

38:578:500

*Introductory Seminar in Labor and Employment Relations*  
Spring 2016 Syllabus

Monday, 7:20 to 10 PM, LEC 130/131

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**DESCRIPTION:** This course is designed to introduce Master's students to research and findings in the fields of labor studies, employment relations and human resources, and to raise significant philosophical questions that lie at the core of the discipline. It is also designed to help students strengthen their analytical and writing skills; and it will provide students with an opportunity to engage a number of SMLR faculty in discussions about their areas of interest.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

Students who successfully complete this course will meet the following official learning objectives of SMLR and MLER:

- Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry level professional. (Goal I)
- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background of a particular work situation (Goal IV)

In addition, successful students will also meet the following course specific goals:

1. Deepen their understanding of key historical and current workplace and social issues through exposure to a variety of research topics and methods;
2. Explore the ethical implications of alternative employment systems and relationships;
3. Develop and improve analytical and writing skills;
4. Be introduced to a number of faculty and through them to the scope of the MLER program so that they can make more informed choices about future course work and research sponsors;
5. Create a culture of open discussion, constructive criticism and active collaboration between and among faculty and students.

**THEMES:**

In addition to the topics to be covered by the presentations from other Rutgers faculty described below, the course will also address a number of questions and concerns that illuminate key professional issues in the area of labor studies and employment relations. These continuing conversations will help to tie the its different parts of the course together and accustom students to asking the most searching questions possible about the material under discussion.

A. SHOULD UNEMPLOYMENT BE CONSIDERED A PUBLIC EMERGENCY?

1. Water-borne diseases (e.g., cholera) are deadly. They are also preventable with appropriate public health measures and investments.
2. Any case of water-borne disease is therefore unacceptable and properly triggers an immediate emergency response.
3. Unemployment, too, is deadly (if not as much so) and preventable with appropriate public policies and investments.
4. Should any unemployment therefore also be considered unacceptable and its appearance trigger an immediate emergency response?

B. IS WAGE THEFT A CRIME?

1. Theft (armed or unarmed robbery) is a taking or appropriation that occurs either without consent or with coerced consent. (Surrendering your wallet at gun- or knife point would be an example of coerced consent.)
2. Any theft is a crime and intolerable: every theft is one theft too many.
3. Is wage theft also a crime, which should be investigated as such?

C. DO UNFAIR WAGES ALWAYS INVOLVE SOME DEGREE OF WAGE THEFT?

1. A fair price for goods or services is the price at which they can be bought or sold in a competitive market (i.e., a market in which both buyers and sellers have a reasonable range of providers and products from which to choose).
2. A fair wage is the price at which labor services can be hired in a competitive labor market (i.e., a labor market in which both wage earners and wage payers have a reasonable range of opportunities and willing workers from which to choose).
3. Where such preconditions are not met, the wages paid will be to some extent coerced, therefore unfair and, by definition, involve some degree of theft.
4. In uncompetitive corners of the labor market, where employment or unemployment is forced, the wages paid in that corner can be considered presumptively unfair, etc.
5. Preventable unemployment is therefore a cause of some number of unfair employment contracts and some degree of coerced wages or wage theft.

D. IS A BAD EMPLOYER A THREAT TO GOOD EMPLOYERS?

1. Creating productive organizations that are acceptable and, if possible, exemplary places of employment is the primary goal of “human resource management” and “employment relations.”
2. When a significant number of employees are forced to work for bad employers (i.e., those who do not provide acceptable terms and conditions of employment), then it is hard for other employers to be good. (Bad employers drive out the good, just as bad money drives out good money.)

**PROCESS:** This course does not rely on only two instructors. In addition to its coordinating and writing instructors, other faculty from the Labor Studies and Employment Relations program will make short, focused presentations about an aspect of their research or work in the field. They have also suggested one or more articles to read (about 25 to 30 pages) on the topic of their

presentation, about which students are required to post short summary responses on the course Sakai site before they come to class. ***These posts are very important.*** The regularity and punctuality of the posts is an index of the degree of your *PREPARATION* for *PARTICIPATION* in the course, both of which are significant determinants of the final grade. (The other elements are *APPLICATION* and *MASTERY*. There is more information about grades and grading below.)

Each class will consist of: (a) an opening summary of the prior week's session (about 15 minutes), which will serve as a bridge and introduction to the day's speaker and themes; (b) a visiting presentation and discussion (about 75 minutes); (c) student-led discussions and presentations to small and large groups of the class, where student papers are "workshopped" and shared (about 60 minutes); and other activities as described below.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Successfully to complete this course, students must:

- (a) Attend class.
- (b) Read and post summaries of each week's reading before the start of class.
- (c) Complete three acceptable short papers as described below.
- (d) Participate in the in-class writing workshops and discussion circles with other students.

In order to document your preparation or engagement with the themes of the course, you are required to write brief summaries of each week's assigned material.

In order to document your participation fully in the course you need to attend class and contribute actively to each of its segments.

In order to demonstrate your final mastery of the material, you are required to prepare two brief personal essays and one slightly longer presentation, as described below, which engage with the themes of the course.

**Required Reading:** There is no single assigned text for the class. Each week's readings are available on the Sakai website. You can retrieve and print out the readings by doing the following:

1. Go to <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>
2. Enter your Rutgers ID and password in the upper right corner
3. Click on the tab that says "38:578:500:01 Intro Sem in LER SP 17"
4. Click on "Resources" at the left
5. Click on the folder titled "38:578:500:01 Intro Sem in LER SP 17 Resources"
6. Click on the folder for the week you want, then the file you want to download.

Many of the readings are in Adobe Acrobat format. You can download the reader for free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. For problems, contact Laura Walkoviak at [lawalkoviak@smlr.rutgers.edu](mailto:lawalkoviak@smlr.rutgers.edu) or (848) 932-9503.

There will also be short videos on writing, announcements, and additional readings posted. You should bring hardcopies of the readings to class.

**Class Preparation:** To prepare adequately for a class, you must carefully read the assigned texts and come prepared to discuss them intelligently. To facilitate your participation, you are urged to keep a reading journal containing notes, summaries, queries and ideas about each text. There is no standard length or format for these entries. They need only be long enough, and specific enough, to assist your efforts to comprehend the main ideas in the assigned readings.

**Class Notes and Queries:** Each week you are required to post a short summary of your relevant reading journal entries, as well as any problem sets, for me to see on Sakai by the morning of each scheduled class. (The location for the posting is the Assignments tab on the course web page.)

**Class Attendance:** Students are expected to attend class regularly. Plan to arrive on time and stay the full class session. Often important information is communicated at the beginning and at the end of the class. Usually I set the broader frame for the class discussion at the beginning of class. At the end of class, I try to save time to introduce the topic for the next week.

If you anticipate a problem with attendance or timeliness, you should discuss the matter with me *before* signing up for the class. Your grade for participation will suffer if your attendance is irregular and/or you repeatedly arrive late and/or leave early. Your overall grade will suffer as well since it is based largely on the persistence of your preparation, the quality of your participation and your mastery of the material.

In case of an absence, you are encouraged to talk with other students in the class about the material covered in class; you are also welcome to talk with me before or after class about anything you may have missed. However, I am not able to respond to e-mail requests to repeat material presented in class. Class handouts will be posted on Sakai.

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively in class discussion. You should read carefully all the required readings *before* the class meets and be prepared to speak about them in class. You should strive to be able to articulate the main ideas of each text, and to offer your own assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. Please bring an accessible copy of the assigned readings with you to the class in which they are to be discussed.

The quality of your comments is as important as their frequency. The best comments are informed by the week's readings or other relevant evidence and examples. Your personal experiences are important, especially as they shed light on the themes of the class. Active, respectful listening is also as important to class participation as talking. Students will be expected to help raise the level of class discussion by contributing their own informed responses and by interacting with others in ways that help them to help clarify and extend their comments.

Your posted brief summaries of your reading journal entries or completed problem sets (as required) are used to measure your class participation. Each may receive up to 10 points, *but only if you attend the relevant class*. Each class may also consist of one or more small-group activity, during which you will be asked to develop with others a perspective on questions raised by the assigned texts. Your participation in these activities will also be taken into account.

### **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES AND WEIGHTS:**

1. **Weekly Summaries and responses (up to 120 points):** weekly short summaries of and responses to the assigned readings, which are to be posted on Sakai before the start of each class, which will be evaluated by the instructors as accomplished (10 points), adequate (5 points) or unacceptable (0 points).
2. **Autobiographical Work Experience Essay (25 points):** An autobiographical essay on your own personal work (or search-for-work) experiences (25 points). The essay should include a description of what, in your opinion, are the best and worst practices, programs or institutions

that you have so far encountered, as well as specific suggestions about how you think the worst of them might be improved.

*Think of this assignment as a letter to the rest of the class, which will help them have a better sense of who you are and where you are coming from. It should be clear, specific and chatty.*

**First Draft Due:** Monday, February 6 by 6 PM on Sakai (for class workshop discussion)

**Final Draft Due:** Monday, February 13 by 6 PM on Sakai (for instructors comment)

3. **Autobiographical Intellectual History Essay (25 points)**: An essay about the most important things you have learned as a Labor Studies and Employment Relations undergraduate major or Master's degree candidate (25 points). The essay should include a description of both the specific facts and perspective that have influenced you the most and the texts or experiences that shaped or made the learning possible. Finally, it should also include a brief description of how your beliefs or actions were changed by the learning.

*Think of this assignment as a personal statement that might accompany an application to graduate school or a think tank focused on issues related to employment and work. It should be clear, serious and fresh, not just the same old same old.*

**Topic Due:** Monday, February 20 by 6 PM on Sakai (for class presentation)

**First Draft Due:** Monday, February 27 by 6 PM on Sakai (for class workshop discussion)

**Final Draft Due:** Monday, March 6 by 6 PM on Sakai (for instructors comment)

4. **Persuasive Policy Speech/Essay (50 points)**: A written short speech (as if to the membership of an organization), presentation (as if to the leadership of an organization) or testimony (as if to a legislative committee) that is designed to secure the membership's, leadership's or committee's support for a particular policy proposal. The speech, presentation or testimony needs to: (a) define the problem that the proposed policy or program is supposed to address; (b) describe the proposed solution; and (c) provide factual evidence to support the claims that the problem warrants the group's attention and support.

*Think of this assignment as a presentation to a legislative committee, corporate lobbying firm, public interest organization or union political action committee. This piece should have the best qualities of the other two, as well as being, if possible, inspiring.*

**Topic Due:** Monday, March 6 by 6 PM on Sakai (for class presentation)

**Outline Due:** Monday, March 20 by 6 PM on Sakai (for class workshop discussion)

**Bibliography Due:** Monday, March 27 by 6 PM on Sakai (for class workshop discussion)

**First Draft Due:** Monday, April 10 by 6 PM on Sakai (for class workshop discussion)

**Final Draft Due:** Monday, April 24 by 6 PM on Sakai (for instructors comment)

**The second and third essays must include a bibliography and relevant citations. The first can be more free form.**

**PLAGIARISM:** The extensive use of another person's ideas without proper citation is plagiarism and unacceptable. It can result in a failing grade and disciplinary action through University channels. The same is true for any other form of cheating. For information about proper citation of written and web-based material, please read, "Documenting Sources" and "Correct Forms for Citation," which is available on the Sakai web page for this course.

**GRADING SCALE:** Grades will be awarded on the basis of the following schedule:

A = 200 to 186 points	( A+ > 200; 191 < A- < 185)
B = 185 to 166 points	(186 > B+ > 180; 171 < B- < 165)
C = 165 to 146 points	(166 > C+ > 160; 151 < C- < 145)
D = 145 to 130 points	(146 > D+ > 150; 141 < D- < 135)
F < 130 points	

There are fourteen class sessions January 23 through May 1, for twelve of which there will be required readings. Points may be earned as follows:

**Posted Summaries:** Up to 10 points per post, up to 120 points overall

**Work Experience Essays:** Up to 25 points based on instructor evaluation

**Intellectual History Essay:** Up to 25 based on instructor evaluation

**Persuasive Speech/Essay:** Up to 50 points based on instructor evaluation

**Class Participation:** Attending class = 1, not attending = 0, up to 15 points

**Final Grade** =  $\sum_{p=(1 \rightarrow 12)} (\text{Posts}_p \times \text{Attendance}_d) + \text{Essays} + \text{Presentation}$

Thus, if you miss a class, you will get no points for anything you post on that day. But as there are twelve opportunities to post, can miss up to two classes or two postings without penalty; and anyone who attends and posts for more than 10 times will earn extra credit.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### Week 1: (January 23) – INTRODUCTION

A brief overview of the themes of the course and its requirements, as described in the syllabus. During the second half of the class, new (and, optionally, continuing) students will adjourn to join the LSER orientation session.

### Week 2: (January 30) – LSER LITERATURE AND RESOURCES (Julie Peters)

**Resource:** Aristotle, "The Best Regime," *Politics* VII:13-15 [1331b24-1334b5] (325 BCE)

**Class Activity:** What are the required features of the best employment regimes?

### Week 3: (February 6) – INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS FRAMEWORKS (Paula Voos)

**Resources:** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

**Post Due:** The first required post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

**First Draft of First Paper Due:** The first draft of your personal work experience essay must be posted before class so that it can be read and critiqued by a fellow student in class.

### Week 4: (February 13) – WORK AND EMPLOYMENT LAW (Jim Cooney)

**Resources:** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

**Post Due:** The second post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

**N.B.: FEB. 13 ASSIGNMENT CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE**

***Final Draft of First Paper Due:*** The final draft of your personal work experience essay must be posted before class.

***Class Activity:*** What principles would you include in a "People's Social Charter" to guide law and policy makers who want employers to create model employment regimes?

**Week 5: (February 20) – DISABILITY, LAW AND SOCIETY (Lisa Schur)**

***Resources:*** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

***Post Due:*** The third post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

***Topic of Intellectual Autobiography Paper Due:*** Bring an idea for your second paper to class and be prepared to present it orally to the whole group.

**Week 6: (February 27) – VARIETIES OF CAPITALISM: WESTERN EUROPE  
(Rebecca Givan)**

***Resources:*** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

***Post Due:*** The fourth post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

***First Draft of Second Paper Due:*** The first draft of your intellectual autobiography must be posted before class so that it can be read and critiqued by a different student in class.

**Week 7: (March 6) – IMMIGRATION AND LABOR RIGHTS (Janice Fine)**

***Resources:*** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

***Post Due:*** The fifth post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

***Final Draft of Second Paper Due:*** The final draft of your intellectual autobiography must be posted before class.

***Topic of Persuasive Essay Due:*** Bring an idea for your persuasive essay/presentation to class and be prepared to present it orally to the whole group.

**-- SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS MARCH 13 --**

**Week 8: (March 20) – CONTINGENT IMMIGRANT LABOR (Carmen Martino)**

***Resources:*** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

***Post Due:*** The sixth post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

***Outline of your Persuasive Essay Due:*** The outline must be posted before class so that it can be read and critiqued by a different student in class.

**Week 9: (March 27) – THE SOUTH ASIAN DIASPORA & THE NEW ECONOMY  
(Juhi Verma)**

***Resources:*** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

***Post Due:*** The seventh post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

***Bibliography for your Persuasive Essay Due:*** The bibliography must be posted before class so that it can be read and critiqued by a different student in class.

**Week 10: (April 3) – VARIETIES OF SOCIALISM: CUBA** (Tamara Lee)

**Resources:** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

**Post Due:** The eighth post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

**Class Activity:** How do the discussions of the last six classes (from disability to Cuban socialism) support or require revisions in the first draft of the "People's Social Charter" developed by the class on February 13?

**Week 11: (April 10) – NON-TRADITIONAL ORGANIZING IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY** (Adrienne Eaton)

**Resources:** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

**Post Due:** The ninth post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

**First Draft of Persuasive Speech/Essay Due:** The first draft of your final paper must be posted before class so that it can be read and critiqued by a different student in class.

**Week 12: (April 17) – WORKER OWNERSHIP & PROFIT SHARING** (Joseph Blasi)

**Resources:** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

**Post Due:** The tenth post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

**Class Activity:** What policies and programs would you include in a "People's Social Platform" intended to guide law and policy makers who want to encourage employers to create model employment regimes?

**Week 13: (April 24) – HIGH PERFORMANCE WORK ORGANIZATIONS**  
(Charles Heckscher)

**Resources:** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

**Post Due:** The eleventh post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

**Final Draft of Persuasive Speech/Essay Due:** The final draft of your final must be posted before class.

**Week 14 (May 1) – WORK & EMPLOYMENT HISTORY** (Michael Merrill)

**Resources:** The required readings for this session are posted on Sakai

**Post Due:** The twelfth post is due on Sakai by 6 PM on this date.

**Class Activity:** The class will discuss which policies and programs advocated by the class require changes in its draft "People's Social Charter" and "People's Social Platform"?

Revised: January 4, 2017