
Course Description

This online course will examine the evolving position of Black workers in the U.S. economy: how it has changed at key points throughout history to the present day, and how access to opportunities in the labor market is informed by racial stratification in the larger society.

We will discuss various dimensions of racial labor market stratification (wages, mobility, benefits, poverty, unemployment, and underemployment) to assess Blacks' economic position in the labor market. The goal of the course is to challenge common notions of how people succeed in the labor market and to explore how systemic patterns of exclusion limit opportunities for Blacks. The course will focus on structural explanations for racial inequality in the labor market rather than purely individualistic ones. We will examine the social constructs of race and class to understand how Blacks at all levels in employment face common challenges in navigating the labor market.

Core Curriculum: Learning Objectives

- CCD-2. Analyze contemporary social justice issues and unbalanced social power systems.
- SCL-1 Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
- SCL-2 Employ tools of social scientific reasoning to study questions or situations, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department Objectives:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations. (Goal I)
- Apply those concepts, and substantive institutional knowledge to understanding contemporary development related to work. (Goal II)
- Analyze the degree to which forms human difference shape a person's experience in the world. (Goal VI)

Course Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, it is expected that students will be able to:

Analyze the degree which forms human difference and shape a person's experience of and perspectives in the world. In this class we will explore how racial categorization, created through the social construction of race, affects one's position in the labor market and consequently produces racial labor market inequality. Through this approach, we will examine the socioeconomic dimensions that race is not a scientifically "real" concept; it is "real" in its consequences.

Explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, methods, evidence, arguments, and theory in social and historical analysis. Through analysis of readings and forum discussions, students will breakdown the author's thesis, arguments and supporting evidence to critically evaluate the claims presented and compare them across other readings, draw connections and distinctions using different approaches and strategies to build a supporting argument.

Analyze issues of social justice across local and global contexts. Students will develop an understanding of concepts such as hierarchy, and power in developing a working knowledge of social

change – specifically, one that uses a complex, nuance analysis of a social problem to devise effective policies to end socioeconomic inequality. We can view the position of African American's position in the U.S. economy as part of a racial structure fortified by mechanisms such as exclusion, access, and institutional discrimination. We will explore this idea through course readings, statistical reports, videos/film and research chosen to explore hypothetical situations designed to encourage student engagement, communicating various perspectives and lived experiences in group discussions.

Understand different theories about social identity, economic entities, human culture, political systems and other forms of social organization. We will use the idea that the labor market, as well as society at large is organized in such a way that it can be examined using a structural approach.

Apply scientific reasoning to complex workplace issues and consequences associated with Black Workers, human assumptions, social closure and economic equity.

Course Delivery

- Course written lectures.
- Research based articles and papers.
- Answer questions regarding.
- Online threaded forum discussions and posts.
- Course videos, and/or listening to audio files.

Course Materials

All required readings, journal article, videos and assignments are located on the course website within Canvas.

Online Assignment Assessment

Weekly written questions are a series of questions students will be asked to answer. The questions are designed to ensure that students understand the most important aspects of the readings and/or videos. The answers for each question should be no longer than needed to fully answer the questions. In most cases 1 to 2 paragraphs using single space sentences that completely answer the question(s).

Forum discussions are interactive threaded discussions used to discuss course topics. Within these forums students can communicate their insights and thoughts pertaining to a particular course topic, as well as learn from one another in the process.

Threaded discussions are also a means for the instructor to identify whether a student comprehends required reading and/or video assignments. Forums include instructor-generated questions and suggested topic areas for discussion, and student-to-student interaction.

Overall Criteria for Grading - Scores on the weekly assignments as well as the online forums reflect whether you have achieved an accurate understanding of the various readings and whether you reflect those ideas well in written English. There are three sets of criteria on which students are graded. Earning the highest number of points within each assignment requires following these best practices:

Content (50% of points)

Content is well developed:

- ✓ Content that relates to required/recommended course material is accurate and well developed.
- ✓ Questions are thoroughly answered, and content is appropriate for the topic of inquiry
- ✓ Content that indicates knowledge gained and potential for knowledge/skills to influence future thoughts/behavior is adequately linked to course materials (including any material brought into the course by a student). When required, citations are provided.

Reflection (40% of points)*Outstanding reflective skills:*

- ✓ Answers indicate a high level of reflection and insight on topic.
- ✓ Critical thinking is evident.
- ✓ A strong desire to reflect on topics is evident.

Organization & Mechanics (10% of points)*Organization of content and expression of ideas/thoughts are outstanding:*

- ✓ Writing is fluent and lively.
- ✓ All answers are presented in a professional manner: using appropriate grammar, sentence structure, and spelling.
- ✓ All ideas/thoughts are well communicated. Answers to all questions are concise/to the point.
- ✓ Engages in a high-quality Internet search (when applicable). Instructions for completing assignment are followed.

Policies and Procedures

The course will begin on Wednesday, September 2, 2026.

Class Sessions and Assignment Due Date Information

Wednesdays are the beginning of each course week. A weekly message and/or video will be sent at the beginning of the week which will provide instructions for new assignments as well as grading feedback regarding prior assignments, and general course announcements. Students are responsible to review content of weekly announcements/messages. Written assignments (weekly questions and forum posts) will be accepted up to **24 hours late** (12:01 am – 11:59 pm) for a 40% penalty. Writing assignments submitted after the 24-hour late period will not be accepted. Consideration for late assignments after this date must be approved by the instructor.

To avoid late penalties, keep in mind when using technology, malfunctions can occur. It is a good practice when taking an asynchronous online course to be proactive when completing assignments. Please plan if you are unable to complete coursework timely; “*things happen.*” You can always submit any assignment early, prior to the due date.

Resources for Student 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 success.rutgers.edu, and nearly all services and resources that are typically provided in-person are now available remotely.

Scholarships and fellowships are offered by generous donors in support of our students and their endeavors through the School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR). More information can be found at <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/academic-programs/scholarships>.

The James B. Carey Library is a great resource when researching assignments, learning how to cite resources, and generally using information to achieve your academic goals. More information can be found at <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/about-smlr/carey-library> or contacting Julie Peters, Library Director at jpeters@smlr.rutgers.edu.

Technical Resources and Assistance

Dedicated faculty and student support is available to assist all students. It is our hope that all students take advantage of the resource tools on Canvas, and contact information provided.

- Rutgers Center for Online and Hybrid Learning and Instructional Technologies (OIT)
Support Website: <https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support>
Email: help@oit.rutgers.edu
Call 24/7: 833-OIT-HELP or (833) 648-4357

Media Policy on recording and transmission of classroom activities and discussions by students or faculty is prohibited without written permission from the class instructor and all students in the class. Class participants must have been informed that audio/video recording or reposting of forum contributions may occur. Public distribution of such material may constitute copyright infringement in violation of federal or state law, or University policy. Students in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action under the University Standards of Conduct. **(See full policy on Canvas)**

- Exception – It is not a violation of this policy for a student determined by the Learning Needs and Evaluation Center (LNEC) to be entitled to educational accommodations to exercise any rights protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 including needed recording or adaptation of classroom lectures or materials for personal research and study. Such recordings of lectures or class presentations are solely authorized for the purpose of individual or group study with other students enrolled in the same class. Permission to allow the recording is not a transfer of any copyrights in the recording or rights to ownership of content. The restrictions on third party web and commercial distribution apply in such cases.
- Destruction of Approved Recordings – Students must destroy recordings at the end of the semester in which they are enrolled in the class unless they receive the instructor's written permission to retain them or are entitled to retain them as an LNEC-authorized accommodation.

Disability Services

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all University 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 service office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodation. **(See full policy on Canvas)**

Academic Integrity

All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to behave in an ethical and moral fashion respecting the human dignity of all members of the community and resisting behavior that may cause danger or harm to others through violence, theft, or bigotry. All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to adhere to the civil and criminal laws of the local community, state and nation, and to regulations promulgated by the University. All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to observe established standards of scholarship and academic freedom by respecting the intellectual property of others and by honoring the rights of all students to pursue their education in an environment free from harassment and intimidation. Please see the following link below for details regarding the Academic Integrity Policy.

Students are expected to refrain from cheating, fabricating information, plagiarizing, inappropriately denying others access to material, and facilitating others in academic dishonesty.

<https://nbprovost.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-students>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are:

- Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.
- Incorporating into one's work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other non-textual material from other sources without proper attribution.
- Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one's own words another person's written words or ideas as if they were one's own.
- Submitting a purchased or downloaded paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.

Very Important: The use of. "AI" is Prohibited

The use of Artificial Intelligence ("AI") such as Chatgpt, Grammarly, etc., is not permitted in any stages of the writing process on any assignment. Turnitin, GPTZero, and similar tools may be utilized to detect student use of AI.

Further, using AI is often a recipe for disaster and can lead to [hallucinations!](#)

Turnitin Plagiarism Detection

In coordination with the Office of General Counsel, Rutgers Teaching and Learning with Technology advises instructors who use Turnitin for plagiarism detection to include the following statement in their course syllabus: **"Turnitin"** to detect plagiarism.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com (directly or via learning management system, i.e., Sakai, Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com ser is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site. **(See full policy on Canvas)**

If a student has never logged into the Turnitin website, a password or will need to be established by using the [Forgot Password Link](#).

Instructor's Message Policy:

Unless you receive advance notification, your instructor will check for messages daily on most workdays. (This excludes Saturday/Sunday, holidays, and official University breaks) If a student sends a comment or question, your instructor will try to respond to your message within 24 hours.

Student's Message Checking Policy:

It is the responsibility of the student to check incoming course related messages and assignment comments on Canvas at least three (3) times a week. Forgetting or being unable to check your messages is not an excuse.

Grading Assignment Breakdown

Everyone will have the opportunity to do well in this course. A final grade is based on the point system below. Number of points for each course assessment is detailed in the following chart.

Course Component	Raw Points Possible
IAT Study	10
Weekly Written Assignments (50 pts each)	300
Forum Discussion (40 pts each)	320
Interview Assignment	50
Social Justice Paper	60
Final	260
Total	1000

Total Raw Points	RU Letter Grade
1000-900	A
899-860	B+
859-800	B
799-760	C+
759-700	C
699-600	D
599 and below	F
Total	1000

Weekly Schedule: Refer to weekly topic pages in course shell for full description.

WEEK DUE	READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1: Sept 02 – 08	<i>Introduction: Familiarizing yourself with Canvas and Rutgers policies</i> Assignments: <i>Icebreaker Forum Discussion Activity</i> <i>Implicit Association Test</i>
Week 2: Sept 09 -15	<i>Racial Bias and Social Consciousness</i> Readings: Frontline: “A Class Divided” Stanford University: “How to check unconscious bias”
Week 3: Sept 16 - 22	<i>Understanding Racial and Economic Stratification</i> Readings: Washington Center for Equitable Growth, “Stratification Economics: What it is and how it advances our understanding of inequality” BLS, “Labor Force Characteristics by race and ethnicity”
Week 4: Sept 23 - 29	<i>History of Black Workers: Post Emancipation</i> Readings: “Race, Ethnicity and the American Labor Market: What’ at Work”
Week 5: Sept 30 – Oct 06	<i>The Industrial Era</i> Readings: History: “The Industrial Revolution” Bruce Nelson, “Divided We Stand” EPI: “Unions Promote Racial Equality”
Week 6: Oct 07 – 13	<i>Black Workers, Labor, and the Civil Rights Movement Labor</i> Reading: “Labor and the Civil Rights Movement” Assignment: Interview
Week 7: Oct 14 – 20	<i>Access to Work</i> CBS, “New Report Some Companies Discriminate Against Black Applicants More Than Other?”

	Amanda Agan, <i>"The Effects of a Criminal Record on Access to Employment"</i> BLS: <i>"State of Unemployment by Race and Ethnicity"</i> August 2026
Week 8: Oct 21 – 27	<i>Gender Pay Gap</i> IWPR, <i>"The Numbers Don't Add Up: Women Continue to Earn Less Regardless of Occupation"</i> World Economic Forum <i>"Progress despite uncertainty: Key findings from the Global Gender Gap Report"</i>
Week 9: Oct 28 –Nov 03	<i>Education and Economic Mobility</i> Reading: Washington Center for Equitable Growth: <i>"Why minimum wages are critical for achieving racial justice in the U.S. labor market"</i> Pew Research Center: <i>"Economic Mobility Seen as a Major Challenge Around the World"</i>
Week 10: Nov 04 – 10	<i>Historical Concepts of Structural Inequality</i> Readings: NELP: <i>"Desegregating Opportunity: Why Uprooting Occupational Elsevier "Historical redlining and contemporary home mortgage lending"</i>
Week 11: Nov 11 –17	<i>Black Workers and the Middle Class</i> Reading: Harvard Gazette: <i>"Economic prospects brighten for children of low-income Black Americans, Study finds"</i> BLS: <i>"The Employment Situation"</i>
Week 12: Nov 18 – 24	<i>Social Justice and Legal Implications</i> Readings: NBER, <i>"Long Term Effects of Affirmative Action"</i> Antony A Jack, <i>"The Privileged Poor"</i> Assignment: Paper & Informal Debate
Week 13: Nov 26 - 29	<i>Thanksgiving Recess (No Classes)</i>
Week 13: Dec 03 - 08	<i>Final Exam</i>