

Occupational Safety and Health

Semester: **Fall 2025**
Course and section number: **37:575:338:91**
Course title: **Occupational Safety and Health**
Location, modality: **Online, non-synchronous**
Instructor: **Matthew Fischer-Daly, Lecturer**
Contact information: **Primary, Canvas; Secondary, matthew.fischer-daly@smlr.rutgers.edu**
Office hours information: **Online, via Zoom by appointment**
Textbook: **None; all readings provided on Canvas**

Course Description

Work impacts our health, physically and psychologically. In this course, students will explore health and safety issues in a variety of types of work and contexts, including the roles of workers, trade unions, employers, and governments. Students will analyze the economic, political, and social forces that have contributed to the current state of occupational safety and health problems, interventions, and outcomes to-date. Students' analysis will encompass the interactions of social hierarchies—including those based on class, gender, race, and nationality—with occupational safety and health practices and outcomes.

Learning Objectives

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department

1. Apply employment relations concepts, and substantive institutional knowledge, to understanding contemporary developments related to work. (Goal II) Assessment: quizzes

School of Management and Labor Relations

2. Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experience of work. (Goal V) Assessment: discussions
3. Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance. (Goal VI) Assessment: discussions

Course Grading

A=90-100; B+=85-89; B=80-84; C+=75-79; C=70-74; D=60-69; F=59 and lower

Activity	Points	Percent of course total	Points that can be accrued
Week 1 assignments: Discussion, survey, academic integrity quiz, and news outlet choice	10 @ 10 points each	10	100
Journal entries	5 @ 50 points each	25	250
Online discussions	3 @ 150 points each	45	450
Exams	2 @ 100 points each	20	200
Total		100%	1,000 points

Points have no absolute meaning, and in the end, I will use my judgment in translating points into grades for the course. Implicitly, that means that grades are “curved” in the sense that they are comparative. The comparison is both to other students taking the class this semester and with those who took the class in the past. In addition, I may increase or decrease a grade for exceptional (positive or negative) class participation and performance – ordinarily by one level (e.g., between B and B+). Grading rubrics for each assignment are available on Canvas. **Extra credit is not offered in this course.**

Journal entries – 5 @ 50 points each

Five entries related to the course content, work safety and health news events, and personal or work-related experiences will be submitted to an online journal. Journal entries will only be read by me.

Online discussions – 3 @150 points each

In Part I of the online discussions, you will have one or two weeks to prepare and submit an initial post to the discussion. The initial post requires preparing a brief topic presentation such as writing a paper, creating a presentation, or other task to share with group members. In Part II, you will read group members’ initial posts and construct replies that communicate questions, insights, analysis, and feedback in a threaded asynchronous (not “real time”) discussion. The *Online Group Discussion Guidelines and Grading Rubric* document provides an in-depth explanation of how to successfully participate in the online discussions and how the discussion submissions are evaluated. Late submissions of up to one week will be assessed a point penalty of 10-50%, depending on late submission history. Late submissions of more than one week will not be accepted.

Exams: 2 @ 100 points each

Timed exams of 90 minutes include true/false, matching, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and essay questions. Exams are noncumulative and must be taken online in the Canvas course site during the open period. Collaboration is not allowed, but the exams are ‘open book’. Make-up exams submitted within one week of the due date, will be assessed a 25%-point penalty. Make-up exams of more than one week will not be permitted.

Class participation

This is an interactive class; students need to stay on track to effectively interact with others in the class. I should be informed of personal situations or emergencies that interfere with class participation. As soon as a problem arises, email me. An online class provides schedule flexibility, but students are ultimately responsible for managing their time and participating in class every week.

Contributing to the learning environment

Students are expected to contribute to the creation of an environment that fosters mutual respect, courtesy, and civility by adherence to class norms for discussion, debate, and all interpersonal interactions. Expressions of hatred or contempt based on race, color, national and ethnic origin, age, gender and gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability will not be overlooked, nor will they be tolerated.

Course communications

Students are responsible for accessing course materials on Canvas and participating as instructed. Rutgers email and Canvas should be checked frequently throughout the semester for announcements and/or updates about this course. Students are responsible for promptly replying to my emails that request a response. **Please inform me of emergencies or issues that are likely to affect your participation or performance in the course. The sooner I know, the easier it will be to develop a plan to ensure that you succeed in the course.**

Class cancellations

This is a non-synchronous, online course; therefore, most Rutgers class cancellations will not affect class participation and activities.

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is essential to your learning, to the mission of Rutgers, and to membership in the Rutgers community. It means honesty and is a fundamental value that supports trust among students and between students and teachers. Academic integrity is also a shared value; students, teachers, and administrators all play vital roles in promoting and ensuring it. In contrast, academic dishonesty violates communal trust, impacts other members of the community, and degrades scholarship. Please read the full Rutgers Academic Code and Academic Oath at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and integrity

Clear, transparent identification of uses of artificial intelligence (AI) is part of academic integrity and essential to your development of critical thinking skills. You may use AI only if you fully and completely identify your use of it every time in every assignment. Identification requires, at a minimum, a footnote identifying the AI program used and the prompt that you input into the AI program. Failure to identify use of AI in your assignments amounts to plagiarism and will be treated accordingly.

From the Office of Disability Services

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 you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible in your courses. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Rutgers' Resources for Success

The faculty and staff at Rutgers are committed to your success. Students who are successful tend to seek out resources that enable them to excel academically, maintain their health and wellness, prepare for future careers, navigate college life and finances, and connect with the RU community. Resources that can help you succeed and connect with the Rutgers community can be found at <https://success.rutgers.edu/>. Nearly all services and resources that are typically provided in-person are now available remotely.

Technical Assistance

Helpdesk: Rutgers Office of Information and Technology

Website: <https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support>

Call: 833-OIT-HELP

Course schedule

Week	Topic	Assignments
1 9/3 – 9/9	Orientation to the Course and Introductions: Tasks— 1. Review the syllabus & the academic integrity & AI policies 2. Take the “Academic Integrity, AI, & Syllabus Quiz” 3. Complete the “Survey for your Professor 4. Participate in the “Meet your Classmates” discussion 5. Review the “Know Your Sources” page 6. Check out the “Meet your professor” page	Week 1 assignments due 9/16
2 9/10 – 9/16	Work safety and health historical survey: Industrial Revolution and the establishment of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Readings: 1. The Woman Behind the New Deal 2. Walsh-Healey and FLSA document Videos: 1. Can’t Take No More 2. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire 3. Cotton Mill Girl 4. Frances Perkins	<i>Case: The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire</i> Discussion #1 – initial post due 9/23
3 9/17 – 9/23	Occupational Safety and Health Concepts Readings: 1. Occupational health and safety and the precautionary principle collective bargaining language 2. Cancer in auto factories: An interview with Mike Bennett Videos: 1. What is industrial/occupational hygiene? 2. The Scientific Method Made Easy 3. The Ghost Map 4. Is it a hazard or risk? 5. Hazard, Risk & Safety: Understanding Risk Assessment, Management and Perception 6. Understanding Permissible Exposure Limits	<i>Case: On the trail of outbreaks: cholera in London, 1830s – 1960s</i> Continue Discussion #1 – initial post due 9/23; replies due 9/30 Journal #1

4 9/24 – 9/30	The Occupational Safety and Health Act and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Readings: 1. “Randomized Government Safety Inspections Reduce Worker Injuries with No Detectable Job Loss” (Levine, Toffel, & Johnson, 2012) Videos: 1. <i>A Dangerous Business Revisited</i> 2. <i>Lock-Out/Tag-Out</i>	<i>Case: Potential of Enforcement: Change at McWane Foundry</i> Continue Discussion #1 – make replies, due 9/30
5 10/1 – 10/7	The Economics of Worker Safety and Health Readings: 1. Show Me the Money: Cost-Benefit Analysis in the Work Environment 2. The Dark Lord of Coal Country 3. Alone and Exploited, Migrant Children Work Brutal Jobs Across the U.S. Videos: 1. The Run Coal Memos	<i>Cases: Upper Big Branch Mine & Child labor in contemporary USA</i> Discussion #2 – initial post due 10/14 Journal #2
6 10/8 – 10/14	Right-to-Know and Workers Compensation in the United States Readings: 1. The demolition of workers’ comp 2. A Town Plagued by Water Videos: 1. Workers’ Compensation History 2. 20,000 Cuts a Day 3. A Town Fights Back: The Toms River Story	<i>Cases: Poultry processing and Water contamination</i> Continue Discussion #2 – initial post due 10/14, replies due 10/21 Journal #3
7 10/15 – 10/21	International Occupational Health and Safety Standards: The International Labour Organization Readings: 1. Supervisory and Review Procedures: International Labour Organization (ILO) 2. Harnessing Public Institutions for Labour Law Enforcement: Embedding a Transnational Labour Inspectorate within the ILO Videos: 1. ILO's work on safety and health at work	Continue Discussion #2 – replies due 10/21
8 10/22 – 10/28	Evaluation week	Exam #1 – opens 10/22 and closes 10/28

9 10/29 – 11/4	Corporate Accountability for Occupational Safety and Health in the International Economy Readings: 1. When does a worker's death become a murder? 2. Bhopal: 40 Years of Injustice (Amnesty International) 3. Banana Workers Made Sterile from Pesticide Sue Dow in France (Beyond Pesticides) Videos: 4. Dying for Gold (https://www.dyingforgold.com/) 5. Talks met Kalpona Akter: power & OSH in Bangladesh (https://youtu.be/HijY2Lly-7M?si=E2leoxviWDIGKE-e)	<i>Cases: Union Carbide's Bhopal disaster, banana industry, gold, and apparel</i> Discussion #3 – initial post due 11/18 Journal #4
10 11/5 – 11/11	Gender Based Violence and Harassment in Global Supply Chains Readings: 1. Dindigul Agreement to Eliminate Gender-based Violence and Harassment: Year 2 Progress Report (Cornell Global Labor Institute) 2. Report on International Domestic Workers Federation Survey on Gender-Based Violence Against Domestic Workers, Asia (International Domestic Workers Federation)	<i>Case: Dindigul agreement to End Gender-Based Violence and Harassment</i> Continue Discussion #3 – initial post due 11/18
11 11/12 – 11/18	Occupational safety & health in waste management Reading: Revolution in the Garbage Dump: The Political and Economic Foundations of the Colombian Recycler Movement Video: <i>Plastic China</i> Podcast: <i>I AM STORY Podcast</i>	<i>Case: waste work in three contexts</i> Continue Discussion #3 – initial post due 11/18, replies due 11/25 Journal #5
12 11/19 – 11/25	Climate Change and Occupational Safety & Health Readings: 1. Hot weather and heat extremes: health risks (WHO) 2. Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate (ILO) 3. How work and workers, can influence heat action plans: Experts from Harvard Law School share lessons from international and interdisciplinary perspectives on heat adaptation and the climate crisis	<i>Case: Outdoor work</i> Continue discussion #3 –replies due 11/25

	Video: 1. India's Extreme Heat Extracts its Toll from Those Working Outdoors (Voice of America) 2. California's Burning, and Farmworkers Are Still in the Fields (Vice) 3. Prison Labor in the Spotlight as Incarcerated California Firefighters Risk Lives for \$5-10/Day (Democracy Now!)	
13 11/26, 12/1, 12/2	OSH and New Technologies Readings: 1. The Exploited Labor Behind Artificial Intelligence (Noema) 2. Amazon Is Still a Health and Safety Nightmare for Workers (Jacobin) 3. AI and employee privacy: important considerations for employers (Reuters) Podcast: 1. Sweden vs Tesla: The Longest Labor Strike in History (Pushback Talks)	<i>Cases: artificial intelligence development & deployment at work</i>
14 12/3 – 12/9	Evaluation week	Exam #2 opens 12/3 and closes 12/9 Complete 2 course evaluations Journal – all (5) journal entries must be submitted by 12/9