



**Work, Society, and the Quality of Life**  
**37:575:110:01 Spring 2026**

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**Office Hours:** By appointment and via Zoom

**Class Days/Time:** Tuesdays 5:40 p.m. – 8:40 p.m.

**Classroom:** Janice H. Levin Building  
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**Teaching Assistants:**

Madison Brody  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The nature of people's work largely determines the quality of their lives and those of their families. Around the world, both the landscape of work and the rewards it offers are changing dramatically. In some countries, these changes lead to increased equality and prosperity for everyone. In other countries, the changes have the opposite effect. This course will study these changes through dynamic, active learning methods increasingly common in the best workplaces. Students will be able to develop their teamwork, leadership, and negotiation skills, gain valuable feedback on their written and oral communication, and develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between work, society, and quality of life.

## **COURSE GOALS AND STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**Learning Objectives. The student can:**

***Core Curriculum: CCO-1 and SCL-1 and SCL-2***

- CCO-1: Analyze a contemporary global issue from a multidisciplinary perspective.
- 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:***

- 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).
- Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experience of work. (Goal 6)

***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)
- Evaluate the context of workplace issues, public policies, and management decisions (Goal V).
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance (Goal VI)

***Additional Course Objective(s) from the instructor:*** By the end of the course, students will be expected to demonstrate that they have met the following learning objectives at the collegiate level appropriate to a 100-level introductory course:

- Demonstrate an understanding of fundamental social science, historical, and legal perspectives, theories, and concepts relating to work, employment relations, and worker movements globally.
- Demonstrate an ability to apply those concepts and knowledge of U.S. labor laws and work institutions to understand contemporary developments in the U.S. and other nations now operating in a global framework.
- Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experiences and perspectives on work.
- Analyze issues of social justice related to work across local and global contexts.
- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience.
- Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to labor & employment relations.
- Analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.
- Formulate, evaluate, and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information about work
- Work productively in teams, in social networks, and on an individual basis.

## PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS AND CLASSROOM PROTOCOL

This course uses dynamic, participatory, and active learning methods. Students are expected to play an active role in their own and others' learning. **This means that class attendance and preparation are essential and will count heavily in evaluating student performance.**

### Texts & Readings

No textbook is required for this course. All readings and course materials are posted on Canvas. Specific readings and assignments may change as the course proceeds.

### Preparation

Always read the assigned material and complete the week's forum post before our class meeting so you can more easily follow the lecture and fully participate in small-group and class discussions. Any PowerPoint slides used weekly will be posted on the course site in the Announcement section after the class. However, the slides may not include all supplementary information provided during lectures and discussions.

### Participation

Class sessions will include a mixture of lectures, group discussions, group exercises, and simulations. Discussions and experiential activities are sometimes held on Canvas and via Zoom in breakout rooms. Students are required to participate *actively* in all aspects of the course.

When participating in discussions, you will be expected to explain your views using **reasoned arguments** and provide **evidence** for assertions. You will need to demonstrate that you understand the difference between **opinion** and **fact**. You will be expected to **respect others' views and listen**. You do not have to agree with your classmates, but you must give them your full attention and consideration.

Any use of electronic equipment during the synchronous portion of the class must be related to the course and authorized by the instructors. Texting, talking on your phone, emailing, or surfing the web on unrelated matters during class time are prohibited during the class's synchronous portions.

### Group-Based Learning

Students will be assigned to groups by the professors, and these groups will work together throughout the semester. Each team will be assigned a teaching assistant who will provide guidance and evaluate many aspects of team performance under the professors' supervision. Groups will discuss the course readings, engage in experiential exercises, prepare presentations, and participate in other in-class activities together. Students who participate fully and enthusiastically in the experiential components of the course will get the most out of the class. Students' performance in the group will be evaluated by the instructors, the teaching assistants, and the other members of your group.

Group projects and group work in this course are designed to simulate the possibilities and pitfalls of collective action in the workplace and other environments. This course is heavily geared toward group and experiential learning for several reasons. Labor and employment relations studies focus on the strategies and tactics used by employers and employees (and other similar pairings) as they pursue their goals within the political and social frameworks of the areas in which they are located. Additionally, collective action is integral to the relations between employers and employees in every country, even though the legal and political contexts vary widely.

Second, the modern workplace and the global economy rely heavily on teamwork. People are expected to work together on projects and tasks regularly and to demonstrate effective team leadership. Employers in all sectors of the economy evaluate workers on their ability to work productively with others and lead their co-workers. Finally, experiential learning and group work can be fun!

### **Written Assignments**

There are two types of written assignments for this course: online forum discussions and two group papers. See page 6 for details on the group papers.

### **Online Forum Assignments**

Students will be required to participate in regularly assigned online discussions with their team members on Canvas prior to class each week. Questions to be addressed in the online discussion will be posted on the site.

#### ***Why do we have forums?***

Forums are intended to foster interaction and collaboration, enabling a deeper understanding and mastery of the course content. Moreover, online communication and social networks are rapidly becoming the new medium of collaboration in the modern-day workplace. Our course format is designed to simulate a modern workplace. You may already be familiar with forum discussions if you have taken an online class or joined an online conversation on social media. Forums in this class are different because the format is more structured.

Forums in this course have:

- *Defined membership* - Rutgers students enrolled in this course and assigned to a particular group.
- *Time boundaries* – the forum opens and closes on a set date and time.
- *Limited topics* – the instructor chooses the topic of discussion and poses questions to get the conversation started. Students are encouraged to raise their own questions after the discussion has begun.
- *Rules* – there are clear rules about how to conduct the conversation, like norms or ground rules in face-to-face classroom participation.
- *Evaluation* – participation in a forum is evaluated and graded.

### **Attendance**

Students are required to attend every scheduled course session. The teaching assistants will take attendance at the beginning of class or Zoom session, and sometimes at the end of class. Students who have an unexcused absence will receive a

zero for that week's attendance and participation grade. Students who leave the Zoom session early without the instructor's or T.A.'s permission will be marked absent for the entire class and graded accordingly. Even if you miss class, you are responsible for that week's assignments (including forum posts).

If you cannot attend a class, **it is your responsibility to inform the Professors in advance**. If that is not possible because of an emergency, do so as soon as practicable. We recognize that illness, family death, or other emergencies may occur and will excuse absences if the affected student provides appropriate documentation to the Professors.

### **Communication**

The course will use Canvas and Zoom heavily for communication and group work. The instructors will communicate all official course correspondence via Canvas. Students are responsible for all information transmitted to them by the instructors via Canvas, email, and Zoom. No other web-based course-related sites (e.g., Facebook) are permitted for course activity without explicit permission from the instructors. Please feel free to contact the instructors or your teaching assistant via email with questions or concerns about the course with Prof. Ryan at [fr156@smlr.rutgers.edu](mailto:fr156@smlr.rutgers.edu) and Prof. Blatt at [Blatt.Michael@Rutgers.edu](mailto:Blatt.Michael@Rutgers.edu).

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity requires that all academic work be wholly 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 course instructor. Students are also expected to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the instructor or dean of the instructional unit. Students are expected to be familiar with all Rutgers University policies regarding Academic integrity ([academicintegrity.rutgers.edu](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu)).

### **Accommodation**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all 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 they 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's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodation with them as soon as possible in your courses. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS website at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

## Audio and Video Recording are Prohibited\*

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students MAY NOT record any part of this class in any audio or video format, regardless of whether the course is held via Zoom, Webex, or any other learning management platform. This prohibition on recording includes, but is not limited to, classroom lectures, discussions, and/or group breakout activities without the **professor's advance written permission**.

\*Students with approved accommodations from the Office of Disability Services must present a Letter of Accommodations to the instructor and discuss accommodations as early in this course as possible. Recording and distribution of such recordings without permission is a violation of educational privacy law.

## GRADING POLICY

This course is graded on a 1000-point scale.

1. Online Forum Discussions discussion)	300 points (30 points per forum)
2. Class Participation & Attendance	140 points (10 points per class session)
3. Group papers:	
Collective Bargaining Strategy Memo	100 points
Stakeholder Position Paper	50 points
Testimony and Rebuttal Paper:	150 points
4. Simulations:	
Collective Bargaining Simulation:	30 points (participation)
Senate Simulation:	30 points (participation)
5. Quizzes	200 points (50 points per x 4 quizzes)

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Total points possible: 1,000 points

We reserve the right to adjust your final grade for exceptional (good or poor) class participation and attendance, typically by one level (e.g., from B to B+). Students who display a strong work ethic and demonstrate improvement throughout the semester may be rewarded.

The final grade breakdown is as follows: A=90+, B+=86-89, B=80-85, C+=76-79, C=70-75, D=60-69, F<60

If you have a question about a specific grade, you are encouraged to speak with your T.A. and/or the instructors.

## Forum Discussions

The weekly forum discussion consists of two parts and requires that you make two posts per week (at a minimum).

In the first post, due by Sunday at midnight, you are expected to answer specific questions we have posed. In your second post, due by Tuesday at class time, you are expected to respond to and/or support/refute posts made by your teammates.

These forum discussions are meant to be interactive. You must make *at least* two posts for each assignment, including one post by midnight on Sunday and a second post prior to class. Your initial post should be your response to the questions posed in the assignment. It may include a reaction to others in the group who have already posted their response. Primarily, it should add something substantive and show an understanding of the assigned readings and course content. You are best served by not waiting until Sunday night to write your first post. Rather, timelier posts enhance the group discussion and ensure the week's assignment is completed. You must submit at least one additional post responding to other posts or arguments in the forum.

You will be graded based on several factors, including but not limited to the quality of writing, the strength/persuasiveness of your responses/arguments, the relevance and accuracy of your arguments, your tone, the appropriate number of posts, and the use of evidence (the readings and/or external sources) to back up your assertions.

Because these forum discussions are designed to foster interaction and constructive engagement among team members, missed discussions cannot be made up. Contributions posted after the assignment deadline will not be counted. Automatic deductions will be made for late posts, failure to answer all assigned questions, missing either the responsive or analytical components, or failing to reference the readings and external sources for evidence.

## Class Participation

Each week, your TA will monitor your attendance and evaluate your class participation. They will be observing characteristics, including but not limited to participation in small-group discussions, leadership, preparation for class, respect for team members, attentiveness, staying on task, and appropriate use of electronic devices.

## Group papers and projects

**You will complete two major group projects with your team:**

1. In the first half of the course, you will prepare for and conduct a **Collective Bargaining exercise**. This will require the team to prepare a 2-3 page "Collective Bargaining Strategy Memo" and to prepare **for performance during a bargaining simulation**.
2. In the second half of the course, you will **prepare testimony for a mock U.S. Senate Subcommittee hearing** on an immigration reform bill. This will involve a group presentation and a **2-3 page "Testimony and Rebuttal" paper**. The paper will consist of your group's testimony to the Senate Sub-committee and

should outline your positions, the expected counterarguments, and your persuasive response to those counterarguments.

Papers must be submitted through Canvas. Papers will not be accepted via email unless the instructors explicitly give you permission. There will be rubrics available for both papers. All students must turn in the same copy of the group paper.

### **Evaluating Team Papers**

In assessing the papers, we will be looking for the following qualities:

1. Clear overall arguments
2. Effective use of evidence (including but not limited to assigned readings and external sources) to support your arguments. You **must cite all sources** of information used in your papers (you may choose the citation format).
3. Quality of the writing (college-level grammar and syntax) and integration of each group member's contributions into a single paper.
4. Responsiveness to all questions posed.

### **Working with your Groups**

In addition to in-class activities, you will also likely need time outside of class to work with your group on your papers, simulation prep, and other group activities. You may use any agreed-upon method for this interaction.

### **Quizzes**

There will be four quizzes covering the readings and class discussions, given approximately every four weeks throughout the semester. These quizzes will not be cumulative. Questions will be drawn from the course material covered during the weeks identified for the quiz. Each quiz will consist of true/false and/or multiple-choice questions.

**Notice:** All aspects of this syllabus, grading, and assignments are subject to change by the instructors. Students will be advised of any changes as soon as they are practicable.

CLASS	DATE	TOPICS, READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS, DEADLINES
1	January 20 <b>Janice H Levin Building</b>	<b>Course Introduction and Overview</b>
2	January 27 <b>Janice H Levin Building</b>	<b>Team Dynamics &amp; Group Process</b>  Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hardaker, M., and B. K. Ward. <i>How to Make a Team Work</i>.</li> <li>• Hill, Linda. <i>A Note on Team Process</i>.</li> <li>• Case study in groups--Retaining an NFL Star</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Forum One Due</b></p>
3	February 3 <b>Janice H Levin Building</b>	<b>Workers &amp; the Middle Class</b>  Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ehrenreich, Barbara. <i>Nickel and Dimed</i> (excerpts)</li> <li>• Meyerson, Harold. <i>The Fallacy of Post-Industrial Prosperity</i>.</li> <li>• Klein, Ezra. <i>Why a Middle-Class Lifestyle Remains Out of Reach for So Many</i></li> <li>• Fussel, Paul. <i>Class: A Guide Through the American Status System</i>, Ch. 1</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Forum Two Due</b></p>
4	February 10 <b>Janice H Levin Building</b>	<b>Labor and Employment Rights</b>  Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muhl, C. J. <i>The Employment-at-will Doctrine: Three Major Exceptions</i>.</li> <li>• EEOC, Federal Laws Prohibiting Job Discrimination – Questions &amp; Answers</li> <li>• Reardon, K. <i>The Memo Every Woman Keeps in Her Desk</i>.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Quiz 1: Open: Sunday, February 8, at 10 a.m. Close: Tuesday, February 10, at 5 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Forum Three Due</b></p>
5	February 17 <b>Janice H Levin Building</b>	<b>Consensus Decision Making</b>  Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus Decision Making</li> <li>• A Short Guide on Consensus Decision Making</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Forum Four Due</b></p>
6	February 24 <b>Janice H Levin Building</b>	<b>Unionization &amp; Collective Representation</b>  Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jaumotte, Florence &amp; Buitron, Carolina. <i>Power from the People</i>.</li> <li>• Sachs, Benjamin. <i>Worker Centers and the "Labor Organization" Question</i></li> <li>• "Collective Bargaining," Michael D. Yates, from <i>Why Unions Matter</i></li> <li>• Case study in groups: <i>Does This Company Need a Union?</i></li> </ul> <p>Collective Bargaining Simulation: Casino Europa Prep</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Film: Viva La Causa</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Forum Five Due</b></p>

7	March 3 <b>Janice H          Levin          Building</b>	<b>Management &amp; Organizational Leadership</b>  Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scott, Richard &amp; Davis, Gerald. <i>Organizations and organizing</i>, Ch. 1</li> <li>• Case study: <i>Treadway Tire Company: Job Dissatisfaction and High Turnover at the Lima Tire Plant.</i></li> </ul> <p style="color: red;">Collective Bargaining Strategy Paper Due March 3, 11:59 PM          Forum Six Due</p>
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CLASS	DATE	TOPICS, READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS, DEADLINES
8	March 10 <b>Janice H            Levin            Building</b>	<b>Collective Bargaining Simulation</b>  <p style="color: red;">Due: Signed collective bargaining agreements are due at the end of class.</p>
		<b>Spring Break March 17 – No Class</b>
9	March 24 <b>Via Zoom</b>	<b>The Future of Work &amp; Globalization</b>  Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future Work Skills, 2020.</li> <li>• Graton, L. <i>The Future of Work.</i></li> <li>• Sen, Amartya. <i>How to Judge Globalization</i></li> <li>• Satell, Gregg. <i>How Technology is Changing the Way Organizations Learn</i></li> <li>• Rotman, David. <i>How Technology Is Destroying Jobs</i></li> <li>• Autor, David, and Dorn, David. <i>How Technology Wrecks the Middle Class</i></li> <li>• <i>Microchips for Employees? One Company Says Yes, NYTimes</i></li> </ul> <p style="color: red;">Quiz 2: Open: Sunday, March 22, at 10 a.m.          Close: Tuesday, March 28, at 5 p.m.          Forum Seven Due</p> <p style="color: green;">Panel Discussion</p>
10	March 31 <b>Janice H            Levin            Building</b>	<b>Public Policy and Political Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Film: Inequality for All</b></li> </ul> Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guiner, Lani. <i>Beyond Legislatures: Social Movements, Social Change, and the Possibilities of Demosprudence</i></li> <li>• Harold Meyerson, <i>The Seeds of a New Labor Movement</i></li> <li>• Sarah Leonard, <i>The Future We Want: Radical Ideas for the New Century</i></li> </ul> <p style="color: red;"><b>Assignment of Stakeholder Groups</b>          Forum Eight Due</p>

11	April 7 <b>Janice H Levin Building</b>	<p><b>Coalition Building and The Politics of Immigration</b></p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fine - Galbraith Final Paper</li> <li>• Massey: Backfire at the Border</li> <li>• Meissner: U.S. Temporary Worker Programs-Lessons Learned</li> <li>• <b>Activity: Coalition Building</b></li> </ul> <p>Quiz 3: Open: Sunday, April 5, at 10 a.m. Close: Tuesday, April 7, at 5 p.m.</p> <p>Forum Nine Due Stakeholder Position Paper due Sunday, April 5, at 11:59 p.m.</p>
12	April 14 <b>Janice H Levin Building</b>	<p><b>Simulation Preparation: U.S. Senate Subcommittee Hearing on Immigration Reform</b></p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Workers Betrayed by Visa Loopholes</i></li> <li>• <i>Immigration plan bad for U.S. workers</i></li> <li>• <i>There's a better way to do immigration reform</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Activity: Prep for Simulation</b></p> <p>Forum Ten Due</p>
13	April 21 <b>LEC</b>	<p><b>Mock U.S. Senate Subcommittee Hearing Simulation</b></p> <p>Due: Testimony and Rebuttal Paper Due at 11:59 PM</p>
14	April 28 <b>Janice H Levin Building</b>	<p><b>Course Wrap-up Class and Review</b></p> <p>Quiz 4: Open Sunday, April 26, at 10 a.m. Close: Tuesday, April 28, at 5 p.m.</p> <p>In-Class Peer Review</p>