

**Introduction to Labor Studies and Employment Relations**  
**Rutgers University, School of Management and Labor Relations**  
**37:575:100:04**  
**Spring 2014**

Instructor: Professor Francis Ryan

Class Time and Place: Thursday 12:35-3:35 LEC Room 137 Auditorium

Office Location: Labor Center Building 114

Office Hours: Tuesday 1-3, Weds 3-4 and by appointment.

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**Course Overview:** This course gives a basic introduction to the field of Labor Studies and Employment Relations, focusing on an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the nature of work from both national and global perspectives. Incorporating sociology, management systems, labor and working class history, human resources, legal studies, literature, art, media and employment relations, we will analyze the ways that work has evolved from the industrial revolution to the twenty-first century. In this course, we will also focus on the experiences and perspectives of working people and their institutions, as well as those of management and human resources to learn a diverse range of perspectives on the contemporary workplace and how it has evolved over time.

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

- h. Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.
- m. Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
- n. 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 rubrics applied to written assignments and items on exams.

**Required Book.** The following required book is available for purchase at the Rutgers University Bookstore, operated by Barnes and Noble. It may also be purchased online.

Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*. Pine Forge Press. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Sage, 2013.

All readings, except for the text, are available on Rutgers Sakai, which you may access at <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>

Once you are registered for the course, you will be granted access to the site. It is your responsibility to access course materials, including the reading assignments. Here is how you access Sakai:

1. Go to <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>
2. Enter your Rutgers NetID and password at the top right corner
3. Click tab (get course number)
4. Please note: You will need Adobe Acrobat or a similar program to download and print out material that has been posted on Sakai.

The syllabus, schedule and assignments are subject to change as the course evolves, and sometimes due to unforeseen schedule changes due to weather. Please note that additional sets of readings that highlight contemporary issues that develop during the course of the semester will also be added to our activities.

### **Course Requirements**

*Class attendance:* You are expected to attend each class session, and to be on time. An attendance sheet will be passed out during each class; it is your responsibility to sign the sheet. Be punctual and plan to stay for the entire class. Students who repeatedly arrive late and leave at break will have their grades lowered. If you need to leave early, see me before class; otherwise you are expected to remain until the class is over. As the class is three hours long, we will have periodic breaks built into the scheduled time.

*Participation:* This class will utilize a variety of formats, with weekly discussion sessions one of the more important of these. You are expected to have completed the readings assigned before coming to class each week and be ready to take an active role in these discussions. Class participation includes active, respectful listening and well as talking. Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. If you have a laptop computer, please feel free to bring it to class as a useful tool to augment in class readings and You Tube clips. You may not use any recording devices in this class.

The class may also have periodic, unannounced quizzes based upon assigned readings. These grades will be evaluated as part of the overall participation grade.

*Missed Exams:* All students are expected to take the scheduled in-class exams (midterm and final) at the designated times. Documented emergencies and personal matters will be taken into account for possible cases of rescheduling that arise.

Unless otherwise specified, all writing assignments should be submitted to me via email attachment before class the day that they are due. Out of respect to those who meet this expectation, all late papers will be subject to downgrading.

*Disability Statement:* This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirement for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of disability should refer to the Rutgers Office of Disability

Services and then contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible.

*Statement on Academic Freedom:* Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. This class will introduce an array of sometimes conflicting ideas and interpretations of U.S. history, and all who partake in the course should feel encouraged to express their views in an open, civic forum.

## **Evaluation**

Bargaining Exercise (10%)  
Class Participation, attendance and quizzes (20%)  
Written Assignment (15%)  
Midterm Exam (25%)  
Final Exam (30%)

## **Weekly Class Summaries:**

### **Week 1, January 22: Introduction to the Course and Course Requirements**

In this first meeting, we will have a chance to introduce ourselves, and to get a sense of what this semester's class will entail. We will discuss our past experiences as workers, and talk about our hopes for satisfying employment. What is a good job? What types of issues currently center on work in America today? How does labor studies, as field, contribute to and help us understand these issues?

Film: *I Love Lucy*, "Job Switching." (1952)

### **Week 2, January 29: Exploring American Working Life: The "Old Economy" and Industrialism.**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 1, Mapping the Contours of Work.

In Class reading: Walt Whitman, *Manhatta*.

Discussion on internships and the youth job market.

Film: *New York: "The Power and the People,"* section on Triangle Shirtwaist Fire. (2001)

### **Week 3, February 5: Class Politics in the United States**

Readings: Zweig, Michael (2000) *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*, ILR Press, 9-37 (The Class Structures of the United States)

Scott, J. and Leonhardt, D. (2005), "Shadowy Lines That Still Divide," in *Class Matters*, Henry Holt and Company, 1-26.

Jefferson Cowie and Lauren Boehm, "Dead Man's Town: "Born in the U.S.A.," Social History, and Working Class Identity," *American Quarterly* (June 2006): 353-378.

In-class Presentation: Bruce Springsteen: Finding the New Jersey experience in Working Class Culture.

#### **Week 4, February 12: Income and Social Mobility**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 2, New Products, New Ways of Working and the New Economy, Chapter 3, Economic Inequality, Social Mobility and the New Economy.

Boushey, H. and Fremstad, S (2008), "The Wages of Exclusion: Low-wage Work and Inequality," *New Labor Forum*, 17 (2): 9-19.

Zweig (2000) *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*, ILR Press, 77-93, "Looking at the Underclass."

Film Clips: *Clerks*, Kevin Smith (1994)  
*Girls*, Laura Dunham (2012)

#### **Week 5, February 19: Power Dynamics, the New Economy and the Future of Work**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 4, "Whose Jobs Are Secure?"

Bryant Simon, "Consuming Lattes and Labor, or Working at Starbucks," *International Labor and Working Class History* (Fall 2008): 193-211.

Francis Ryan, "Journal of a Retail Worker" (1996-97)

Film: *The Big One* (1997)

Paper Due in Class

#### **Week 6, February 26: Midterm Exam**

#### **Week 7, March 5: The Role and Function of Unions**

Readings: Stephen A. Sweet and Peter Meiksins, "Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy, Chapter 8, "Reshaping the Contours of the New Economy."

Michael Yates, *Why Unions Matter?* pp. 11-82.

"Union Members 2010," Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, January 21, 2011.

Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000). Getting to 1959, 17-57.

### **Week 8, March 12: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 7, "Race, Ethnicity and Work: Legacies of the Past, Problems of the Present."

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, Chapter 3.

Steve Striffler, "Inside a Poultry Processing Plant: An Ethnographic Portrait," *Labor History* 43:3 August 2002 305-314.

Roger Waldinger, et al., "Helots No More: A Case Study of the Justice for Janitors Campaign in Los Angeles." (Los Angeles., Calif: Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, Working Paper No. 15, April 1996): 1-19.

Film: *At the River I Stand* (1993)

### **Week 9, March 19: Spring Break**

### **Week 10, March 26: Work, Gender, Equality**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 6, "Gender Chasms in the New Economy."

Ehrenreich, Barbara, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000): Selling in Minnesota.

Gatta, Mary and Yasemin Besen-Cassino, Gender Pay Gap in New Jersey, A Report of the American Association of University Women, 2010.

Film: *Bread and Roses* (2000)

### **Week 11, April 2: Work and Family**

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, "Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy, Chapter 5, "A Fair Day's Work."

Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," *The Atlantic*, July/August 2012 85-102

Netsy Firestein and Nicola Dones, "Unions Fight for Work and Family Policies—Not For Women Only," in *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor*, ed. Dorothy Sue Cobble, 140-154.

### **Week 12, April 9: Unions and Collective Bargaining Today**

Readings: Yates, Michael (2009) *Why Unions Matter*, "Collective Bargaining," 83-110.

Michael Mauer, *The Union Members' Complete Guide*, Union Communication Services, Inc. 41-65, 67-85

Strom, A. (2006) "U.S. Labor Law," in *Current Economic Issues*, edited by the Dollars and Sense Collective, Economic Affairs Bureau, 17-21.

### **Week 13, April 16: Collective Bargaining Simulation**

### **Week 14: April 23: Immigration Old and New**

Readings: Gracie Chang, "Disposable Domestic: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy," Chapter 3, "Undocumented Latinas: The New Employable Mother," 55-92.

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," 13-39.

John Schmitt and Kris Warner, "The Changing Face of U.S. Labor, 1983-2008," *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society*, 13:2 June 2010 263-279

Film: *Amreeka* (2009)

### **Week 15, April 30: Contemporary Debates and Semester Overview**

Readings: Joseph A. McCartin, "Convenient Scapegoats: Public Workers Under Assault," *Dissent* Spring 2011, 45-50

Final Exam as scheduled by Rutgers during the final exam period.

