

INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT
RELATIONS
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Labor Studies 37:575:100:T1

Summer 2015
Professor John Castella

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Schedule: The weeks in the course begin on Monday (or Tuesday for the 1st week) and end on Sunday evening at 11 p.m. (or Wed. in the final week). You often will have things due on either Thursday evening or Sunday evening, just like any course that meets twice a week. The schedule and the assignments are subject to change.

This course addresses the Social Analysis (SCL) Learning Objectives of SAS:

- Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
- Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations.

Your progress toward understanding how work, workers, and forms of worker organization fit into these social science goals will be assessed through before/after test items and rubrics applied to written assignments.

Text: Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*. 2nd Edition. Sage, 2013. (Please note: the second edition of this book is quite different from the first – it has a new chapter and other chapters have been renumbered).

Additional reading, viewing and listening materials are available online.

Evaluation (Subject to change via a collective negotiations exercise):

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

- 3 Threaded Discussions (Forums) at 12% each (36%)
- Op. Ed. Writing assignment (20%)
- 3 Quizzes at 12% each (36%)
- Introductory exercises (Personal information sheet; pre-test participation; rights check) (8%)

Unit I. The Situation Working People Face Today (May 26-June 23)

Week 1: Work and Our Lives (May 26- May 31)

- Explore what the course is about and make note of what is required of you.
- Learn how to use Pearson E-college and locate readings & other online resources. There are excellent instructional videos online about the use of the e-college system.
- Post information about yourself for the instructor and other students you will be working with (worth 1% of your grade)
- 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 1% of your grade)
- Explore your family's history of work **Assignment for this week: Interview at least one parent or grandparent about your family's work history (preferably more).**
- Get an overview of what the course is about.

Read: Sweet & Meskins, Chapter 1 and

Paul Krugman, Chapter 1, *End This Depression Now*. New York: WW Norton, 2012.

Watch: Richard Florida interview on Big Think:
<http://bigthink.com/ideas/18241>

This week you need to interview your family so you can participate in a forum about their experience at the start of next week. There is no formal paper to write or turn in.

Week 2: Corporations & Work in the “New Economy” (June 1-7)

- Corporations – structure, power, and rights
- Old and new forms of work organization
- The rise of contingent work

Read: Sweet & Meskins, 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: 4 Video excerpts from *The Corporation* on You-tube.

PBS video, “A Job at Fords” from the series, *The Great Depression*

Due week 2: Participate in Forum 1: At a minimum, you need to post at least once by Thursday evening, and then a second time by Sunday evening. You need to answer several questions each time.

Week 3: Social Class in the U.S. (June 8-14)

- Class and opportunity in the U.S.

- Class and social mobility
- Relationship between wealth and power
- Has class faded in American culture?

Read: *NYTimes* website on Social Class:
<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/class/>

Be sure to read on this site:

- (1) The Overview article,
- (2) Tamar Lewin “Up from the Holler” and
- (3) David Leonhardt “The College Dropout Boom” and
- (4) At least two other articles/blogs from the site.
- (5) Also read Bob Herbert’s op. ed. linked to the site.
- (6) You should also be sure to do the interactive exercise on the *NYTimes* site using your family of social origin.**

Watch:

Professor Francis Ryan, Rutgers Labor Studies & Employment Relations Dept. speak about the history of the ideal of social mobility in the U.S. and the reality today.

Joseph Stiglitz, “The Price of Inequality: How today’s Divided Society Endangers Our Future,” Interview June 6, 2012 on *Democracy Now*.

Kate Pickett, Big Think Interview, “Why Inequality is Bad for Your Health”
<http://bigthink.com/katepickett>. The rest is optional viewing

Read: Joseph E. Stiglitz, “How Policy Has Contributed to the Great Economic Divide,” *The Washington Post*, June 22, 2012.

Due in week 3 – nothing. However, you should start working on the assignment that is due on Thursday next week.

Assignment: Write a 500 word Op. ed. (see week 4 for a choice of topics)

An Op-Ed is an opinion piece (named such because it is usually placed "opposite the editorials" in a publication) designed to offer an alternate position to what the media provides. Typically, an op-ed is written by an expert in a subject area or in industry. Generally, the goal of an op-ed is to educate the public on an issue. While the op-ed is largely an "opinion" piece, it must be based in fact and should be persuasive in style rather than a simple report. Take the time to edit, reedit and then reedit again. A clean, concise and compelling op-ed is your goal.

Week 4: Economic Inequality Today (June 15-21)

- Class, race, and gender inequality
- Does the U.S. have a power pyramid?
- Health and other effects of income inequality

Read: Sweet & Meskins, Chapter 3, and

G. W. Domhoff, "Wealth, Income and Power," April 2005, and

Watch: Professor Jeff Keefe, LSER Department, Rutgers, speaking about economic inequality. There are two videos.

Due on Thursday in Week 4: 500 word Op. Ed. Upload your Op. Ed. into the dropbox as a Microsoft Word attachment. Do not cut and paste it into the box.

Assignment: Write a 500 word Op-Ed. on social class and inequality. You can choose any one of the following three suggestions for a central theme (Op-Eds advocate an idea or a public policy).

- (a) "Social class is real in the United States." These Op-Eds are typically built around the personal experience of the author, their family, and/or people they know. See the *New York Times* website on social class for several examples.
- (b) "Widening economic inequality is a big problem in the United

States.” This type of Op-Ed needs to be built on facts (the Domhoff reading has many) but must be written in a way that is readable, convincing, and often illustrated by either personal experience or that of others.

- (c) (c) “We should reduce economic inequality in the United States by passing the following law.” Here you would need to choose a public policy that would help reduce economic inequality and advocate convincingly for its effectiveness. Explain why it would reduce this current problem.

Take Online Quiz on Unit 1: Sunday June 21 or Monday June 22.

Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights (June 22- July 19)

Week 5: Employment Rights in the U.S. (June 22-28)

- 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

Read: Sweet & Meskins, Chapt. 4

Steven Greenhouse,, Low-Wage Workers are Often Cheated. Study Says, September 1, 2009, *New York Times*.

Sloan Work and Family Research Network, Selected U.S. Labor Laws and Regulations Timeline, July 2004.

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: Videos on Employment at Will and the common law exceptions from Professor Carla Katz

Due Week 5: Take the survey about employment rights. Then participate in the forum on employment rights. At a minimum, the first comment is due by Thursday and the second by Sunday.

Week 6: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality: (June 29-July 5)

- 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.

Sections from Bari-Ellen Roberts, with Jack White, Roberts vs. Texaco: A True Story of Race and Corporate America. NY: Avon Books, 1998:

pp. 107-112,

pp. 158-164

pp. 192-197

pp. 202-206

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

Watch: Three videos

- (1) One is an excerpt from the movie, *At the River I Stand*, about the Memphis Garbage workers strike and Dr. Martin Luther King

- (2) The second is a YouTube video that continues the story of the Memphis garbage strike.
- (3) Mr. Wade Henderson, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Testimony to U.S. Senate Subcommittee, 2009.

Week 7: The New Immigration (July 6-12)

- 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.

An optional reading by Ray Marshall is also available online for those participating in the Immigration Forum

Watch: Two videos

Professor Janice Fine, LSER Department, Rutgers, speaking about immigration issues.

Week 8: Gender, Work and Family (July 13-19)

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

Read: Sweet and Meskins, Chapters 5 and 6

Take Online Quiz on Unit II: Sunday July 19 or Monday July 20

Unit III Improving Working People's Lives (July 19- August 12)

Week 9: The Legacy: The New Deal and Labor (July 20-26)

- 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: Jack Metzgar, Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000). “Getting to 1959,” first part pp. 17-39.

Watch: Various videos.

(1) Professor Paula Voos, Speaking about the New Deal, WWII and Labor (3 sections)

(2) A short You-Tube video regarding the early 1930s and the San Francisco General Strike:

(3) A short You-Tube video on the sit-down strike and its use by the CIO Autoworkers union in the 1930s: (4) A feature video (54 min.), “Mean Things Happening: The Great Depression, Part 5” from PBS also on You-Tube. Please pay particular attention to the second half of the video on steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania.

Due in week 9: Participate in Forum 3 on New Deal Public Policy. The first post involves research on laws enacted as part of the New Deal and is due on Thursday. Additional posts are due by Sunday evening.

Week 10: Unions Today, Part 1 (July 27-Aug. 2)

- What do unions do?
- Collective bargaining
- Strikes and other mobilization actions
- Are unions good or bad for the economy?
- Union membership trends over time

Read: BLS Union Members 2011.

AFL-CIO Fact Sheets: Unions 101; Union Advantage by the Numbers

Michael D. Yates, Why Unions Matter. New York: Monthly Review Press, "At the Table," pp. 66-78.

Watch:

(1) Reverend Jim Wallis, Sojourners, Testifying on unions and economic inequality, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.

(2) Professor Jeff Keefe, Rutgers.

(3) Professor Paula Voos, Rutgers, Testifying about the economic effects of unions, before a Senate subcommittee, 2009.

(4) Carla Katz, Big Think Interview:
<http://bigthink.com/ideas/2676>

Week 11: Unions Today Part 2: Organizing and American Labor Law (Aug 3-9)

- What is legally-protected concerted activity
- Organizing the unorganized today
- Is reform of labor law needed?

Read:

Michael D. Yates, Why Unions Matter. New York: Monthly Review Press, "How Unions Form," pp. 30-38.

Dean Baker, "The Risk of Dismissal for Union Organizing and the Need to Modify the Process", Congressional Testimony by Dean Baker, Co-Director, Center for Economic and Policy Research.

Gordon Lafer "Proposed Rule Changes by Labor Board Would Make Workplace Elections More Democratic", Policy Memorandum, Economic Policy Institute, July 2011

Watch:

- (1) Two videos on unions today by Professor Adrienne Eaton
- (2) Target anti-union employee orientation video on YouTube
- (3) Levitt, Confessions of a Union Buster Video on YouTube

Week 12: Public Policy and the Future of Work (Aug 10-12)

Read: Sweet and Meiskins, Chapter 8.

Due in week 12: Take Online Quiz on Unit III: Wed. Aug. 12