

Employment Law (Spring 2026)

Prof. James M. Cooney, Esq.
Rutgers University, Labor Studies & Employment Relations Department, SMLR
Course #37:575:315:01 (3 Credits)
Class Meets: Tuesdays, 2:00 PM–5:00 PM (U.S. Eastern Time)
Class Location: Tillett Hall, Room 242 (Livingston Campus)
Contact Info: Use Canvas messaging system or send email to:
jacooney@rutgers.edu
Campus Phone: 848-932-8560
Virtual (or Actual) Office Hours: By appointment

Note:

This is an abbreviated version of the course syllabus. More detailed information can be found on the Canvas course site. The syllabus content may be modified.

Course Description:

Overview of employment-at-will and its limitations; wages & hours; medical/family leave; privacy; drug testing; workers' compensation; and fundamental anti-discrimination law.

Grading Criteria:*

- (1) Personal Introduction (5%)
 - (2) Academic Integrity Quiz (5%)
 - (3) Mid-term Exam (45%)
 - (4) Final Exam (45%)
- (*Credit is also earned for in-class contributions)

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend class on a timely and regular basis. Please note that excessive unexcused absences will lower your grade. Unexcused absences in excess of 3 classes may result in a failing grade. Students arriving to class late or departing early must sign-in/out with the TA and will receive partial credit for attending that class.

Course Materials:

There is no textbook. All course learning materials are found on Canvas. The Instructor reserves the right to supplement, substitute, and/or modify the listed reading selections.

Use of “AI” Strictly Prohibited:

The use of artificial intelligence (“AI”) such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, etc., is not permitted at any stage of the writing process on quizzes or on any assignment. GPTZero or similar tools will be used to help detect student use of AI. Any written assignment or quiz answer flagged for AI use will be scored as a “0.”

No Individual Extra Credit:

I do not offer extra credit or “grade adjustments” to individual students upon their request, since this is unfair to other students who do not receive the same opportunity. However, I sometimes will offer an extra credit opportunity to the class as a whole, since that is fair to all students.

Recording:

Students are not permitted to videotape or otherwise record any lecture or course activity, absent prior express consent and authorization by the Instructor.

Academic Integrity:

The conduct of all students is governed by the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy. See the Canvas course site for details and for a link to the Policy. Students will take a graded Quiz to demonstrate knowledge of the Policy and the course syllabus.

Disability Accommodations:

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 they are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide supporting documentation. *See the Canvas course site for further details and to view other applicable policies.*

Learning Objectives - At the end of the course, the student is able to:

Labor Studies & Employment Relations Department:

- Apply employment relations legal concepts, and substantive institutional knowledge, to understanding contemporary developments related to work. (Goal 2)

School of Management & Labor Relations:

- Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance. (Goal VI)

Additional Course Objective(s) from the Instructor:

- Demonstrate basic knowledge of employment-at-will and the various exceptions.

- Demonstrate basic knowledge of the policies underlying common-law, constitutional, and statutory employment law principles.
- Demonstrate ability to comprehend court decisions on employment law issues.
- Apply employment law concepts to a given fact pattern.

Course Schedule & Topics:

Class 1 (Jan. 20) - Introduction & Course Overview

Readings:

- Course syllabus and Canvas site
- Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy

Assignments:

- Post personal introduction
- Take Academic Integrity Quiz

Class 2 (Jan. 27) – Court Systems; Procedures; Remedies

Readings:

- *Understanding the Federal Courts* (Admin. Office of Courts)
- *Remedies for Employment Discrimination* (EEOC)

Class 3 (Feb. 3) - Employment at Will & Exceptions

Readings:

- *Pierce v. Ortho Pharmaceutical*
- *Woolley v. Hoffman-LaRoche*

Class 4 (Feb. 10) - Title VII; EEOC; Methods of Proof

Readings:

- *McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green*
- *Griggs v. Duke Power*

Class 5 (Feb. 17) - Constitutional Issues

Readings:

- *Pickering v. Board of Education*
- *City of Ontario v. Quon*

Class 6 (Feb. 24) - Sex Discrimination

Reading:

- *Bostock v. Clayton County*

Class 7 (March 3) – Mid-Term Examination

No Readings

Class 8 (March 10) - Sexual Harassment

Readings/Media:

- Movie: “North Country”
- *Sexual Harassment* (EEOC website)
- *Lehmann v. Toys ‘R’ Us, Inc.*

No Class (March 17) – Spring Break

Class 9 (March 24) - Family & Medical Leave

Readings:

- *Gerety v. Hilton Casino Resort*
- *Cruz v. Publix Super Markets, Inc.*

Class 10 (March 31) – Polygraphs; Disability Discrimination

Readings:

- *Polkey v. Transtecs Corp.*
- *Karraker v. Rent Center Inc.*

Class 11 (April 7) - Non-Compete Agreements; Drug Testing

Readings:

- *Nike, Inc. v. McCarthy*
- *Treasury Employees v. Von Raab*

Class 12 (April 14) – To Be Determined

Class 13 (April 21) - Whistleblower Protection; Employment-related Torts

Readings:

- *Abbamont v. Piscataway Twp.*
- *Taylor v. Metzger*

Class 14 (April 28) – Final Exam (non-cumulative)

(Dated: 01/04/2026)