

**INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES &
EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS**
(Fall 2025)

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Rutgers University, Labor Studies & Employment Relations Department, SMLR

Course #37:575:100:02 (3 Credits)

Class Meets: Tuesdays, 10:20 AM–1:20 PM

Class Location: Beck Hall, Room 250 (Livingston Campus)

Contact Info: Canvas messaging system preferred, or you can send email to:

jacooney@rutgers.edu

Campus Phone: 848-932-8560

Virtual (or Actual) Office Hours: By appointment

(Please note that this is an abbreviated version of the course syllabus. More detailed information can be found on the Canvas course site)

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 study topics including the changing nature of work, worker institutions and organizations; labor and employment laws; social class, immigrant workers, race, ethnicity, and gender; the history of labor unions and challenges the labor movement faces today; workplace grievances, alternative dispute resolution, and collective bargaining.

Class meetings will include lectures, discussions, simulations, and guest speakers. All students are encouraged to freely express their views. Respect for different viewpoints will be a guiding principle. **Note: the syllabus content may be modified as the course proceeds.**

Grading Criteria:

- (1) Personal Introduction (5%)
- (2) Academic Integrity/Syllabus Quiz (5%)
- (3) Family Work Interview (5%)
- (4) Attendance & Participation (5%)
- (5) Grievance Simulation/Written Summary (10%)
- (6) Exam #1 (35%)
- (7) Exam #2 (35%)

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class on a timely and regular basis. The TA will take attendance in each class. Please note that excessive *unexcused* absences will lower your grade. Unexcused absences in excess of three (3) classes

may result in a failing grade. Students arriving to class late or departing early must sign-in/out with the TA and will receive partial credit for attending that class.

Course Materials:

Will be provided on Canvas. The Instructor reserves the right to supplement, substitute, and/or modify the listed reading selections. **Students are expected to read the assigned materials for each week *prior* to class.**

Use of “AI” Strictly Prohibited: The use of generative Artificial Intelligence (“AI”) such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, etc., is not permitted at any stage of the writing process during exams or on any assignment. **GPTZero or similar tools will be used to detect student use of AI.** Any written assignment or exam answer that is flagged for AI use will be scored as a “0.”

Academic Integrity: The conduct of all students is governed by the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy. See Canvas course site for details and for a link to the Policy. Students will take a graded Quiz to demonstrate knowledge of the Policy and the course syllabus.

Recording: Students are not permitted to videotape or otherwise record any lecture or course activity, absent prior express consent and authorization by the Instructor.

No Individual “Extra Credit:”

I do not offer extra credit to individual students upon their request, since this is unfair to other students who do not receive the same opportunity. However, I will sometimes offer extra credit opportunities to all students, since that is fair to everyone.

Disability Accommodations:

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 they are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide supporting documentation. ***See the Canvas course site for further details and to view other applicable policies.***

Learning Objectives:

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

School of Arts & Sciences Core Curriculum - SCL (social analysis):

- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization. (Goal SCL-1).

School of Management & 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 & 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)

COURSE TOPICS & CLASS SCHEDULE:

SEPT. 2: Introduction and Course Overview

- In-class review of syllabus, class policies, and assignments
- Post your personal introduction (5% of grade) on Canvas *by no later than September 8th*
- Take the Academic Integrity/Syllabus Quiz (5% of grade) on Canvas *by no later than September 8th*

Readings:

- Syllabus
- Canvas course site (learn how to use Canvas and locate readings)
- Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy

SEPT. 9: Work, Careers, and Education

- Lecture/Discussion
- Guest Speaker: Mayelin Torres, Career Management Specialist, SMLR Career Services (Job Market/Internships)
- Upload your completed Family Work Interview (5% of grade) on Canvas *by no later than September 15th*

Readings/Media:

- “Education and Lifetime Earnings” (SSA.gov)
- “Employment Projections: Education Pays” (BLS.gov)
- “Who Are STARs?” (Opportunity@Work.org-video)

- SMLR Career Services website (become familiar with available resources)

SEPT. 16: Definitions, Mass Layoffs, Strikes, and the Great Resignation

- Guest Speaker: Ann Marie Fiorella-Mullen, Student Counselor, LSER Graduate Programs (Post-Graduate Education Opportunities)
- Lecture/Discussion
- Discussion on your family work interviews and how they relate to course themes

Readings:

- “*Mass Layoffs in Big Tech Are an Old-Guard Mistake*” (Bloomberg)
- “*What Strikes and ‘Quits’ Say About US Labor’s Resolve*” (Bloomberg)
- “*Union Strike Activity Continues Measured Slowdown*” (Bloomberg)

SEPT. 23: Labor Unions and Collective Bargaining

- Lecture/Discussion

Readings/Media:

- “*What a Labor Union Is and How It Works*” (Teen Vogue)
- “*Collective Bargaining 101*” (Jobs With Justice Education Fund)
- “*What is Collective Bargaining?*” (HRM From a Business Professor-video)

SEPT. 30: Worker Protections and Labor Laws

- Lecture/Discussion

Readings:

- “*Summary of Major Labor Laws of the Labor Department*” (DOL.gov)
- “*Basic Guide to the National Labor Relations Act*” (NLRB.gov)

OCT. 7: Exam #1 (35% of grade)

- **IMPORTANT: There is no in-person class this week**
- Exam is available on Canvas from Tuesday, October 7th at 12:00 a.m. through Wednesday, October 8th at 11:59 p.m. (you will take exam at home)

No Readings

OCT. 14: Labor Unions (continued)

- Guest Speaker: Djar Horn, Labor Education Specialist, Labor Education Action Research Network (“LEARN”)
- In-Class Video (scenarios faced by a Union Representative)

Readings:

- “*What Is a Union Representative?*” (Indeed.com)
- “*Weingarten Rights*” (NLRB.gov)

OCT. 21: Contemporary Workplace Issues

- Lecture/Discussion

Readings/Media:

- “*How Social Media Can Cost Someone Their Job* (CBS Texas-video)
- *McVey v. AtlantiCare Health System, Inc.* (App. Div. 2022)
- “*AI Rules on Firing, Disciplining Workers Passed in California*” (Bloomberg Law)

OCT. 28: Workplace Sex Discrimination

- Lecture/Discussion
- Group discussions on *Ledbetter* case

Readings/Media:

- *Ledbetter v. Goodyear* (U.S. 2007)
- “*Ledbetter Equal Pay Act*” (EEOC YouTube – video)

NOV. 4: Employment Rights in the U.S.

- Lecture/Discussion

Readings/Media:

- “*Equal Employment Opportunity Laws*” (EEOC.gov)
- “*Can Bosses Do That?*” (PBS – audio or read)

NOV. 11: Resolution of Workplace Disputes

- Lecture/Discussion
- Form groups (Union/Management) -prepare for Workplace Grievance Simulation
- Guest Speaker: Prof. William Dwyer – Negotiation Skills

Readings:

- “*Alternative Dispute Resolution*” (Cornell Law School LII)

NOV. 18: Workplace Grievance Simulation

- Participate in Workplace Grievance Simulation in class today and upload your Summary on Canvas *by no later than November 24th* (10% of grade)

Readings:

- Workplace Grievance Scenario (handout)

NOV. 25: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Week)

DEC. 2: Immigration and Labor

- Guest Speaker: Amanda Dominguez, Organizer, New Labor
- Lecture/Discussion

Readings:

- “*Know Your Rights: Immigrants’ Rights*” (ACLU)

DEC. 9: Exam #2 (not cumulative)(35% of grade)

- **IMPORTANT: There is no in-person class this week**
- Exam is available on Canvas from Tuesday, December 9th at 12:00 a.m. through Wednesday, December 10th at 11:59 p.m. (you will take exam at home)

No Readings

(Date revised: 09/16/2025)