

Labor Relations and Professional Sports

ONLINE Syllabus

Alex Sperling
37:575:310:90

Office Hours: Online, by Appointment
Email Address:

alexander.sperling@smlr.rutgers.edu

Spring 2025

WEEK BEGINS ON MONDAYS

Course Description

This class focuses on labor relations systems in professional sports in the United States. The course will provide a basic understanding of labor relations and labor law, as well as the business of sports. We will learn the history of professional leagues, the unions and the bargaining history for the four major sports (Baseball, Hockey, Football and Basketball) and others. Students are expected to participate in group and individual activities to learn about the collective bargaining process, and the operation of the various labor agreements in regards to salaries, discipline and free agency. As an online course, material will be covered in videos, online lectures, group projects and posted discussion questions. There is one simultaneous activity that require students to be logged in at the same time to participate. The specific dates will be set based on the student questionnaires, due during the first week.

Equipment needed:

USB Headset with a microphone (other types don't work well); please do not attempt to use an "open" microphone built into a personal computer because it leads to feedback that will bother other students. You also need a personal computer with broadband connection. An I-pad, other tablet, or a smart-phone will not be sufficient.

Covered Texts

- All texts will be assigned on CANVAS. There is no textbook for this course. Texts will be drawn from a variety of sources, including the following:
 - Staudohar, Paul. *Playing for Dollars. Labor Relations and the Sports Business.* IRL Press, 1996.
 - Yost, Mark. *Tailgating, Sacks, and Salary Caps: How the NFL Became the Most Successful Sports League in History.* Kaplan Publishing, 2006.
 - Clark, Paul; Delaney, John and Frost, Ann. *Collective Bargaining in the Private Sector (LERA Research Volumes).* IRL Press, 2002.
 - Rosner, Scott and Kenneth L. Shropshire. *The Business of Sports.* Jones & Bartlett Learning, 2004.
 - Marvin Miller. *A Whole Different Ball Game: The Inside Story of the Baseball Revolution.* I.R. Dee, 2004.
 - Glenn M. Wong. *Essentials of Sports Law.* ABC-CLIO, 2009.
 - Sloane, Arthur A and Fred Witney. *Labor Relations.* Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2007.
- Projects require students to conduct their own research.

Course Learning Outcomes

- You will be able to describe the salary structure, employment relationship, history of bargaining and current/future outlook for players in the major professional sports in the United States.
- You will be able to describe the fundamental labor laws of the United States and how they relate to professional sports.
- You will understand the major arbitration decisions and the principles of Collective Bargaining, and the implications of these decisions on professional athletes.
- You will be able to describe the conditions leading up to and the results of 1 major labor action in Professional Sports.
- You will demonstrate an understanding of basic negotiation tactics and the specific negotiation structure by engaging in a negotiation with your group.

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department Learning Outcomes:

- Work productively in teams, in social networks, and on an individual basis (Goal 13).

School of Management and Labor Relations Learning Outcomes:

- Analyze issues of social justice related to work across local and global contexts (Goal V)
- Demonstrate an ability to interact with and influence others in a professional manner, and to effectively present ideas and recommendations (Goal VII).

Course Requirements

- **Participate in one synchronous online activities with members in your group**
****This requires that ALL students have a USB powered-headset.**
- Participate in online class activities including two online forums
- Participate in a small group presentation covering a specific labor action in sports
- Midterm and Final written exam, administered online
- Journal questions, and knowledge checks as assigned
- Regularly check your CANVAS Course Site. You will receive announcements from CANVAS at your Rutgers e-mail address, so remember to check that account frequently. I will often assign additional readings as the course progresses.

Policies

- Papers that exhibit significant errors of punctuation, grammar, spelling, or syntax (generally, three or more errors per page) risk failing.
- Work is generally accepted late, except projects that impact other students (for example: forums, labor action project, MMA project).
- Papers and exams will be evaluated using Turnitin. Significant plagiarism risks receiving a failing grade for that assignment, the class, and other sanctions
- You are required to review and abide by the University's Policy on Academic Integrity. This can be found online at <http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

Grading

Grading will focus primarily on two written exams and projects. Online discussion participation will make up the remaining portion of the grade. There will be periodic opportunities for extra credit during the course. Grades distributions are as follows:

Student Questionnaire – 25 Points
Forum 1 - 30 Points (Week 2)
Forum 2 – 50 Points (Week 5)
Knowledge Checks – 10 points each (50 total)
Journal Question 1 (Football) – 40 Points
Journal Question 2 (Basketball) – 40 Points
Journal Question (Hockey) – 40 Points
Labor Presentation Outline – 25 Points
Labor Presentation – 100 Points
Midterm Exam – 200 Points
Second Midterm Exam – 200 Points
MMA Project Plan – 25 Points
MMA Project Paper – 75 points
Final Student Bargaining – 100 Points
Total – 1000 points

Schedule Weeks Begin on Monday

Week	Start Date	End Date	Topics of Discussion
1	1/21/2025	1/26/2025	Course Introduction Syllabus Student Questionnaire
2	1/27/2025	2/2/2025	Labor Law/Collective Bargaining History of Labor Selection of Labor Presentation
3	2/3/2025	2/9/2025	➤ Baseball
4	2/10/2025	2/16/2025	➤ 20 th Century Baseball
5	2/17/2025	2/23/2025	➤ Baseball Antitrust and Collective Bargaining
6	2/24/2025	3/2/2025	➤ Football
7	3/3/2025	3/9/2025	➤ Football
8	3/10/2025	3/16/2025	➤ Football
9	3/24/2025	3/30/2025	➤ MMA
10	3/31/2025	4/6/2025	➤ Basketball
11	4/7/2025	4/13/2025	➤ Basketball
12	4/14/2025	4/20/2025	➤ Hockey
13	4/21/2025	4/27/2025	➤ Hockey
14	4/28/2025	5/4/2025	➤ NASCAR, Tennis, Soccer
15	5/5/2025	5/11/2025	➤ Bargaining Student