

**INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS**  
**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY 37:575:100:01 Tentative - Subject to Change**  
**Fall 2015**



**Classroom:** Room 116, Tillett Hall (TIL), Livingston Campus, 53 Avenue E, Piscataway, NJ 08854

**Course schedule:** Monday and Thursday, 12:00 pm – 1:20 pm, September 3 – December 10, 2015

**Final Exam:** TBD

**Instructor:**

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**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 also study the changing nature of work, workers and workers' institutions and organizations; the impact of technological change, the economic cycle, social class, immigration, race, ethnicity and gender; the role of government in labor policy; the history of unions, the role of unions in politics and challenges the labor movement faces today; and collective bargaining and workers' rights issues.

Class will include lectures, small group discussions, simulations, in-class assignments, and media presentations. Students are encouraged to freely express their views. Respect for the appreciation of different viewpoints will be a guiding principle in this course. **Note: this syllabus may be changed or modified as the course proceeds.**

**Textbook:** Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*, Second Edition. Sage 2013. The text is available at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore on the College Avenue Campus. IMPORTANT! The second edition of this book is quite different from the first – it has a new chapter and other chapters have been renumbered.

All readings, except for the textbook, are available on Rutgers Sakai, which you may access at <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>. To log on, enter your Rutgers ID and password in the upper right hand corner. Click on the tab: 37:575:100:01 and then click on modules on the menu on the left hand side of the page.

**The syllabus, schedule, and assignments are subject to change as the course evolves.**

**Course Requirements**

1. **Read entire syllabus** and make sure you understand it. This is your contract with the instructor.

**2. Be prepared for class.** Always read the material assigned for a class before the class. For instance, complete the reading for Week 2 before our class meets on September 10, complete the reading for Week 3 before our class meets on September 17, etc. **Bring the reading material to class with you** in case you need to refer to it (for instance, for an open-book quiz or for a discussion). Check your email regularly for class announcements.

**3. Be present and be on time.** Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, **please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence.** An email is automatically sent to us. Please note: Our attendance policy is that students begin with an “A” for attendance. However, the grade for attendance will decline each time a student is absent, late, or leaves early. If you are late or leave early, you will be charged with  $\frac{1}{2}$  class absence. If you have a legitimate reason for your absence, lateness or need to leave early, it must be provided to us in writing in advance or immediately after the occurrence. Even excused absences must be reported via the University absence reporting website indicated above.

**4. Participate in discussions and group activities.** Students will be divided into groups for breakout sessions and projects. The teaching assistants and us will supervise the groups. Your participation in these group situations goes to your participation grade. Explain your views. Ask questions. Listen – don’t monopolize the discussion or ignore other views. Do your share of the work in simulations and in-class group activities. Texting, talking on your phone, FB and Twitter are prohibited in class (unless part of the group activity).

**5. Take careful lecture notes.** You should obtain lecture notes from another student if you miss a class. These are not provided by the instructors or by the teaching assistants.

**6. 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 or dean of the instructional unit. For more information on the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, see

[http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\\_Policy\\_2013.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_2013.pdf)

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<http://policies.rutgers.edu/sites/policies/files/50.3.7-current.pdf>

## **Evaluation**

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

- Family Interview Exercise (5%)
- Class preparation, attendance and participation (20%)
  - Attendance will be taken in class and participation in group activities and discussions will be tracked.
- Written assignments (20%)
  - There are two written assignments for this class. The first is a short response paper on social class and economic inequality and the second is a final reflection paper on course themes. Each paper is worth 10% of your course grade.

- Collective bargaining exercise (10%)
  - The entire class will participate in a collective bargaining exercise spanning a couple of weeks. Students will be assigned to a union team or to a management team and will be required to negotiate a contract by a set date and time. You will be graded as a team on this exercise.
- Exams (45%)
  - There will be two (2) exams (a midterm and a final) that are predominantly “objective” – a combination of short-answer, objective, and short essay items given in class. Both are closed book but you may bring one note card or sheet of paper no larger than 4x6 inches with notes on it. The final exam will be similar in nature to the first exam but cover material since the first exam. The midterm exam is worth 20% of your course grade and the final exam is worth 25% of your course grade.

**Learning Objectives:** This is a social science course. The following SAS learning objectives are particularly relevant:

**h. Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.** *One learning objective involves understanding how U.S. workers have reacted to the changing nature of work, to their class position in American society, and to particular contingencies like immigration. You will gain an overview of the history of the American labor movement, how it fits into a global context, and how race, ethnicity and gender affect workers. You will demonstrate knowledge through writing assignments and examinations.*

**m. Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.** *A second objective involves understanding theories regarding the relationship between economic organization (e.g., the extent of economic markets and corporate structures) and the type of worker organization and public policy responses that are needed to improve the lives of workers. You will demonstrate this knowledge through writing assignments and examinations.*

**n. Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations.** *A third objective will be for you to apply these theories to current policy debates. You will demonstrate this through participation in class debates and through participation in a collective bargaining exercise based on current situations.*

### **Unit I: The Situations Facing Working People**

Most people have to work. Work shapes our lives and our conceptions of self, and at the same time it provides us with income. 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 enlarges our capacities, 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 ponder 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. A major topic is the prevalence of economic inequality in the United States today.

### **September 3: Introduction and Course Requirements**

- Review syllabus and discuss course expectations, assignments, and goals.
- What is a good job?
- What jobs have you held? What are your hopes for the future?

- What is Labor Studies and how does it help us understand issues around work?

**First class assignments:**

- Read the syllabus thoroughly. Learn how to use Sakai and locate readings.
- Family Member Interview: See Family Interview assignment sheet (also posted on Sakai). Assignment due in class on September 10.

**TUESDAY September 8: Work and Our Lives (Monday classes are meeting on Tuesday this week!)**

- Lecture and class discussion on the contours of work in the U.S.
- Assign discussion groups.

**READING:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 1

**September 10: Family Histories**

- Group discussions and report backs on your family interview assignments and how they relate to course themes.
- Family interview assignment due in class.

**READING:**

- Paul Krugman, *End This Depression Now*, chapter 1 (Sakai)

**September 14: Work in the “New Economy” part 1**

- Film: *The Big One* (directed by Michael Moore, 1997).
- Hand out and discuss written assignment #1 (due in class October 1).

**READING:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 2

**September 17: Work in the “New Economy” part 2**

- Discussion of *The Big One*.
- In class presentation: New Jersey’s Changing Economy.

**READING:**

- Peter Capelli et al., excerpts from *Change at Work*, “The Employment System that Died” and “How the World Began to Change” (Sakai)

**September 21: Social Class in the United States**

- Lecture and class discussion on the theories, ideologies, structures, and experiences of class in the U.S.

**READINGS:**

- Read the following on the *New York Times* website on social class:

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/class/>

1. Overview article, "Shadowy Lines That Still Divide" and Interactive Graphic, "A Closer Look at Income Mobility"
2. Day 3: Marriage (Tamar Lewin, "Up from the Holler")
3. Day 5: Education (David Leonhardt, "The College Dropout Boom")
4. Bob Herbert's "Mobility Myth" Op-Ed linked to the site; (See Readers Opinions Box on the right)

5. One other article/blog from the site (minimum); and
6. Interactive exercise in the website which you should do using your family of social origin: "Interactive Graphics: Where do you fit in" (top middle, in between Slide Show and Income and Education)

### **September 24: Economic Inequality**

- Group activity: what would ideal wealth distribution look like and why?
- Review of the causes and consequences of inequality.

#### **READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 3
- Michael Zweig, "Looking at the Underclass," excerpt from *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*, 77-93 (Sakai)

### **September 28: The Industrial Revolution and the Origins of the Labor Movement**

- Film: *The Grand Army of Starvation* (directed by Stephen Brier, 1987).
- Group discussions: What has changed and what has remained similar about the politics of poverty and work between 1877 and today?

#### **READING:**

- William Brucher, "Labor Unions and Strikes" in *Conflicts in American History, Volume 6: The Roaring Twenties, Great Depression, and World War II, 1920-1945*. (Sakai)

### **October 1: The New Deal and the Rise of the Labor Movement**

- Lecture on the New Deal and the growth the labor movement in the 1930s and 1940s.
- Video excerpt from *Mean Things Happen*, part of *The Great Depression* PBS documentary series.
- Written assignment #1 due in class.

#### **READINGS:**

- Excerpt from Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered* (Sakai)
- Andrew Leonard, "Lessons for Obama from the New Deal" (interview with journalist and historian Michael Hiltzik), Salon.com, September 12, 2011:  
[http://www.salon.com/2011/09/12/the\\_new\\_deal/](http://www.salon.com/2011/09/12/the_new_deal/)

### **Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights**



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. And obviously, future managers 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, the workplace is much more equal today than it was in 1964 when the Civil Rights Act was passed. 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.

**October 5: Employment Rights and Job Security in the United States part 1**

- “Know Your Rights” – in class quiz and discussion.

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 4

**October 8: Employment Rights and Job Security in the United States part 2**

- Lecture and discussion of major workplace labor laws and regulations, including the at-will doctrine and its exceptions, antidiscrimination, and wage and hour laws.
- Is it a violation? Group activity on the Fair Labor Standards Act.

**READINGS:**

- Excerpts from Lewis Maltby, *Can They Do That?* on “Wrongful Discharge and Employment at Will” and “The Rights You Have” (Sakai)
- Steven Greenhouse, “Low Wage Workers are Often Cheated, Study Says,” *New York Times*, September 2, 2009 (Sakai)
- Winnie Stachelberg and Crosby Burns, “10 Things to Know About the Employment Non-Discrimination Act,” Center for American Progress website:  
<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2013/04/24/61294/10-things-to-know-about-the-employment-non-discrimination-act/>

**October 12: Worker Safety and Health**

- Film: *Can't Take No More* (produced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 1980).
- Discussion of occupational safety and health.
- Midterm exam review.

**October 15: MIDTERM EXAM (IN-CLASS)**

**October 19: Work, Race, Ethnicity, and Equality part 1**

- Film: *At the River I Stand* (directed by David Appleby, Allison Graham, and Steven Ross, 1993).

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 7.

**October 22: Work, Race, Ethnicity, and Equality part 2**

- Discussion of historical and contemporary issues surrounding race and employment.

**READINGS AND AUDIO STORY:**

- Sonali Kolhatkar, “Black Lives Matter... and Black Jobs Matter, Too,” Common Dreams/Truth Dig, April 6, 2015: <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/04/17/black-lives-matter-and-black-jobs-matter-too>
- Listen to “Job Searching While Black: What’s Behind the Unemployment Gap?” NPR news story, May 25, 2013: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/05/25/186609052/for-black-americans-finding-work-an-uphill-battle>

**October 26: Immigration and Labor part 1**

- Discussion of immigration and labor issues in the U.S.
- Film excerpts from *Bread and Roses* (directed by Ken Loach, 2000).

**READINGS:**

- Waldinger et al., “Helots No More: A Case Study for the Justice For Janitors Campaign in Los Angeles,” Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies Working Paper #15 (Sakai)

**October 29: Immigration and Labor part 2**

- Presentation on immigrant workers in New Jersey.

**READINGS:**

- Immanuel Ness, *Immigrants, Unions, and the New U.S. Labor Market*, chapter 2 (Sakai)
- Sarah Maslin Nir, “The Price of Nice Nails,” *New York Times*, May 7, 2015:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/nyregion/at-nail-salons-in-nyc-manicurists-are-underpaid-and-unprotected.html>

**November 2: Gender and Work**

- Presentation on the relationships between gender, working conditions, and employment opportunities.
- In-class discussion on “occupational ghettos,” “the glass ceiling,” and possible remedies.

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 5

**November 5: Work and Family**

- Presentation and Discussion of the challenges integrating work and life, work hours and overwork, and U.S. family leave laws compared to other nations.

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 6.
- “Working Anything But 9 to 5,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2014:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/08/13/us/starbucks-workers-scheduling-hours.html>

**Unit III: Improving Working People’s Lives: Collective Bargaining, New Forms of Organizing and Activism, and the Future of Work**

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 35 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.

**November 9: Unions 101**

- “Union knowledge” in class quiz and discussion.

- Presentation on the structure of the labor movement in the U.S. and New Jersey.

**READINGS:**

- “The Union Difference,” AFL-CIO website: <http://www.aflcio.org/Learn-About-Unions/What-Union-Do/The-Union-Difference>
- “Union Members – 2013,” Bureau of Labor Statistics website: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>
- Excerpts from Michael Yates, *Why Unions Matter* (Sakai)

**November 12: Unions and Collective Bargaining**

- The basics of collective bargaining under private and public sector labor laws.
- Mediation, arbitration, lock-outs, and strikes.
- Hand out Collective Bargaining simulation assignment guideline and assign bargaining teams.
- Write first drafts of contract language proposals individually outside of class.

**READINGS:**

- Excerpts from the National Labor Relations Act (Sakai)
- “Employer/Union Rights and Obligations,” National Labor Relations Board: <http://www.nlrb.gov/rights-we-protect/employerunion-rights-and-obligations>

**November 16: Collective Bargaining Simulation**

- Bring first drafts of contract proposals to class.
- In-class preparation with your team: assign roles, revise, and finish contract proposals.

**November 19: Collective Bargaining Simulation continued**

- Begin bargaining!

**November 23: Collective Bargaining Simulation continued**

- Continue bargaining and reach a final settlement with the other side... if possible!
- Hand-in contract language bargained in class and notes from bargaining.
- Complete online peer and self review for collective bargaining exercise (due by December 1).
- Hand out and discuss written assignment #2 (due in class December 14).

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26: THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**November 30: Unions Under Attack**

- The Taft-Hartley Act, “Right-to-Work” laws, the origins of the backlash against unions.
- “Union avoidance” strategies by employers.
- Online peer and self review for collective bargaining exercise due

**READINGS:**

- Harold Meyerson, “If Labor Dies, What Next?,” *The American Prospect* website: <http://prospect.org/article/if-labor-dies-whats-next>

**December 3: Workers Fight Back: Organized Labor Today**

- Examples of recent successful organizing campaigns in face of the odds.
- Begin studying for final exam!

**READINGS:**

- David Bensman, “Port Truck Drivers on Strike! A Dispatch from Two of the Nation’s Largest Ports,” *Dissent* blog, November 22, 2014: <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/port-truck-drivers-on-strike-dispatch-from-los-angeles-long-beach-ports>

**December 7: Public Policy and the Future of Work**

- Discuss how new public policies could address work and employment-related problems.
- Discussion of ways young students and workers (like yourselves!) can get involved.
- Continue studying for final exam!

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, chapter 8
- Peter Dreier, “How Seattle’s Minimum Wage Began in New York City’s Zuccoti Park,” *The American Prospect*, June 5, 2014: <http://prospect.org/article/how-seattle%20%99s-15-minimum-wage-victory-began-new-york-city%20%99s-zuccotti-park>
- Sarah Blaskey and Phil Gasper, “Campus Struggles Against Sweatshops Continue,” *Dollars and Sense*, September/October 2012:  
<http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2012/0912blaskeygasper.html>

**December 10: Final Exam Review**

- Written assignment #2 due in class.
- Overview of major course themes and review of final exam topics.
- Continue studying for final exam!

**FINAL EXAM – DATE AND TIME TBD**