

# RUTGERS

## School of Management and Labor Relations

**Intro to Labor & Employment: 37:575:100:92, Spring 2025, Asynchronous, Online  
Downloadable Syllabus - subject to change**

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### **Contact Method Preference**

I am available to speak by phone if need be. However, I prefer email via the internal Canvas email system (Canvas Inbox) or through Outlook/Rutgers Connect.

### **Course Delivery Format**

**This course runs from January 21, 2025, through May 14, 2025.** It is delivered online through the Learning Management System Canvas.

In this section, you will then have a **choice** as to doing one of two things:

1. An individual paper of about five pages after visiting one professor-approved labor-related **museum** (see the Appendix). This might be a better choice if your life makes a group activity difficult or if you do not have a strong internet connection. The collective bargaining exercise is probably more fun, but students have also found the museum visits to be worthwhile.
2. An individual paper of five pages (Not including Bibliography, Times New Roman, 12 font, double-spaced) on the topic of what government could do to improve the lives of working Americans (or a group of them, for instance, disabled workers). This paper requires research after a review of the material on information literacy and academic integrity in the course.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, you should be 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).
- Employ tools of social scientific reasoning to study particular questions or situations using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments. (Goal SCL-2)

#### **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 instructor:**

- Students will be able to apply facts and concepts from the course to argue convincingly against common contemporary fallacies related to employment relations.

**Syllabus Content**

**Note:** The content of this syllabus is subject to change.

**Schedule:** The course weeks begin on Monday and end on Sunday at 11:59 p.m. (EST). **Like any course that meets twice a week, you often have things due on either Thursday or Sunday evening.** The schedule and the assignments are subject to change.

- Please note that all times stated are in **Eastern Standard Time (EST)**

**Grading**

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

- Introductory exercises (Personal information/choice of exercise; pre-test participation) (3%)
- Threaded Discussions (Forums) (40%)
- Rights check and union knowledge check at 1% each (2%)
- Museum paper or Improving Workers’ Lives paper (10%)
- 3 Quizzes at 12% each (36%)
- Short take-home final (9%)

<u>A 100% to 90%</u>	<u>B+ &lt;90% to 87%</u>
<u>B &lt;87% to 80%</u>	<u>C+ &lt;80% to 77%</u>
<u>C &lt;77% to 70%</u>	<u>D &lt;70% to 64%</u>
<u>F &lt;64% to 0%</u>	

## Textbook & Other Course Materials

### Required Textbook:

- 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 4<sup>th</sup>; although latter editions are more up to date. The first is very different – do not use it).

### Additional Course Materials:

- All other additional course materials, such as links to videos and articles, PDFs, and lecture PowerPoint documents, are provided in the relevant module section of the course. You do not need to purchase these materials. Some of your readings will be in the New York Times. You have access to the NYT articles through the Rutgers Digital Libraries. Follow instructions on [how to access the NYT through Rutgers Libraries](#).

### Technology Requirements:

- Access to the internet
- Reliable computer
- Headphones/Headsets - highly recommended
- Webcam - optional
- Microsoft Word
- [Basic Computer Specifications for Canvas \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

For convenience, you can also download/install the Canvas Student App for Android or iOS devices. Follow the instructions on the respective app centers:

- [Canvas Student App for Android \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- [Canvas Student App for iOS](#)

## Technical Support Information

If you are new to Canvas or need a refresher tutorial, visit:

- [Getting Started In Canvas for Students \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem with Canvas:

- Contact [Rutgers IT Help Desk \(Links to an external site.\)](#). 833-648-4357, email [help@oit.rutgers.edu](mailto:help@oit.rutgers.edu), accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Refer to the [Canvas Student TutorialLinks to an external site.](#)
- Access Rutgers Canvas via the [MyRutgers Portal](#), [rutgers.instructure.com](http://rutgers.instructure.com), mobile app, and <https://canvas.rutgers.edu>

- For Canvas assistance, Passwords, or any other computer-related technical support, contact the [Rutgers Canvas Help Desk](#).
  - [help@canvas.rutgers.edu](mailto:help@canvas.rutgers.edu)

## Accommodation Request

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 ([See Documentation Guidelines](#)). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you and your instructor with a Letter of Accommodations. Please discuss the accommodations with your instructors as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the [registration form](#).

## Rutgers Student Support Resources for you

### Rutgers Student Health Services:

- Rutgers Student Affairs is dedicated to health for the whole student body, mind and spirit. It accomplishes this through a staff of qualified clinicians and support staff. [Health, Counseling, and Wellness services](#) are available at several locations throughout Rutgers University.

### Crisis Intervention - Student Health

- [Crisis Situations](#)
- [In the Wake of Trauma](#)

### Academic Services:

- For academic support, including tutoring, visit the [Rutgers - New Brunswick Learning Centers](#).
- For coaching help with writing skills and assignments, visit the [Rutgers - New Brunswick Writing Tutors in the Learning Center](#).
- Many library resources are available online. Assistance is available through phone, email, and chat. For information, check the [Rutgers Libraries website](#).

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### Veteran Services:

- Rutgers is proud to support veterans. If you are a veteran of the armed forces, please visit the [Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services website](#) for more information.

## Course Topics & Schedules

### Unit I: The Situation Working People Face Today (January 21 – February 23)

#### Week 1: Introduction (January 21 - 26)

- Explore what the course is about and make a note of what is required of you.
- Post information about whether/when you will do the bargaining exercise or the paper for the instructor (worth 2% of your grade –less if you are late)
- Take the Pre-test. Your score does not affect your grade, but it is important to be sure how your computer will interact with the exam software to prevent later problems. (worth 2% of your grade). So please use the computer you will later use to take quizzes.
- Buy or rent the text

#### Read:

- Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 1

**Assignment for Week 1:** Interview at least one parent or grandparent about your family’s work history (preferably more). You do not need to write anything about the interview. It will form the basis of an online discussion next week.

#### Week 2: Work and Our Lives (January 27 – February 2)

- You and your family’s history of work
- The contemporary economic/work situation
- Longer-term trends in work

#### Read:

- Ben Casselman and Jeanna Smialek, “Could the Recession in the Distance Be Just a Mirage?” *New York Times*, July 19, 2023.
- Stephen Mihm, “Mass Layoffs in Big Tech Are an Old-Guard Mistake,” *Bloomberg*, Nov. 15, 2022.
- Katia Dmitrieva and Josh Eidelson, “What Strikes and ‘Quits’ Say about U.S. Labor’s Resolve,” *Bloomberg*, June 17, 2022.

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).

**Due week 2: Participate in Forum 1 - You need to post at least once by Sunday evening** and then another two times by next Sunday evening. Both quantity and quality count, so you may want to post beyond this minimum.

#### Week 3: Corporations & Work in the “New Economy” (February 3- February 9)

- Corporations – structure, power, and rights
- 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.

**Watch:**

- Parts 1 and 2 of *The Corporation*.
- PBS video, “A Job at Fords,” from the series *The Great Depression*

**Due week 3: Finish Forum 1:** You must post at least twice by Sunday evening. Both quantity and quality count, so you may want to post beyond this minimum. You cannot post after 11:59 pm (EST) on Sunday, so do not ask for that or send me posts by email – it will not be accepted.

**Week 4: Economic Inequality today (February 10 – February 16)**

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

**Read:**

- Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 3
- David Leonhardt and Yaryna Serkez, “The U.S. is Lagging Behind Many Rich Countries. These Charts Show Why,” July 2, 2020
- Paul Krugman, “Wages, Wealth and Politics,” *New York Times*, August 18, 2006

**Watch:**

- Richard Wilkinson’s TED Talk on the impact of inequality globally.
- Robert Reich, “How Corporations Crush the Working Class”

**Due in week 4 – Participate in Forum 2. The first response is due Thursday evening before 11:59 pm. The second before Sunday evening at the same time. The forum closes, and you cannot participate after Sunday evening.**

**Week 5: Social Class (February 17- February 23)**

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

**Read:**

- Serkez, Yeryna, “Who is Mostly Likely to Die from the Coronavirus,” New York Times, June 4, 2020.
- Janny Scott and David Leonhardt, ‘Shadowy Lines That Still Divide’ New York Times, May 15, 2005.

**Watch:**

- 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. speaks 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>. The rest is optional viewing.

**Take the Online Quiz on Unit 1: Saturday, February 22, or Sunday, February 23**

**Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights (February 24 – March 30)****Week 6: Employment Rights in the U.S. (February 24- March 2)**

- 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 total number of points (10). After the week is over, the rights check ends – so be sure to do it this week.

**Read:**

- Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 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:**

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

**Due Week 6:** Participate in the forum on employment rights (parts 3A and 3B). At a bare minimum, post your original contribution on each by Sunday. **To earn more than the minimum passing grade of C, comment on others' posts and respond to other students' comments.**

### **Week 7: Work, Race, Ethnicity, and Equality (March 3- March 9)**

- 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.”
- 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.
- “Whites Account for Under Half of Births in the U.S.,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2002, p. 1.

#### **Watch:**

- One is an excerpt from the movie *At the River I Stand*, about the Memphis Garbage workers strike and Dr. Martin Luther King.
- The second is a YouTube video that continues the story of the Memphis garbage strike.
- Mr. Wade Henderson, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Testimony to U.S. Senate Subcommittee, 2009 about the relationship between union rights and civil rights.

**Due Week:** Participate in the forum on HRM policy (parts 3C and 3D). At a bare minimum, post your original contribution on each by Sunday. **To earn more than the minimum passing grade, comment on others' posts and respond to other students' comments.**

### **Week 8: The New Immigration (March 10 – March 15)**

**\*\*Short week due to spring break. Pay particular attention to the forum due dates.**

- 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



- 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.

**Due in Week 8: Participate in Forum 4 – there are two parts. The first is due by Wednesday at 11:59 pm. The second is due by Saturday, 11:59 PM. After that, you cannot participate in Forum 4.**

**Week 9: Gender, Work, and Family (March 24- March 30)**

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

**Read:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, Chapters 5 and 6, and
- *Washington Post*, “Nearly 40 Percent of Mothers Are Now the Family Breadwinners Report Says,” 5/28/2013.

**Watch:**

- Emma Neely, “COVID-19 and the Women’s Employment Crisis,” *Econofact*, March 5, 2021.

**Take the Online Quiz on Unit II: Saturday, March 29, or Sunday, March 30**

**Unit III Improving Working People’s Lives (March 31 – April 27)**

**Week 10: The Legacy: The New Deal & Labor (March 31- April 6)**

- 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:**

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

**Due week 10: Participate in Forum 5.** The first post is due by Thursday evening; additional posts are due Sunday evening.

**Week 11: Unions Today in the U.S., Part 1 (April 7 – April 13)**

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

**Read:**

- Review: PowerPoint on what American unions do.
- Kim Kelly, “What a Labor Union is and How it Works,” *Teen Vogue*, March 12, 2018.
- **Optional:** Read/look at Tables.... Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Union Members 2021.”

**Watch:**

- Emma Neely and Timothy Valk, “Unionization,” *Econofact*, June 24, 2022
- Reverend Jim Wallis, Sojourners, Testifying on unions and economic inequality, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.
- Professor Paula Voos, Rutgers, Testifying about the economic effects of unions, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.
- Professor Carla Katz, Rutgers, “Unions and Individual Voice”

**Week 12: Unions Today Part 2: Union Organizing & Membership (April 14 – April 20)**

- How unions are formed
- Union membership trends over time
- New tactics of contemporary unions – for example, the Fight for \$15

**First: Take the union knowledge 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).**

**Read:**

- Noam Scheiber, “The Revolt of the College-Educated Working Class,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2022.

- “The Fight for \$15,” from Steven Greenhouse, *Beaten Down, Worked Up*, NY: Knopf, 2019, pp. 232-248.
- Review: PowerPoint on union membership

**Watch** Q&A videos on union organizing:

- Three Videos, Professor Carla Katz
- Watch for an example of how employers combat union organizing campaigns: Target anti-union employee orientation video on YouTube.
- Optional videos: Watch for an understanding of where contemporary unions are strong and, where they are struggling, and why
- Professor Jeff Keefe on unions in the public sector and among low-wage service workers
- Two videos on unions today by Professor Adrienne Eaton. One is about the challenges posed by contingent and non-standard work. The other is about unions among athletes, actors, professors, and other “stars.”

**Due in Week 12: On Sunday, April 20, both the paper and museum assignments are due.**

**Week 13: Public Policy and the Future of Work (April 21 – April 27)**

**Read:**

- Sweet and Meiskins, Chapter 8.
- Noam Scheiber, “California Senate Passes Bill to Regulate the Fast Food Industry,” *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 2022

**Watch:**

- *Wall Street Journal* video, “The Robots Are Now Hiring”
- Robert Reich on the need for public investment, “The Biggest Deficit is the One You Never Heard of,” YouTube, 2001
- Dr. Teresa Boyer, Executive Director, Center for Women and Work, Rutgers, on Work and Family Policy

**Take the Online Quiz on Unit III: Sat, April 26, or Sunday, April 27.**

**Week 14 and Final Exam Period: Wrap-Up (April 28 – May 4):**

A short take-home final will be distributed Monday, April 28. It is due on Sunday, May 4, at 11:59 pm (EST). No exceptions.

## Appendix A

### Labor-related Museum visit and paper

1. Visit one of the following locations listed below. **Take a picture of yourself at the location or scan a program from the location to document that you were physically there. You will upload this separately.**
2. Write a five-page (double-spaced) paper in which you describe your experience and the content of the museum exhibit. In your essay, address some of the following questions:
  - o Why did you choose to visit that place?
  - o What did you learn from your visit?
  - o What did you like most about the museum?
  - o What did you like most about the exhibits? What would you have changed if you could?
  - o How is the location connected to the course or a specific part of the course?
  - o How did your labor studies knowledge and background change the lens through which you viewed the exhibits?
  - o What readings from this course were helpful for viewing and understanding the exhibits?
  - o Would you recommend visiting to other students in the class? Why or why not?
  - o Please feel free to comment on other aspects of the visit that may not be addressed in the above questions.

#### Locations to visit (choose any one):

1. The Tenement Museum in NYC. Go to <http://www.tenement.org/> for information. There are a variety of tours, and you may need to sign up in advance.
2. The American Labor Museum at the Botto House in Patterson, NJ. Go to <http://www.labormuseum.net/> for information. There are also suitable walking tours in Patterson.
3. Ellis Island. Go to [http://www.ellisland.org/genealogy/ellis\\_island\\_visiting.asp](http://www.ellisland.org/genealogy/ellis_island_visiting.asp) for information.
4. Roebling Museum in Burlington County -- <http://roeblingmuseum.org/> ( If you go to this one, be sure also to investigate the big strikes that occurred in this company town.
5. Seabrook Museum -- in far South Jersey near Vineland - <http://www.seabrookeducation.org/>. The history of Seabrook includes a united black/white Communist-influenced 1934 strike, battles with the Klan, and the owner's use of every group possible to keep down labor costs (Japanese internees, Estonian refugees, German POWs, etc.).
6. Philadelphia History Museum (formerly the Atwater-Kent) in downtown Philly - <http://www.philadelphiahistory.org/> -- A general history museum, but includes ethnic and worker-related exhibits. They have a lot of the material objects (most not displayed) from the late great Balch Ethnic Institute and some suggested walking tours of city neighborhoods. Visit a part of the museum related to labor studies. (This museum may be closed... see #8 and #9 for other museums close to Philadelphia).

7. Nearer to the Lehigh Valley Area, Pennsylvania, the Bethlehem Steel Stacks, in Pennsylvania, runs tours. If you do this one, also investigate the history of the union there. Go to <http://www.historicbethlehem.org> for information.
8. Camden Shipyard Maritime Museum is more promising: <https://www.camdenshipyardmuseum.org/exhibits>. The Camden Museum seems to have limited hours, but it should be open (it is a relatively new museum): <https://www.camdenshipyardmuseum.org/exhibits>
9. The African American Museum in Philadelphia also has a permanent exhibit on African Americans in Philadelphia from 1776-1876, which would, of course touch on the themes of race, civil rights, and social class: <https://www.aampmuseum.org/current-exhibitions.html>
10. For those who may be near the Washington D.C. area, The National Museum of African American History and Culture would be an excellent choice. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/search?keyword=exhibits&page=1>

## **Appendix B**

### **Paper on Improving Workers' Rights**

Craft a 5-page paper (Not including citation page, Times New Roman, 12 font, double-spaced) around a theme suggested by the following question. You may use references to material you have been asked to read in the course or to other material you research online. However, be sure to cite all sources. Points will be deducted for not properly citing sources.

How could the government improve the situation of working Americans or particular groups (like disabled workers, younger workers, working women, etc.)? Present the case for at least two public policy initiatives (new laws or programs) with high potential, whether or not they are politically possible.

In making your case for the initiatives, explain precisely how they would help workers in general or the group of workers you select; you may choose different groups of workers for the two initiatives. Be sure to evaluate the arguments against your proposals and show why they are wrong or less important than the benefits of the proposed initiatives. You determine the precise theme of your essay, but you will be evaluated in part based on how well you demonstrate an understanding of the labor and employment relations issues studied in this course.