

Working Women in U.S. Society
Rutgers University: 37:575:309:01
Fall 2025
Mondays, 2:00 - 5:00 PM
Room 103C, Tillett Hall

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course explores the experiences of working women in U.S. society through the lens of social justice, workplace dynamics, and social identities. We will examine how systems of power, cultural norms, and human differences shape women's roles, opportunities, and challenges in the workforce.

Using a mix of discussion, group projects, and critical analysis, students will evaluate:

- Public policies that impact women workers
- Workplace inequalities and biases
- Barriers to leadership and inclusion

Big Questions & Central Themes

- How do social inequalities, cultural beliefs, and institutional policies shape women's work experiences?
- What strategies can help create more equitable and inclusive workplaces?
- How do race, gender, class, and other aspects of identity intersect to shape opportunity and power?

At the heart of this course is a focus on intersectionality, a framework for understanding how multiple forms of identity and inequality interact in shaping women's participation and leadership at work.

Learning Objectives

This course covers Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR), and Labor Studies and Employment Relations (LSER) Department learning objectives.

Rutgers Core Objectives

- **CCD 2:** Analyze contemporary social justice issues and systems of social power.

- **SCL 1:** Understand theories of human culture, identity, and social systems.
- **SCL 2:** Use social scientific reasoning to analyze real-world questions.

SMLR Objectives

- Apply relevant theories in workplace contexts.
- Evaluate workplace issues, public policy, and management decisions.

LSER Department Objectives

- Understand key theories and concepts.
- Apply them to current labor developments.
- Analyze how human difference shapes work experiences.

Required Readings

All readings will be posted on Canvas. There is no textbook to buy.

Course Format

This is a discussion-based seminar, with a mix of:

- In-class discussions
- Short lectures
- Videos and group activities

We will use Rutgers Canvas for everything:

- Log into canvas.rutgers.edu
- Use your NetID and password
- Click on the course: 37:575:309:01
- All announcements, readings, assignments, and resources will be posted there

Participation & Engagement

To do well in this course:

- Show up and participate in discussions
- Do the readings before class
- Engage with others and think critically
- Group work is part of your learning - bring your voice to the table.

Basic Needs Security: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the [Dean of Students](#) for support.

Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable doing so. I will help you find resources. Other family/close relations may occur. Mental health is a key component of a sustainable life. It is sometimes necessary to miss class for physical or mental health reasons. Let me know in

advance or as soon as possible if you are missing assignments for any health or quality-of-life reasons. If you need assistance, please communicate early and often.

Pro-tip: *Communicate early and often. Life happens; just keep me in the loop.*

Discussion: Success in the course requires active engagement during discussions. This is where we will learn from each other, test the authors' theories, and formulate and test our own. Students' success in written assignments will depend on their active engagement, including involvement in discussion.

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. For more information, see the [Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videos, 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 the distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted on 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](#).

Similarly, these copyright protections extend to the original papers you produce for this course. If I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your written consent to do so. Finally, as the instructor for this course, I have a 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 the online sessions is to be recorded, and such recordings cannot be circulated outside the course.

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 they are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. 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 accommodation with them as early as possible in your semester. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the Office of Disability Services (ODS) website at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of disability should refer to the [Rutgers ODS](#) and then contact me privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible.

Turnitin: Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site. Students who do not agree should contact me immediately.

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.

Communication/Email/Electronic Devices: Feel free to email me with questions, concerns, ideas, and/or issues that may arise during the semester. Remember to check the syllabus or Canvas resources for general questions before contacting me. I will reply to most emails within 24 hours. Students are responsible for looking for announcements or updates on Canvas.

Utilizing the James B. Carey Library: The 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.

Course Assignments

Students will complete two group projects and three independent written assignments in this course. All writing assignments are due on Mondays at 11:59 p.m. More detailed instructions for each assignment will be posted on Canvas.

Late Assignments

Assignments will be considered late at midnight. Assignments will lose two points for every day that they are late.

One-time 24-hour extension: **Each student can use ONE 24-hour extension on any individual assignment that is due during the semester, no questions asked.** Students may use this extension for any assignment except the group assignments. Each assignment is due on Monday

at 11:59. If you would like to use your extension, you must submit a Word document with the statement, “I would like to use my one-time 24-hour extension”. Each extension starts at midnight and ends at 11:59 on Tuesday.

Extra Credit

Each student who completes the mid-semester survey will receive three extra credit points.

Individual Assignments

Positionality Paper (2 pages; double space; 12in font) (15 points)

Due Monday, September 22

In this assignment, you will write a reflective paper about your positionality and how it affects your views and experiences, especially regarding gender and work. Positionality is the social and political context that shapes your identity based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Understanding your positionality helps you see the biases and assumptions that influence your worldview.

Group Project

Group Assignment: Policy Report (25points)

Student groups will research current workplace policies affecting women and develop a comprehensive policy proposal to improve gender equity in the workplace. A complete assignment will utilize publicly available data on gender and race composition in an occupation they choose and report salary, tenure, and future outlook information. Each group’s proposal should be well researched, clearly articulated, and feasible for implementation. You will present your proposal to the class, highlighting its potential benefits and challenges.

The Choice 2024 (5-7 pages; double space; 12in font) (25pts)

You will be responsible for watching the Frontline documentary “The Choice 2024,” which discusses the candidates in the 2024 Presidential Election.

Reflection Paper (2 pages; double space; 12in font) (15points)

This reflection assignment aims to synthesize your learning from the course, critically analyze the topics discussed, and reflect on how the course content has influenced your understanding of gender dynamics in the U.S. workforce.

The following schedule is subject to change

Week	Topic/ Class Activity	Readings and/or deliverables due
1 - 9/8	Introduction to the course and its objectives Overview of the syllabus and assignments Sharing Positionality Statements	

2 - 9/15	Intersectionality: Race, Class, and Gender in the Workplace	Reading(s) Due: - Lavalley, R., & Johnson, K. R. (2022). Occupation, injustice, and anti-Black racism in the United States of America. - Lee and Tapia, “Intersectional Organizing: Building Solidarity through Radical Confrontation” ‘Intersectionality’ has become a hot-button topic in recent years. Here’s what it means By Leah Asmelash
3 - 9/22	History and Legal Structures	Assignment Due: Positionality Paper Reading(s) Due: So, We All Can Succeed: 125 Years of Women’s Participation in the Economy
4 - 9/29	Women's Wages	Reading(s) Due: - Goldin C. (2015). "How to Achieve Gender Equality." - Equitable Growth Report on Gender Wage Inequality
5 - 10/6	Women’s Work	Reading(s) Due: - Data Deep Dive: Women in the Workforce (U.S. Chamber of Commerce) - Inequality Regimes Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations Joan Acker
6 - 10/13	Gender Bias in the Workplace	Reading(s) Due: - Hancock, A.-M. (2009). An untraditional intersectional analysis of the 2008 election. 3 Workplace Biases that Derail Mind-Career Women by Colleen Ammerman and Boris Groysberg

Mid-term week – Group Project (10/20)

8 - 10/27	Policy Spotlight: Hair and Uniform Policies	Reading(s) Due: - Let My Hair Be Me: An Investigation of Employee Authenticity and Organizational Appearance Policies Through the Lens of Black Women’s Hair. Tina Opie - What should I wear to work? An integrative review of the impact of clothing in the workplace
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9 - 11/3	Anti-discrimination and Sexual Harassment	Reading(s) Due: Abraham, S. E., & Voos, P. B. (2021). "Procedural and Distributive Justice in Sexual Harassment Arbitrations: Evolution of Decisions in the Union Context." Watch: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (2024). "About the Agency." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HwD00LWnOM
10 - 11/10	Women in Leadership/ The Glass Ceiling	Reading(s) Due: - Readings: Novotney, A. (2024, July 8). Women leaders make work better. Here's the science behind how to promote them. https://www.apa.org/topics/women-girls/female-leaders-make-work-better (9 mins) - Women in Leadership: Lessons in Working Smarter, Not Harder (16:32)
11 -11/17	Work-life Balance and Family	Reading(s) Due: Kossek, E. E., Gettings, P., & Misra, K. (2021). The future of flexibility at work. Harvard Business Review, 28. (45 mins)
12 - 11/24	Women in Tech	Reading(s) Due: - Women In Tech Tell Us How To Fix The Industry's Gender Problem (4:44) - How Social Media Became a Pink-Collar Job (15 mins) - Freedman, G., Green, M. C., Kussman, M., Drusano, M., & Moore, M. M. (2023). "Dear future woman of STEM": Letters of advice from women in STEM. International Journal of STEM Education, 10(20). (30 mins)

13 – 12/1	Women in Entertainment	Reading(s) Due: • Women’s Sports Rising Roundtable (38:29) • Whipple, K., & Coleman, R. (2021). Facing the music: Stereotyping of and by women in U.S. music journalism. Journalism, 23(10), 2060-2078. (60 mins)
14 - 12/8	End of Semester Discussion	No readings due

