

INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS
Labor Studies 37:575:100 online: Section 91 *Draft subject to change*

Spring 2015
Professors Alex Sperling and Paula B. Voos

Contact information for Professor Sperling: email: sperling.alex@gmail.com Cell phone: 313-580-7202

Contact information for Professor Voos:
Office phone: 848-932-1748. Cell phone: 732-261-5958. She is available in her office (140 Labor Education Center) most mornings but its best to call to be sure. Professor Voos prefers to answer substantive questions by phone, rather than email; her email is pbvoos@work.rutgers.edu

Please copy both professors when you email about the course. That way one of us can be sure to get back to you.

Schedule: The weeks in the course begin on Monday and end on Sunday evening at 11 p.m. 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 is an online course that is largely asynchronous. But you do need to be able to schedule an online activity on the following days/times, so plan your schedule accordingly:

- **Participation on one Monday or Wednesday evenings to “negotiate the syllabus” – this is an online exercise designed to make you familiar with how the negotiating room virtual reality software works and to insure you have suitable computer equipment for the bargaining exercise that takes place later in the course.**

You will need to give us at least a first and second choice of days/times from the following list. If you can give us more choices, that would really help.

**Monday Feb. 2 from 6 pm to 8 pm, or
Monday Feb 2 from 8 to 10 pm or
Wed. Feb. 4 from 6 to 8 pm, or
Wed. Feb. 4 from 8 to 10 pm**

- **Participation in a collective bargaining exercise as a member of a union or management team.**

**Mon. April 20 7:00-10:00pm, or
Wed. April 22 7:00-10:00pm**

We would truly appreciate it if you could give us a choice of days because we realize some students will be limited to one particular day and we need to have good teams for all.

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 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).

Equipment needed: USB Headset with a microphone (other types don't work well); please do not attempt to use an "open" microphone built into a personal computer because it leads to feedback that will bother other students. You also need a personal computer with broadband connection. An I-pad, other tablet, or a smart-phone will not be sufficient.

Evaluation (Subject to change via the "negotiate the syllabus" exercise):

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

- Introductory exercises (Personal information sheet; pre-test participation; negotiate the syllabus exercise participation) (3%)
- Negotiate the syllabus exercise (4%)
- 3 Threaded Discussions (Forums) at 10% each (30%)
- Op. Ed. Writing assignment (8%)
- Rights check and union knowledge check at 1% each (2%)
- Bargaining exercise (8%)
- 3 Quizzes at 12% each (36%)
- One page take-home final (9%)

Unit I. The Situation Working People Face Today (Jan. 20 – Feb. 22)

Week 1: Introduction (Jan. 20-25)

- 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 0.5% 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). So please use the computer you will later use on Sunday to take exams.

Read: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 1

Assignment for Week 1: Interview at least one parent or grandparent about your family's work history (preferably more). You do not need to write anything about the interview. It will form the basis of an online discussion next week.

Also if you do not have a computer headset with an attached microphone, please get it this week. A USB connection is best. You will need to test it next week with an audio program next week. This piece of equipment is needed to reduce "feedback" in group discussions online.

Week 2: Work and Our Lives (Jan. 26 - Feb. 1)

- You and your family's history of work
- Intergenerational economic mobility and immobility
- Intergenerational transmission of resources (types of economic and social capital)

Read:

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

Harold Meyerson, "European Austerity Engenders a Keynesian Outlook," *Washington Post*, 12/31/14 (link in the online course shell).

The Pew Charitable Trust, "A Third of Americans Now Say They Are in the Lower Classes" and watch the accompanying short video on absolute vs. relative income mobility (link in the online course shell).

Gene Demby, "Young People Want Equality but Struggle to Discuss Bias," National Public Radio, 5/15/14 (link in the online course shell).

Listen: Richard Florida, "The Rise of the Creative Class," on Big Think (link in shell).

Due week 2: Participate in Forum 1: You need to post at least once by Thursday evening, and then a second time by Sunday evening. Both quantity and quality count so you may want to post beyond this minimum.

Week 3: Corporations & Work in the "New Economy" (Feb. 2 - 8)

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

Read: Sweet & Meiksins, 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 in Week 3: Participate in “negotiate the syllabus exercise” on your scheduled day and time. Instructions will be sent in the weekly message for this week and also posted in the Announcement area.

Week 4: Social Class in the U.S. (Feb. 9 - 15)

- 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 4 – Nothing, but you should start working on the assignment that is due on Thursday next week:

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 in week 5 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) “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.

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 an 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, re-edit and then re-edit again. A clean, concise and compelling op-ed is your goal.***

Week 5: Economic Inequality Today (Feb. 16-22)

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

Read:

Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 3, and

G. W. Domhoff, “Wealth, Income and Power,” April 2005 (updated 2013).

Review:

Power-point slides by Alan Kruegar, Chairman, Council of Economic Advisors of the President of the U.S., Jan 2012, “The Causes and Consequences of the Growth of Income Inequality.”

Watch:

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

Richard Wilkinson’s, TED Talk, on the impact of inequality globally.

Due Thursday Feb. 19 in Week 5: 500 word Op. Ed. Upload your Op. Ed. into the dropbox as a Microsoft Word attachment. See week 4 (above) for details on the assignment.

Take Online Quiz on Unit 1: Saturday Feb. 21 or Sunday Feb. 22

Unit II: Diversity, Work, and Employee Rights (Feb. 23 – March 29)

Week 6: Employment Rights in the U.S. (Feb. 23 – March 1)

- 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

First: Take the rights check. This is a quiz that you can take and retake over the course of the week until you get a perfect score and the full number of points (10). After the week is over, the rights check ends – so be sure to do it this week.

Read:

Sweet & Meiksins, 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.

Center for American Progress, “10 Things to Know about the Employment Non-Discrimination Act,” from their website.

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

Due Week 6: Participate in the forum on employment rights. At a bare minimum, the first comment is due by Thursday and the second by Sunday on each of the two scenarios.

Week 7: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality: (March 2 - 8)

- 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.

Listen: National Public Radio, “Job Searching While Black: What’s Behind the Unemployment Gap?” and read the accompanying news story on the web.

Week 8: The New Immigration (March 9 - 13)

- 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.

Watch: Two videos

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

Review:

Ellis Island Web site, “Immigration Timeline.” Be sure to review information about the predominant nationalities of immigrants in various periods.

SPRING BREAK: March 14 – March 22

Week 9: Gender, Work and Family (March 23-29)

- Women’s participation in the paid labor force

- Gender inequalities and discrimination
- Work/family policies and the law

Read: Sweet and Meiksins, Chapters 5 and 6, and

Washington Post, “Nearly 40 Percent of Mothers Are Now the Family Breadwinners Report Says,” 5/28/2013.

Take Online Quiz on Unit II: Sat. March 28 or Sun. March 29

Unit III Improving Working People’s Lives (March 30 –May 3)

Week 10: The Legacy: The New Deal and Labor (March 30 – April 5)

- 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 week 10: Participate in Forum 3. The first post is due by Thursday evening; additional posts are due by Sunday evening.

Week 11: Unions Today, Part 1 (April 6 - 12)

- What do unions do?
- Collective bargaining
- Are unions good or bad for the economy?

First: Take the union knowledge check. This is a quiz that you can take and retake over the course of the week until you get a perfect score and the full number of points (10). You cannot take it after the week is over so do it this week.

Review: Power-point on what American unions do.

Read:

Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Union Members 2013."

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

Collective Bargaining Exercise material.

Explore: "Learn about Unions" on the AFL-CIO website. See various pull down items, but be sure to review "Collective Bargaining," and "The Union Difference" at the bottom of the bargaining page.

Watch:

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

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

(3) Professor Carla Katz, Rutgers, "Unions and Individual Voice"

Due in Week 11: You have been assigned a role (union or management team) and should read background materials you need to read for the exercise. Your team should schedule an initial meeting this week because you have material **due on Thurs next week (initial proposals; bottom line, etc.)**.

Week 12: Unions Today Part 2: Union Organizing and Union Membership (April 13-19)

- How unions are formed
- Union membership trends over time

Read:

"The Process of Establishing Collective Bargaining," pp. 65-66 of Fact Finding Report, Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations, May 1994.

Posted materials for the bargaining exercise.

Watch Q&A videos on union organizing:

3 Videos, Professor Carla Katz

Watch for an overview of how employers combat union organizing campaigns:

(1) Target anti-union employee orientation video on YouTube

(2) Levitt, Confessions of a Union Buster Video on YouTube

Watch for an understanding of where contemporary unions are strong and where they are struggling, and why:

(3) Professor Jeff Keefe on unions in the public sector and among low-wage service workers

(4) Two videos on unions today by Professor Adrienne Eaton. One is about the challenges posed by contingent and non-standard work. The other is about unions among athletes, actors, professors and other “stars.”

Review: Power-point on union membership

Due in Week 12: On Thursday: your team’s bargaining plans (initial proposals; bottom line etc.). Then you bargain next week on the day and time assigned.

Week 13: Collective Bargaining Exercise. (April 20-26)

Bargain as part of your union or management team on the day assigned.

Due in Week 13: Due on Sunday: Summary of final contract settlement; your evaluation of all team members.

Week 14: Public Policy and the Future of Work (April 27 – May 3).

Read:

Sweet and Meiskins, Chapter 8.

Watch the following videos:

(1) Paul Krugman, May 17, 2012, “End This Depression Now: Paul Krugman Urges Public Spending, Not Deficit Hysteria,” on *Democracy Now*.

(2) Adrienne Eaton, Professor, Labor Studies Department, Rutgers, Unions and Informal Work

(3) Dr. Teresa Boyer, Executive Director, Center for Women and Work, Rutgers, on Work and Family policy

(4) Sattik Deb, Director of Student Services, Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department “How you can get involved”

Take Online Quiz on Unit III: Sat. May 2 or Sunday May 3

WRAP UP: May 4 - 7

A short take home final will be distributed on the last day of class and can be handed in any time over these 4 days.