

INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

Labor Studies 37:575:100 online: Sections 92/94

Draft subject to change

This course is asynchronous online

Fall 2026, Department of Labor Studies and Employment Relations

Professor Mary Gatta, PhD

Contact Information for Professor Gatta- gatta@smlr.rutgers.edu It is best to reach out via email or Canvass message to me. I will most likely respond within 24 hours. I am also happy to set up phone calls and/or Zoom meetings.

Course Schedule:

The weeks in the course begin on Sunday and end on Saturday evening at 11:59 p.m. **You often will have things due on either Wednesday evening or Saturday evening, just like any course that meets twice a week.** There are some exceptions to these dates depending on holiday breaks and end of the semester work. The schedule and the assignments are subject to change.

There will be an *optional* virtual "meet your professor and classmates" [live Zoom session in my Zoom meeting room](#). The "meet your professor and classmates sessions" will be held on:

- **Thursday September 3 from 5:00 PM to 5:30 PM (EST)**

Course Learning Objectives. The student is able to:

Core Curriculum: SCL

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

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 continue to develop their critical thinking and communication skills for professional success (NACE Career Readiness Competencies)

Grades:

For purposes of grading, there are multiple components of the course:

Grading Components	Total # of Points
6 Discussion Forums (45 points each)	270
Rights Check (15 points)	15
Movie Check (15 points)	15
2 NACE Workplace Skills Assignments (50 points each)	100
3 Quizzes (100 points each for Quiz 1 and 2 and 50 points for Quiz 3)	250
2 Reflection Papers (100 points each)	200
Final Project Plan (50 points)	50
Final Project (100 points)	100
Optional Extra Credit (10 points)	
Total	1,000

Grading

Each assignment is worth a certain number of points as identified in the assignments section of the syllabus. The highest number of points a student can earn is 1000. Points accumulate to determine final grade. It is your responsibility to monitor your grade as you are going through the course. At any time, please reach out to me with questions.

A	= 1000– 900
B+	= 899 – 870
B	= 869 – 800
C+	= 799 – 770
C	= 769 – 700
D	= 669 – 600
F	= 599 – 0

Assignments

Final Project. In this section, you will then have a CHOICE as to doing one of two things for the final project: 1) an individual paper of about 5 pages on a workplace organizing plan for workers. This assignment will require you to do outside research from the class readings or 2) an individual paper of about 5 pages, after visiting one professor-approved labor related museum. You will need to physically visit the museum. Prior to the final project you will submit a **Final Project Plan** that I will review and provide feedback on.

Forums. These are 6 online threaded discussion forums throughout the semester. For the forums the goal is for you to think critically, engage with your peers, and deepen your understanding of

the course material. You will be randomly placed into a discussion group which will be your group all semester. Each week, you are expected to post one original response to the weekly prompt and reply to at least two of your classmates' posts. Your initial post should be between 150–250 words and should be submitted by Wednesday at 11:59pm. Replies should be between 75–150 words each and are due by Saturday at 11:59pm.

When writing your posts, use complete sentences and maintain college-level writing. Support your points with examples, evidence, or references when appropriate. A strong reply goes beyond agreement; it might ask a follow-up question, offer a new perspective, or respectfully challenge a viewpoint. Avoid short or vague comments like “I agree” without explanation. Posts should be respectful and on-topic. Forums open on Sunday of each week and close on Saturday of each week. Think of this like an in person class discussion. **For this reason, you cannot submit late posts after the week closes.**

Quizzes. We will have 3 quizzes throughout the semester based on course readings, videos and discussions. Quizzes must be completed during the quiz time period allotted in the course.

NACE Workplace Skills. You will complete 2 workplace skills writings where you will assess yourself on 2 NACE competencies related to your work and classes. Specific directions will be provided

Evidence- Based Reflection Papers. You will have 2 reflections during the semester. Twice throughout the semester you will have to complete an evidence-based reflection paper. Evidence-based reflective papers combine personal reflections with academic sources and evidence to create a more rigorous and insightful piece. It involves critically analyzing experiences, connecting them to relevant theories and research, and using this combination to draw meaningful conclusions and show personal growth. You need to be sure to cite the readings and videos from the week (you do not need to reference all the readings but enough to support your thoughts). Detailed directions for the papers are in the modules.

Extra Credit. At the end of the semester you will have the opportunity for an extra credit assignment.

Cheating/Plagiarism

There are serious consequences, including expulsion, for cheating and taking someone credit for someone else's work without attribution, this includes, using text written by a generation system as one's own (e.g., entering a prompt into an artificial intelligence tool and using the output in a paper), using the internet to answer questions on exams or on papers, when advised to use only class materials. The university has clear, strict policies on these matters. They include signing in for another student. I will report all violations. If you have not done so already, please familiarize yourself with the [university's academic integrity policy](#) If you have any questions, please see me.

What is the AI Policy of this Course?

AI tools can be a powerful resource for learning, especially when used thoughtfully. In this course, you are welcome to use AI to help you:

- Brainstorm ideas and topics
- Create outlines or mind maps
- Explore different ways of approaching a question or problem
- Generate study questions or summaries of concepts

However, the actual writing you submit—whether it’s a paper, discussion post, or other written assignment—must be your own original work. Think of AI as your brainstorming partner, not your ghostwriter. If you use AI at any stage, be sure to:

- Indicate which AI tool(s) you used
- Briefly explain how you used it (e.g., “used ChatGPT to generate a list of potential subtopics, then created my own outline”)
- Revise and adapt any AI-assisted material into your own words and ideas

By using AI in this way, you can take advantage of its strengths—speed, variety of ideas, and fresh perspectives—while still developing your own voice, critical thinking, and writing skills.

For each written assignment (forums, papers, exams) you must disclose if you used AI and how you used it at the END of that assignment.

Example of Proper AI Use Disclosure

For this assignment, I used ChatGPT to generate a list of potential subtopics for my paper on work and life. I selected three that I found most relevant, revised them, and created my own outline. All writing, analysis, and examples in the final paper are my own.

OR

For this assignment I did not use AI at all.

Course Text:

Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*. **4th Edition**. Sage, 2021. (Please note: the second and third editions are similar to the 4th; although latter editions are more up to date. The first is very different – do not use it). This book can be rented or purchased.

There are also additional readings/videos located in course modules in Canvas.

Course Support

Technical Resource- Contact helpdesk staff if you need assistance using **Canvas**.

Email: <https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support> or **Call:** 833-OIT-HELP

Student resources- If you are in need of help in the areas of (a) mental health, (b) academic coaching, and (c) financial assistance: <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/about-smlr/fall-2022-information-smlr-students>

SMLR Scholarships- <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/academic-programs/scholarships>

Students with Disabilities

To receive consideration for accommodations students with a disability must send their letter of accommodation to their instructors and discuss the needed accommodation(s) as early in the semester as possible. For more information regarding the process of applying for a letter of accommodation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>

How Does This Course Prepare You for Work?

In this course, you will be building skills that employers are seeking. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has identified 8 career readiness competencies that employers

find college graduates need for success in the workplace and lifelong career management. Included below are 2 of the career readiness competencies you will develop in this course.

NACE Competency	In the Workplace...	In this Course...	Articulating Your Skill
Communication- Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.	In the workplace , you can expect to articulate your thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral form to colleagues inside and outside the organization.	In this course , you will demonstrate communication by writing evidence based reflective papers in which arguments presented in the scientific literature are identified, analyzed, and critically evaluated. You will also demonstrate this skill by participating in forum discussions with your peers.	On your resume , you can articulate communication by including the title of your papers and detailing your methodology and findings in succinct bullet points.
Critical Thinking Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.	In the workplace , you can expect to exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems.	In this course , you will demonstrate critical thinking by writing evidence based reflective papers in which you critically analyze experiences, connect them to relevant theories and research, and use this combination to draw meaningful conclusions and show personal growth. You will also develop this skill in your forum discussion with your peers.	On LinkedIn , you can articulate critical thinking by sharing the articles you researched and the conclusions you drew from your papers to encourage discussion with others in your field of interest.

Unit I. The Situation Working People Face Today (Sept 1 – Oct 3)

Unit Overview- Most people have to work. Work shapes our lives and our conceptions of self, and at the same time it provides us with income. Not all work is the same. When work is insecure, low-paid, or we are not accorded dignity on the job, we suffer. On the other hand, when work is rewarding, it expands our skills, allows us to connect to others, and enables us to contribute to the community at large. In this unit, you will have a chance to think about your

family's history of work, consider how work has changed in the last 150 years, and explore the relationship of work and social class.

Week 1: Introduction (Sept 1-5)

- Explore what the course is about and make note of what is required of you.
- Review Rutgers' Academic Integrity Policy
- Buy or rent the text
- Complete NACE Workplace Skills Assignment
- Conduct an interview with a family member

Read: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 1 (This chapter will give you an overview of the theoretical framework for our course.)

Rutgers Career Center, NACE Competencies -
<https://careers.rutgers.edu/nacecompetencies>

Nearly Two-Thirds of Employers Use Skills-based Hiring Practices for New Entry-level Hires by Mary Gatta <https://www.nacweb.org/talent-acquisition/trends-and-predictions/nearly-two-thirds-of-employers-use-skills-based-hiring-practices-for-new-entry-level-hires>

Videos: Here are some additional video resources to help explain some of the main theories

Frederick Taylor | Scientific Management Explained

Karl Marx & Conflict Theory: Crash Course Sociology #6

Adam Smith's Invisible Hand Theory Explained | Economics

An Introduction Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic

Assignment for Week 1: NACE Workplace Skills Assignment- This week you read about the value employers place on career readiness skills for recent college graduates. In this class you will have the opportunity to further develop your critical thinking and communication skills. To get us started thinking about these skills, take the NACE Competency Assessment Tool in communication and critical thinking. Explain how you may have used the skill in the past and/or how you hope to continue to develop the skill. (about 200 words). This is due by Saturday Sept 12th at 11:59pm. We will return to this assignment later in the semester also.

Conduct an interview with a family member. You just need to conduct the interview this week (next week you will participate in a forum about it), Guidelines for the interview are in the module. Next week we will have a welcome forum where you share what you learned about your family work history with your classmates.

Week 2: Work and Our Lives (Sept 6 – Sept 12)

- The contemporary economic/work situation
- Longer term trends in work
- Complete Forum 1

****Be sure to complete Module 1 first, if you have not already****

Read:

Lindsay Ellis, “Think Work-Life Balance is Overrated? You’re Hired!” *Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 2025.

Danielle Abril, “Why your job may face a double threat if the economy sours,” *Washington Post*, June 5, 2025; <https://wapo.st/4kNvupY>

Katia Dmitrieva and Josh Eidelson, “What Strikes and ‘Quits’ Say about U.S. Labor’s Resolve,” *Bloomberg*, June 17, 2022.

Shawn VanDerziel and Mary Gatta.” The Impact of AI on the Early-career Labor Market,” May 13, 2026 <https://www.naceweb.org/job-market/trends-and-predictions/the-impact-of-ai-on-the-early-career-labor-market>

Start to think about longer term changes in the economy...

Watch: Richard Florida, “The Rise of the Creative Service Worker,” on Big Think (link in shell).

Assignment for Week 2: Forum 1- Welcome and Family History. To start the week you want to conduct an interview with a family member and then share that with the class. You will then comment on each other’s post. So first, conduct the interview and post a summary of your interview of your family’s work history by Wednesday Sept 9 at 11:59pm and then comment on at least 2 other student summaries and answer any questions others ask about your family's work experience by Saturday Sept 12 at 11:59pm. This forum will also give you an opportunity to meet your classmates.

Guidelines-

Interview a parent (actual or adopted), a grandparent, or if one of these is not available another older relative (uncle, great aunt etc.). Choose the interview format that works for you; in-person, remotely by phone, facetime, etc. If interviewing a family member is not possible, reach out to me.

Address the following questions in your initial post. You also have the option to include any other important information about the job of the person you interviewed.

(Job) Who did you interview and what job did they have longest? In that job, what did they do on a typical day? How did they learn the skills needed for the job and which were most important? In general, were they treated fairly – in pay, in chances for promotion, in the way they were treated by management? What were they paid?

(Life) Did funny or enjoyable things happen much on this job (if so, give an example). How did this job Impact the rest of their life and the life of their family? Did it enhance or limit their opportunities to make friends? Did it provide intellectual stimulation, opportunities for creativity, or other personal growth? Or was it mostly a way to earn money and their satisfactions come elsewhere?

Then, comment on 2 other students' summaries. You may want to ask them questions about their summaries for clarification, relate their summaries to yours (where there similarities/differences) and pose any questions to them. You should also answer any questions other students ask about your family's work experience.

Week 3: Corporations & Work in the “New Economy” (Sept. 13 - 19)

- Old and new forms of work organization
- The rise of contingent work

Read: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 2, and

Peter Capelli et al. Change at Work (New York: Oxford, 1997), subpart “The Employment System that Died,” and “How the World Began to Change,” pp. 15-29, and “The Restructuring of Organizations,” pp. 44-51.

Stephen Mihm, “Mass Layoffs in Big Tech Are an Old-Guard Mistake,” *Bloomberg*, Nov. 15, 2022.

Sarah Hunter Simanson. The gig economy sucked in millennials like me. Will we ever get out? The LA Times Jan 14 2024 <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2024-01-14/economy-millennials-gen-z-freelance-gigs>

Watch: PBS video, “A Job at Fords” from the series, *The Great Depression*

Assignment for Week 3: Movie Check --15 point quiz on movie content by Saturday Sept 19 at 11:59pm).

Week 4: Economic Inequality Today (Sept 20 -26)

- Class, race, and gender inequality
- Health and other effects of income inequality

Read:

Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 3,

Read:

David Leonhardt and Yaryna Serkez, “The U.S. is Lagging behind Many Rich Countries. These Charts Show Why,” *New York Times*, July 2, 2020,

Paul Krugman, “Wages, Wealth and Politics,” *New York Times*, August 18, 2006.
Janny Scott and David Leonhardt, ‘Shadowy Lines That Still Divide’ *New York Times*, May 15, 2005

Daniel Schneider, David Weil, Julie Su, and Kevin Brue “Amazon Drives Low Wages: The Unraveling of Workplace Protections for Delivery Drivers.” The Shift at Harvard. 2025 https://shift.hks.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Shift_brief_Oct25.pdf

Serkez, Yeryna, “Who is Mostly Likely to Die from the Coronavirus,” New York Times, June 4, 2020.

Watch:

Nicole Sweeney, Host, “Social Class and Poverty in the U.S.: Crash Course in Sociology #24” on YouTube.

Richard Wolff, “Class Struggle is a Fundamental Core of Capitalism,” on YouTube

Professor Francis Ryan, Rutgers Labor Studies & Employment Relations Dept. speak about the history of the ideal of social mobility in the U.S. and the reality today.

Kate Pickett, Big Think Interview, “Why Inequality is Bad for Your Health” <http://bigthink.com/katepickett>.

Robert Reich, “How Corporations Crush the Working Class”

Richard Wilkinson’s, TED Talk, on the impact of inequality globally.

Assignment for week 4 – Reflection 1- Income Inequality by Saturday Sept 26 at 11:59pm.
For this assignment you will need to use AI and reflect on the output.

The goal of our assignment is explore this question, first using AI and then reflecting on that answer using your own critical thinking skills, and the readings and videos for the week. The question we are exploring is --- "Is income inequality in the U.S. increasing? If yes, what specific problems does this cause? If no, what evidence shows the gap is stable or shrinking?"

Step 1: Generate an AI Summary

Use an AI tool (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or another large language model) to generate a **300-word summary** that answers the question above.

Save the AI-generated response as a Word document and include it in your reflection paper. At the top of the document, clearly indicate which AI tool you used.

Step 2: Reflect on the AI Response

AI-generated summaries can be useful, but they do not always capture the depth and nuance of course materials. After reading the assigned materials, write a reflection (approximately 300–500 words) addressing the following questions:

1. **What did you learn from this week's readings, videos, or other course materials that was not included in the AI-generated summary?**
 - Identify at least **two specific ideas, examples, or concepts** that were missing.
 - Cite the course resource where you learned each point.
2. **What information did the AI summary include that was not discussed in the course materials?**
 - Was this information accurate, useful, or potentially misleading?

3. **Would it have been a good idea to rely only on the AI-generated summary to learn about income inequality? Why or why not?**
 - Consider both the strengths and weaknesses of the AI response.
4. **Was having a short AI-generated summary helpful?**
 - Explain how it did or did not help you understand the topic and engage with the course materials.

Week 5 Social Class in the U.S (Sept 27 – Oct 3)

- Class and opportunity in the U.S.
- Class and social mobility
- Relationship between wealth and power
- Has class faded in American culture?

Read:

Janny Scott and David Leonhardt, ‘Shadowy Lines That Still Divide’ *New York Times*, May 15, 2005

Charlotte O'Herron and Daniel Schneider. “Dreams Deferred: Downward Mobility and Making Ends Meet in the Service Sector” *The Shift* at Harvard School.2023
(https://shift.hks.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Class_Brief_Layout_Final.pdf)

Read: Serkez, Yeryna, “Who is Mostly Likely to Die from the Coronavirus,” *New York Times*, June 4, 2020.

Assignment for Week 5- Take Online Quiz on Unit 1: Thursday Oct 1 at 5am- Saturday Oct 3 at 11:59pm

Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights (Oct 4 – Oct 31)

Overview. Employment law is the fundamental law of the workplace. It is essential for you to know something about your rights at work, or lack thereof. As professionals and managers you need to recognize their own rights and how they can, and cannot, treat employees. Employment law is mutable—it has changed in the past and may change in the future. One of the biggest changes in American employment law occurred in the 1960s in the face of demands for greater equality by race, color, national origin, religion and gender. Employment opportunities for people of different races and national origins have become more equal under the law since then, but racial and ethnic divisions and discrimination still persist throughout the workforce. Gender also matters for employment outcomes, although again, in some ways the workplace is much more accessible to women today than it was in 1964 when the Civil Rights Act was passed, with significant variances by race. As more women have entered the workplace on a full-time basis, families are increasingly juggling the demands of two (or more) jobs along with the need to care for their families

Week 6: Employment Rights in the U.S. (Oct 4 – Oct 10)

- Employment at-will

- Exceptions to employment at-will
- The NLRA (Wagner Act) and state bargaining laws
- The Fair Labor Standards Act & the Occupational Safety and Health Act

First: Take the rights check. This is a quiz that you can take and retake over the course of the week until you get a perfect score and the full number of points (10). After the week is over, the rights check ends – so be sure to do it this week.

Read:

Sweet & Meiksins, Chapt. 4

Steven Greenhouse, Low-Wage Workers are Often Cheated. Study Says, September 1, 2009, *New York Times*.

Josh Edelson, “Most Americans Can Be Fired for No Reason at Any Time, but a New Law in New York Could Change That,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, June 21, 2021.

Lewis Maltby, Can They Do That? (New York: Portfolio, 2009). Chapter 4, “Wrongful Discharge and Employment at Will,” pp. 57-67 and a portion of Chapter 13, “The Rights You Have,” pp. 196-203.

Watch:

3 short Videos on Employment at Will and the common law exceptions from Professor Carla Katz

Assignment for Week 6: Forum 2- Participate in the forum on employment rights. The first part is due on Wednesday October 7 at 11:59pm; the second at the same time on Saturday on Oct 10.

One of the central questions in labor and employment relations is how much power employers should have to hire and fire workers. In this chapter from this week Lewis Maltby argues that the U.S. doctrine of employment at will gives employers extraordinary authority to terminate employees and that the law should instead require just cause before a worker can be fired. We are going to engage in forum where we collectively unpack the article so that we can build a study guide that highlights the main concepts and arguments.

For your first post, you want to:

1. Explain employment at will and why it is important for workers.
2. Highlight an example of employment at will- Maltby uses numerous real-world examples and court cases to illustrate his argument. Choose one example and explain:
 - a. What happened?
 - b. Why did the author include this example?
 - c. How does it strengthen (or weaken) his overall argument?
3. Identify an exemption
 - a. Highlight one of the legal exceptions to employment at will discussed in the chapter, explain what it is and if you think it goes far enough to protect workers. Examples include: discrimination laws, employment contracts, and public policy exceptions

Then you want to respond to 2 students' posts. You want to deepen our collective understanding of the reading. So think about responses such as

- Can I explain this concept more clearly?
- Can I add another example?
- Can I connect it to another reading?
- Can I challenge or strengthen the author's argument?

By the end of the forum assignment, we should have a study guide that collectively answers questions such as:

- What is employment at will?
- Why does Maltby believe it is problematic?
- What legal protections currently exist for workers?
- What are the limitations of those protections?
- What is "just cause," and how would it change employment relationships?

Week 7: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality: (Oct 11-17)

- Race, ethnicity and inequality in the contemporary workplace
- Discrimination and Fairness
- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- The Memphis Garbage Workers Strike and Martin Luther King

Read: Sweet and Meiksins, Chapter 7, "Race, Ethnicity and Work."

Justin Fox, "Black Employment is on a Worrying Decline," Bloomberg, July 9, 2025.

Charlie LeDuff, "At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die: Who Kills, Who Cuts; Who Bosses Can Depend on Race," *New York Times*, June 16, 2000.

Watch: Three videos

(1) One is an excerpt from the movie, *At the River I Stand*, about the Memphis Garbage workers strike and Dr. Martin Luther King

(2) The second is a YouTube video that continues the story of the Memphis garbage strike.

(3) Mr. Wade Henderson, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Testimony to U.S. Senate Subcommittee, 2009 about the relationship between union rights and civil rights

Assignment for Week 7- Forum 3. Several of this week's materials suggest that labor rights and civil rights are deeply connected. Drawing on the Memphis sanitation workers' strike videos, Wade Henderson's testimony, and the chapter reading, discuss: Why did workers in the Memphis strike viewed their struggle as both a labor issue and a civil rights issue? Do you agree that labor rights and civil rights are deeply connected? Why/why not?

You want to post your response by Wednesday October 14th at 11:59pm and then respond to two students by Saturday October 17 at 11:59pm

Week 8: Gender, Work and Caregiving (Oct 18-24)

- Women's participation in the paid labor force
- Gender inequalities and discrimination
- Work/family policies and the law

Review power-point lecture on gender, work, and family.

Read:

Sweet and Meiksins, Chapter 5

Caregiving in the US, 2025- Executive Summary. AARP

<https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/topics/ltss/family-caregiving/caregiving-in-us-2025-executive-summary.doi.10.26419-2fppi.00373.003.pdf>

Cathy Bussewitz. As the US population ages, more employees are seeking caregiver benefits at work. AP News FEB. 19, 2026 <https://www.ap.org/news-highlights/spotlights/2026/as-the-us-population-ages-more-employees-are-seeking-caregiver-benefits-at-work/>

'It's a job, and a tough one': the pain and privilege of being a millennial caregiver" The Guardian, Jan 28, 2025

Bipartisan Policy Center, State Paid Family Leave Laws Across the US, April 2026

Sari Pekkala Kerr, The Motherhood Penalty and the Fatherhood Premium: The Gender Wage Gap Across the Family Life Cycle 2022

Watch:

(1) The Culture of Overwork Hurts Everyone (Quick Study) [5:11]

Assignment for Week 8- Evidence Based Reflection #2 This week's readings explore how gendered notions of caregiving impact work and family integration. We discussed how the gendered nature of care impacts both men and women in the labor force. The readings and videos this week highlight both the personal challenges of caregiving, and the broader workplace and societal issues surrounding care. Think about the impact of carework on individual workers; the role of public policy (such as childcare supports and paid family leave)

Drawing on the assigned readings, write a 2 page reflection addressing the following question:

Should caregiving be viewed primarily as a private family responsibility, or as a broader workplace issue?

In your reflection:

Use evidence from the course materials. Consider the roles of men and women; employers, and government in supporting caregivers who are working. Explain who you believe should bear the greatest responsibility for helping working caregivers and why (should it be workers themselves, employers and/or public policy). To do so, be sure to address the following-

- Use evidence from the assigned readings and videos
- Explain who you believe should bear the greatest responsibility for supporting working caregivers and why.
- Explain how your response can impact gender equity in the labor market.
- At the end of the reflection briefly explain why you chose to use AI or not and if you did use AI please complete the AI policy for the course.

Your grade will be based on your use of course materials, the strength of your analysis, and the clarity of your writing.

This assignment is due by Saturday October 24th at 11:59pm.

Week 9: The New Immigration (Oct 25-31)

- Effects of immigration on wages and work
- Public policy debates regarding immigration policy for the U.S.

Read:

New York Times, 1/27/2007, “Study of Immigrants Links Lighter Skin and Higher Income, and

Tara Watson. The impact of immigrants on the US economy Brookings Institute March 30, 2026

Immanuel Ness, Immigrants, Unions, and the New U.S. Labor Market (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005). Chapter 2, “The Political Economy of Transnational Labor in New York City: The Context for Immigrant Worker Militancy,” pp. 13-39.

Watch:

Professor Janice Fine, LSER Department, Rutgers, speaking about immigration issues.

Assignment for Week 9- Take Online Quiz on Unit II: Thursday Oct 29 at 5am to Saturday Oct 31 at 11:50pm

Unit III Improving Working People’s Lives (Nov 1-Dec 12)

Overview. Union membership grew rapidly in the 1930s-1950s. Collective bargaining between unions and employers in major industries helped raise the standard of living not only for union members, but also for the entire workforce. For the past 40 years, however, the labor movement has been in steep decline in the U.S. In this final unit for the course we will try our hand at collective bargaining during an in-class simulation. We will also explore the reasons why the labor movement has been in decline, as well as some of the newest and most innovative efforts on the part of unions, worker centers, and community organizations to organize workers in the ever-changing economy. The course will end with a discussion of public policies that could reshape the future of work.

Week 10 The Legacy: The New Deal & Labor (Nov 1-7)

- A new relationship between government and working Americans in the 1930s

- Union growth and consolidation in the 1930s-40s
- The CIO and the sit-down strike
- The “New Deal System’s” achievements and limitations

Read:

Andrew Leonard, “Lessons for Obama from the New Deal,” *Salon*, 2011.

Jack Metzgar, Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000). “Getting to 1959,” first part pp. 17-39.

Watch: Various videos.

- (1) Professor Paula Voos, Speaking about the New Deal, WWII and Labor (3 sections) (and accompanying ppt slides)
- (2) A feature video (54 min.), “Mean Things Happening: The Great Depression, Part 5” from PBS also on You-Tube. Please pay particular attention to the second half of the video on steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania.
- (3) Optional: A short You-Tube video regarding the early 1930s and the San Francisco General Strike:
- (4) Optional: A short You-Tube video on the sit-down strike and its use by the CIO Autoworkers union in the 1930s:

Due week 10: Participate in Forum 4. The first post is due by Wednesday Nov 4; then comment on 2 other students’ post by Saturday Nov 7 at 11:59pm

Why was it harder to organize a union of sharecroppers than a union of steelworkers in the 1930s? Was it simply that the National Labor Relations Act (the Wagner Act) did not cover sharecroppers? What else made the situation difficult (according to the PBS video you watched -- please be specific about the scenes that support your answer! Are there additional factors you can identify)?

After Wednesday, you should comment on the posts of at least two other people. Don’t just say “I agree,” or “I disagree,” but explain why and/or give other examples or reasons.

Week 11: Unions Today in the U.S., (Nov 8-14)

- What do unions do?
- Collective bargaining
- Are unions good or bad for the economy?

Read:

Kim Kelly, “What a Labor Union is and How it Works,” *Teen Vogue*, March 12, 2018.

US Department of Labor. What is a Union? <https://beta.dol.gov/policy-regulations/unions-collective-bargaining/what-union>

Steven Greenhouse, “Broken U.S. Labor Laws Could Hamper Union Wins for Workers, Experts Warn” *The Guardian*. Dec. 27, 2023.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. [Weekly earnings of nonunion workers were 85 percent that of union workers, 2024](#),

Watch:

Emma Neely and Timothy Valk, “Unionization,” *Econofact*, June 24, 2022

Watch:

(1) Reverend Jim Wallis, Sojourners, Testifying on unions and economic inequality, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.

(2) Professor Paula Voos, Rutgers, Testifying about the economic effects of unions, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.

(3) Professor Carla Katz, Rutgers, “Unions and Individual Voice”

Optional: Read/look at Tables....Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Union Members 2025.”

Due in week 11 – Forum 5

For this forum I want you to collaboratively with your forum group unpack the article- by Kim Kelly, “What a Labor Union is and How it Works,” *Teen Vogue*, March 12, 2018 (in our unit) so that we can all highlight the main points and have a strong study guide for the article at the end. The first post is due by Wednesday Nov 11 at 11:59pm; and then comment on 2 other students’ post by Saturday Nov 14 at 11:59pm

For your first post I want you to include:

1. **The Big Idea**-- Identify one passage that explains what labor unions are or why they exist. Explain, in your own words, why this idea is important.
2. **How Unions Work**--Find a passage that explains how unions function (for example, organizing workers, collective bargaining, dues, contracts, strikes, or representation). Briefly explain the process in language that another student could easily understand.
3. **Myth or Misconception**- Kelly discusses several common misunderstandings or criticisms about labor unions. Highlight one example and explain: What is the misconception? How does the author respond to it?

Then I want you to respond to 2 students where you add additional information to their posts based on the passage; flesh out the ideas more based on the passage or perhaps correct something they may mis-interpreted from the reading.

Note—for this forum you will be able to see other students' posts before you post. If a student has already addressed what you want to address, add something new instead! By the end of the forum you should have a complete study guide to this article that collectively is able to answer questions such as:

What is a labor union?

Why do workers organize?

What problems are unions designed to address?

How does collective bargaining work?

What rights and responsibilities do union members have?

What are some common criticisms of unions, and how do supporters respond?

Week 12: (Nov 15-25) Final Project Plan (NOTE- LONG WEEK BECAUSE OF THANKSGIVING)

This week you will use the time to complete your final project plan

Due in week 12 – Use this week to prepare for your final project. You need to select which of the 2 options you will be doing for your final project by Saturday Nov 21 and submit a brief plan on how you will go about the project.

Thanksgiving Break- Nov 26-29

Week 13 Public Policy and the Future of Work (Nov 30-Dec 5)

Read:

Sweet and Meiskins, Chapter 8.

Karen Weise, "Video Game Union Reaches Deal on Industry-First Contract at Microsoft," *New York Times*, May 30, 2025.

Noam Scheiber, "California Senate Passes Bill to Regulate the Fast Food Industry," *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 2022.

Slawa Rokicki, Andrea Hall. "Use of New Jersey's Paid Family Leave Has Increased Across All Socioeconomic Groups, but Not Equally" Rutgers State Policy Lab April 9, 2026 <https://policylab.rutgers.edu/publication/use-of-new-jerseys-paid-family-leave-has-increased-across-all-socioeconomic-groups-but-not-equally/>

Watch the following videos:

(1) *Wall Street Journal* video, "The Robots Are Now Hiring"

(2) Video Amazon's Sexist Recruitment AI [3:35]

(3) Robert Reich on the need for public investment, "The Biggest Deficit is the One You Never Heard of," YouTube, 2001.

(4) Dr. Teresa Boyer, former Executive Director, Center for Women and Work, Rutgers, on Work and Family policy

Assignment- Forum 6 The first post is due by Wednesday Dec 3 additional posts are due Saturday Dec 5

The readings and videos in this unit highlight several challenges facing workers today, including the impact of AI and automation, unequal access to workplace benefits, the role of unions, and the importance of public investment and work-family policies.

Imagine you have been asked to help design a "new social deal" for workers in the 21st century. Your goal is to identify the changes you believe would best improve the lives of workers and their families.

In your post:

Identify two policies, workplace practices, or protections that you believe should be part of a new social deal for work based on the course materials In your post explain why you selected each of these priorities. What problem would it address? Which workers would benefit most? Connect your ideas to at least two of the assigned readings or videos.

Your initial post should be approximately 300–500 words. When responding to classmates, identify one proposal you agree with and one proposal you would modify or approach differently, explaining your reasoning.

Week 14: (Dec 6-10) NACE Workplace Skills and Unit II Quiz.

Assignment Week 14- Complete the 2nd NACE Workplace Skills Assignment. You want to re-take the NACE Competency Assessment on Critical Thinking and Communication that you took earlier in the semester. Then think specifically about the critical thinking and communication skills that you just assessed yourself on with the NACE tool Imagine that you are at a job interview and an employer asked you to demonstrate your critical thinking OR communication skills that you developed in this class. **How would you respond?** Be sure to use a specific example from this semester. For instance, perhaps talk about how a paper you wrote or a discussion you participated in demonstrates the skill. You don't want to say you wrote a paper or participated in a discussion. Instead talk about the ways that you developed and exhibited the skills in the activity. Be specific about the skills that you engaged in-- you may want to use the assessment tool to help you demonstrate your skill (but put the ideas into your own words) (200-250 words) This is due by Thursday Dec 10 at 11:59pm

Assignment Week 14- Take Online Quiz on Unit III: Tues Dec 8th at 5am to -Thursday Dec 10th at 11:59pm

Week 15 and Final Project and Extra Credit Period: WRAP UP:

Final Project is Due Friday December 18 at 11:59pm

Extra Credit Opportunity—Due by Friday Dec 18 at 11:59pm

Extra Credit: Labor Anthem & Course Readings Connect (10 Points)

Instructions:

Music has always been a vital tool for worker solidarity, morale, and protest. For this extra credit assignment, you will connect a historical or contemporary labor song to the concepts we have discussed in class.

1. **Listen:** Choose and listen to **one** of the classic labor anthems below (or find another labor-themed song of your choice):
 - *"Solidarity Forever"* (Pete Seeger / The Almanac Singers)
 - *"Which Side Are You On?"* (Florence Reece / Natalie Merchant)
 - *"Bread and Roses"* (Judy Collins / Utah Phillips)
 - *"9 to 5"* (Dolly Parton)
2. **Analyze & Connect:** Write one to two paragraphs addressing the following two points:
 - **The Lyric:** Quote your favorite line or stanza from the song and explain what it means in the context of worker struggles.
 - **The Reading:** Explicitly connect that lyric to one or two specific concept, terms, or historical event from our course materials (e.g., collective bargaining, job security/insecurity; employer/employee relationship, worker rights etc).