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.

## **Week 6**

### Immigration and Industrialization

Central Question: What is race? What is the relationship between industrialization and racial formation?

Readings:

Bivens, Josh. "Unions Promote Racial Equity." *Economic Policy Institute*, July 31, 2023. <https://www.epi.org/publication/unions-promote-racial-equity/>.

Economic Policy Institute. "Testimony before the Indiana Senate, Select Committee on Immigration Issues." Accessed September 1, 2024. <https://www.epi.org/publication/testimony-before-the-indiana-senate-hearing-before-the-select-committee-on-immigration-issues/>.

## **Week 7**

### In Class Mid Term Exam

## **Week 8**

### Women and Work

Central Question: What explains women's relationship to work?

Readings: Excerpts from Reagan, Michael Beyea. *Intersectional Class Struggle: Theory and Practice*. AK Press, 2021.

Economic Policy Institute. "Gender Wage Gap Persists in 2023: Women Are Paid Roughly 22% Less than Men on Average." Accessed September 2, 2024. <https://www.epi.org/blog/gender-wage-gap-persists-in-2023-women-are-paid-roughly-22-less-than-men-on-average/>.

## **Week 9**

### Unions

Central Question: Why has worker strike activity increased in the last two years?

Readings:

Economic Policy Institute. "Major Strike Activity Increased by 280% in 2023: Many Workers Still Need Policies That Protect Their Right to Strike." Accessed September 1, 2024.

<https://www.epi.org/publication/major-strike-activity-in-2023/>.

Anderson, Elizabeth. "EQUALITY AND FREEDOM IN THE WORKPLACE: RECOVERING REPUBLICAN INSIGHTS." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 31, no. 2 (April 2015): 48–69.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052514000259>.

## **Week 10**

### Environment

Central Question: What is the relationship between the working class and climate change?

Readings:

Bell, Karen. *Working-Class Environmentalism: An Agenda for a Just and Fair Transition to Sustainability*. 1st ed. 2020 edition. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

Martinez, Jessica E. "Workers Are Bearing the Brunt of Extreme Heat." *Progressive.org*, August 29, 2024. <https://progressive.org/api/content/1f01d572-664f-11ef-aaeb-12163087a831/>.

## **Week 11**

### Inequality

Central Question: Why is social inequality so vast today?

Readings

Economic Policy Institute. "CEO Pay Slightly Declined in 2022: But It Has Soared 1,209.2% since 1978 Compared with a 15.3% Rise in Typical Workers' Pay." Accessed September 1, 2024.

<https://www.epi.org/publication/ceo-pay-in-2022/>.

Lewis, Michael A. "A Justification of the Right to Welfare." In *Post-Work*. Routledge, 1998.

## **Week 12**

### Future of Work

Central Question:

Readings: What does our current moment tell us about the future of work?

Deranty, Jean-Philippe. "Post-Work Society as an Oxymoron: Why We Cannot, and Should Not, Wish Work Away." *European Journal of Social Theory*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 27 Apr. 2021, p. 13684310211012168, doi:10.1177/13684310211012169.

Bruun and Duka, "Artificial Intelligence, Jobs and the Future of Work."

### **Week 13**

Writing Conferences

### **Week 14**

Second Paper Due In Class

### **Week 15**

Final Essay in class