

**INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS**  
**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY 37:575:100:03 Tentative - Subject to Change**  
**Spring 2015**



**Classroom:** Cook/Douglass Lecture Hall (CDL) - Room103, 3 College Farm Road, New Brunswick NJ 08901

**Course schedule:** Wednesdays, 9:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m., January 21 – May 3, 2015.

**Final Exam:** TBD

**Instructors:**

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**Course Overview:** The course is designed to give you an overview of various aspects of labor and employment relations, including the perspective of working people and their labor organizations. We will also study the changing nature of work, workers and workers' institutions and organizations; the impact of technological change, the economic cycle, social class, immigration, race, ethnicity and gender; the role of government in labor policy; the history of unions, the role of unions in politics and challenges the labor movement faces today; and collective bargaining and workers' rights issues.

Class will include lectures, small group discussions, simulations, in-class assignments, and media presentations. Students are encouraged to freely express their views. Respect for the appreciation of different viewpoints will be a guiding principle in this course. **Note: this syllabus may be changed or modified as the course proceeds.**

**Textbook:** Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*, Second Edition. Sage 2013. The text is available at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore on the College Avenue Campus. **IMPORTANT!** The second edition of this book is quite different from the first – it has a new chapter and other chapters have been renumbered.

All readings, except for the textbook, are available on Rutgers Sakai, which you may access at <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>. To log on, enter your Rutgers ID and password in the upper right hand corner. Click on the tab: 37:575:100:03 and then click on modules on the menu on the left hand side of the page.

**The syllabus, schedule, and assignments are subject to change as the course evolves.**

### **Course Requirements**

1. **Read entire syllabus** and make sure you understand it. This is your contract with the instructor.
2. **Be prepared for class.** Always read the material assigned for a class before the class. For instance, complete the reading for Week 2 before our class meets on January 28, complete the reading for Week 3 before our class meets on February 4, etc. **Bring the reading material to class with you** in case you need to refer to it (for instance, for an open-book quiz or for a discussion). Check your email regularly for class announcements.
3. **Be present and be on time.** Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, **please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence.** An email is automatically sent to me. Please note: My attendance policy is that students begin with an “A” for attendance. However, the grade for attendance will decline each time a student is absent, late, or leaves early. If you are late or leave early, you will be charged with ½ class absence. If you have a legitimate reason for your absence, lateness or need to leave early, it must be provided to me in writing in advance or immediately after the occurrence. Even excused absences must be reported via the University absence reporting website indicated above.
4. **Participate in discussions and group activities.** Students will be divided into groups for breakout sessions and projects. The teaching assistants and I will supervise the groups. Your participation in these group situations goes to your participation grade. Explain your views. Ask questions. Listen – don’t monopolize the discussion or ignore other views. Do your share of the work in simulations and in-class group activities. Texting, talking on your phone, FB and Twitter are prohibited in class (unless part of the group activity).
5. **Take careful lecture notes.** You should obtain lecture notes from another student if you miss a class. These are not provided by the instructor or by the teaching assistants.
6. **Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity requires that all academic work be 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 instructor of this course. Students are also expected to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the instructor or dean of the instructional unit. For more information on the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, see [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\\_Policy\\_2013.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_2013.pdf)

### **Evaluation**

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

- Family Interview Exercise (5%)
- Class preparation, attendance and participation (20%)
  - Attendance will be taken in class and participation in group activities and discussions will be tracked.
- Written Op-Ed assignment (15%)

- A 500-word Op-Ed piece on social class or inequality. 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.
- Collective bargaining exercise (10%)
  - The entire class will participate in a collective bargaining exercise spanning a couple of weeks. Students will be assigned to a union team or to a management team and will be required to negotiate a contract by a set date and time. You will be graded as a team on this exercise.
- Exams (50%)
  - There will be two (2) exams (a midterm and a final) that are predominantly “objective” – a combination of short-answer, objective, and short essay items given in class. Both are closed book but you may bring one note card or sheet of paper no larger than 4x6 inches with notes on it. The final exam will be similar in nature to the first exam but cover material since the first exam. Each exam is worth 25% of your total grade.

**Learning Objectives:** This is a social science course. The following SAS learning objectives are particularly relevant:

**h. Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.** *One learning objective involves understanding how U.S. workers have reacted to the changing nature of work, to their class position in American society, and to particular contingencies like immigration. You will gain an overview of the history of the American labor movement, how it fits into a global context, and how race, ethnicity and gender affect workers. You will demonstrate knowledge through writing assignments and examinations.*

**m. Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.** *A second objective involves understanding theories regarding the relationship between economic organization (e.g., the extent of economic markets and corporate structures) and the type of worker organization and public policy responses that are needed to improve the lives of workers. You will demonstrate this knowledge through writing assignments and examinations.*

**n. Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations.** *A third objective will be for you to apply these theories to current policy debates. You will demonstrate this through participation in class debates and through participation in a collective bargaining exercise based on current situations.*

### **Unit I: The Situations Facing Working People**

Most people have to work. Work shapes our lives and our conceptions of self, and at the same time it provides us with income. When work is insecure, low-paid, or we are not accorded dignity on the job, we suffer. On the other hand, when work is rewarding, it enlarges our capacities, allows us to connect to others, and enables us to contribute to the community at large.



In this unit, you will have a chance to ponder your family's history of work, consider how work has changed in the last 150 years, and explore the relationship of work and social class. A major topic is the prevalence of economic inequality in the United States today.

#### **Week 1, January 21: Introduction and Course Requirements**

- Review syllabus and discuss course expectations, assignments, and goals.

- What is a good job?
- What jobs have you held? What are your hopes for the future?
- What is Labor Studies and how does it help us understand issues around work?

**First class assignments:**

- Read the syllabus thoroughly. Learn how to use Sakai and locate readings.
- Family Member Interview: See Family Interview assignment sheet (also posted on Sakai).  
Assignment due in class on Week 2.

**Week 2, January 28: Work and Our Lives**

- Lecture and class discussion on the contours of work in the U.S.
- Assign discussion groups.
- Group discussions and report backs on your family interview assignments and how they relate to course themes.
- Family interview assignment due in class.

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 1
- Paul Krugman, *End This Depression Now*, chapter 1 (Sakai)

**Week 3, February 4: Work in the “New Economy”**

- In class presentation: New Jersey’s Changing Economy.
- Film and discussion: *The Big One* (directed by Michael Moore, 1997).
- Hand out and discuss op-ed assignment (due in class February 18).

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 2
- Peter Capelli et al., excerpts from *Change at Work*, “The Employment System that Died” and “How the World Began to Change” (Sakai)

**Week 4, February 11: Social Class and Economic Inequality**

- Lecture and class discussion on the theories, ideologies, structures, and experiences of class in the U.S.
- Group activity: what would ideal wealth distribution look like and why?
- Review of slides on the rise and consequences of inequality.

**READINGS:**

- Read the following on the *New York Times* website on social class,  
<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/class/>
  1. Overview article, "Shadowy Lines That Still Divide" and Interactive Graphic, "A Closer Look at Income Mobility"
  2. Day 3: Marriage (Tamar Lewin, "Up from the Holler")
  3. Day 5: Education (David Leonhardt, "The College Dropout Boom")
  4. Bob Herbert's "Mobility Myth" Op-Ed linked to the site; (See Readers Opinions Box on the right)
  5. One other article/blog from the site (minimum); and
  6. Interactive exercise in the website which you should do using your family of social origin: "Interactive Graphics: Where do you fit in" (top middle, in between Slide Show and Income and Education)
- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 3

- Michael Zweig, “Looking at the Underclass,” excerpt from *The Working Class Majority: America’s Best Kept Secret*, 77-93 (Sakai)

### **Week 5, February 18: The Historical Origins of the Labor Movement**

- Film: *The Grand Army of Starvation*
- Group discussions: What has changed and what has remained similar about the politics of poverty and work between 1877 and today?
- From 1877 to the New Deal: the fall and rise of the labor movement.
- Op-ed assignment due in class.

#### **READINGS:**

- William Brucher, “Labor Unions and Strikes” in *Conflicts in American History, Volume 6: The Roaring Twenties, Great Depression, and World War II, 1920-1945*. (Sakai)
- Excerpt from Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered* (Sakai)
- Andrew Leonard, “Lessons for Obama from the New Deal” (interview with journalist and historian Michael Hiltzik), Salon.com, September 12, 2011, [http://www.salon.com/2011/09/12/the\\_new\\_deal/](http://www.salon.com/2011/09/12/the_new_deal/)

### **Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights**



Employment law is the fundamental law of the workplace. It is essential for you to know something about your rights at work, or lack thereof. And obviously, future managers need to recognize their own rights and how they can, and cannot, treat employees.

Employment law is mutable—it has changed in the past and may change in the future. One of the biggest changes in American employment law occurred in the 1960s in the face of demands for greater equality by race, color, national origin, religion and gender. Employment opportunities for people of different races and national origins have become more equal under the law since then, but racial and ethnic divisions and discrimination still persist throughout the workforce.

Gender also matters for employment outcomes, although again, the workplace is much more equal today than it was in 1964 when the Civil Rights Act was passed. As more women have entered the workplace on a full-time basis, families are increasingly juggling the demands of two (or more) jobs along with the need to care for their families.

### **Week 6, February 25: Employment Rights and Job Security in the United States**

- “Know Your Rights” – in class quiz and discussion.
- Lecture and discussion of major workplace labor laws and regulations, including the at-will doctrine and its exceptions, antidiscrimination, workplace safety, and wage and hour laws.
- Is it a violation? Group activity on the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- Mid-term exam review.

#### **READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 4
- Excerpts from Lewis Maltby, *Can They Do That?* on “Wrongful Discharge and Employment at Will” and “The Rights You Have” (Sakai)
- Steven Greenhouse, “Low Wage Workers are Often Cheated, Study Says,” *New York Times*, September 2, 2009 (Sakai)

- Excerpt from Bernhardt et al., “Broken Laws, Unprotected Workers: Violations of Employment and Labor Law’s in America’s Cities,” National Employment Law Project, 2009 (Sakai)
- Winnie Stachelberg and Crosby Burns, “10 Things to Know About the Employment Non-Discrimination Act,” Center for American Progress website, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2013/04/24/61294/10-things-to-know-about-the-employment-non-discrimination-act/>

**Week 7, March 4: MIDTERM EXAM (IN-CLASS)**

**Week 8, March 11: Race, Immigration, and the Civil Rights Movement**

- Watch and discuss *At the River I Stand* (directed by David Appleby, Allison Graham, and Steven Ross, 1993).
- Discussion of issues surrounding race, immigration, and employment.

**READINGS AND AUDIO STORY:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 7.
- Charles LeDuff, “At a Slaughterhouse Some Things Never Die: Who Kills, Who Cuts, Who Bosses Can Depend on Race,” *New York Times*, June 16, 2000 (Sakai)
- Listen to “Job Searching While Black: What’s Behind the Unemployment Gap?” NPR news story, May 25, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/05/25/186609052/for-black-americans-finding-work-an-uphill-battle>
- Immanuel Ness, *Immigrants, Unions, and the New U.S. Labor Market*, chapter 2 (Sakai)
- Waldinger et al., “Helots No More: A Case Study for the Justice For Janitors Campaign in Los Angeles,” Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies Working Paper #15 (Sakai)

**SPRING BREAK! No class on March 18.**

**Week 9, March 25: Gender, Family, and Work**

- Presentation on the relationships between gender, working conditions, and employment opportunities.
- Discussion of the challenges integrating work and life, work hours and overwork, and U.S. family leave laws compared to other nations.

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapters 5 and 6.
- “Why Women are Leaving Jobs Behind,” *New York Times*, December 12, 2014: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/14/upshot/us-employment-women-not-working.html>
- “Where Men Aren’t Working,” *New York Times*, December 11, 2014: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/12/12/upshot/where-men-arent-working-map.html>
- “Working Anything But 9 to 5,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2014: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/08/13/us/starbucks-workers-scheduling-hours.html>

**Unit III: Improving Working People’s Lives: Collective Bargaining, New Forms of Organizing and Activism, and the Future of Work**

Union membership grew rapidly in the 1930s-1950s. Collective bargaining between unions and employers in major industries helped raise the standard of living not only for union members, but also for the entire workforce. For the past 35 years, however, the labor movement has been in steep decline in the U.S.



In this final unit for the course we will try our hand at collective bargaining during an in-class simulation. We will also explore the reasons why the labor movement has been in decline, as well as some of the newest and most innovative efforts on the part of unions, worker centers, and community organizations to organize workers in the ever-changing economy. The course will end with a discussion of public policies that could reshape the future of work.

### **Week 10: April 1: Unions and Collective Bargaining**

- “Union knowledge” in class quiz and discussion.
- Presentation on the structure of the labor movement in the U.S. and New Jersey.
- The basics of collective bargaining under private and public sector labor laws.
- Mediation, arbitration, lock-outs, and strikes.
- Hand out Collective Bargaining simulation assignment guideline and assign bargaining teams.
- Write first drafts of contract language proposals individually outside of class.

### **READINGS:**

- Excerpts from the National Labor Relations Act (Sakai)
- “The Union Difference,” AFL-CIO website, <http://www.aflcio.org/Learn-About-Unions/What-Unions-Do/The-Union-Difference>
- “Union Members – 2013,” Bureau of Labor Statistics website, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>
- Excerpts from Michael Yates, *Why Unions Matter* (Sakai)
- “Employer/Union Rights and Obligations,” National Labor Relations Board, <http://www.nlr.gov/rights-we-protect/employunion-rights-and-obligations>
- “The Process of Establishing Collective Bargaining,” a short summary from the Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations, Fact Finding Report, May 1994 (Sakai)

### **Week 11, April 8: Collective Bargaining Simulation**

- In-class preparation with your team.
- Begin bargaining!

### **Week 12, April 15: Collective Bargaining Simulation**

- Continue bargaining and reach a final settlement with the other side... if possible!
- Hand-in contract language bargained in class and notes from bargaining.

### **Week 13, April 22: Unions Under Attack and Workers Fight Back: Organized Labor Today**

- The Taft-Hartley Act, “Right-to-Work” laws, the origins of the backlash against unions.
- “Union avoidance” strategies by employers.
- Examples of recent successful organizing campaigns in face of the odds.
- Begin studying for final exam!

### **READINGS:**

- Excerpts from Gordon Lafer, “The Legislative Attack on American Wages and Labor Standards, 2011-2012,” Economic Policy Institute Briefing Paper #364 (Sakai)
- Bill Fletcher, Jr., *Reimagining Labor Unions: Busting Myths, Building Unions* (Sakai)
- Excerpts from Mari Jo Buhle and Paul Buhle, eds., *It Started in Wisconsin: Dispatches from the Frontlines of the New Labor Protest* (Sakai)
- David Bensman, “Port Truck Drivers on Strike! A Dispatch from Two of the Nation’s Largest Ports,” *Dissent* blog, November 22, 2014: <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/port-truck-drivers-on-strike-dispatch-from-los-angeles-long-beach-ports>

**Week 14, April 29: Public Policy and the Future of Work**

- Discuss how new public policies could address work and employment-related problems.
- Discussion of ways young students and workers (like yourselves!) can get involved.
- Overview of major course themes and review of final exam topics.
- Continue studying for final exam!

**Readings:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, chapter 8
- Josh Harkinson, “Wal-Mart is Seeing Its Biggest Black Friday Protests Ever Today,” *Mother Jones*, November 28, 2014: <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/11/walmart-protests-black-friday>
- Peter Dreier, “How Seattle’s Minimum Wage Began in New York City’s Zuccotti Park,” *The American Prospect*, June 5, 2014: <http://prospect.org/article/how-seattle%E2%80%99s-15-minimum-wage-victory-began-new-york-city%E2%80%99s-zuccotti-park>
- Sarah Blaskey and Phil Gasper, “Campus Struggles Against Sweatshops Continue,” *Dollars and Sense*, September/October 2012: <http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2012/09/12blaskeygasper.html>

**FINAL EXAM – DATE AND TIME TBD**