

INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY 37:575:100:01 Tentative - Subject to Change
Fall 2016



Classroom: Room 116, Tillett Hall (TIL), Livingston Campus, 53 Avenue E, Piscataway, NJ 08854
Course schedule: Monday and Thursday, 12:00 pm – 1:20 pm, September 8 – December 12, 2016
Final Exam: TBD

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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*, Third Edition. Sage 2016. The text is available at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore on

the College Avenue Campus. Note: The third edition contains updated chapters and information not in the second edition

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: 37:575:100:01 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 the 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 September 12 before our class meets on September 12, complete the reading for September 15 before our class meets on September 15, etc. **Bring the reading material to class with you** in case you need to refer to it (for instance, for an activity, quiz, or discussion). Check your Rutgers 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 us. Please note: Our 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 us 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 us 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, Twitter, etc. 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 instructors 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 https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2014/11/AI_Policy_2013.pdf

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more information on the Rutgers University Copyright Policy, see <http://policies.rutgers.edu/sites/policies/files/50.3.7-current.pdf>

Evaluation

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

- Family Interview Exercise (5%)
- Class preparation, homework, attendance, and participation (20%)
 - Attendance will be taken in class. Completion of homework and participation in group activities and discussions will be tracked.
- Written assignments (20%)
 - There are two written assignments for this class. The first is a short response paper based on your family interview exercise and the second is a final reflection paper on course themes. Each paper is worth 10% of your course grade.
- 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 individually and as a team on this exercise.
- Exams (45%)
 - There will be two in-class exams (a midterm and a final) that are predominantly “objective” – a combination of short-answer and short essay items. Both are closed book. The final exam will cover material after the midterm. The midterm exam is worth 20% of your course grade and the final exam is worth 25% of your course grade.

Learning Objectives

Students in this course should achieve the following SAS, SMLR, and LSER learning objectives:

SAS Core Curriculum - Social Analysis (SCL):

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

School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR):

- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation (Goal IV).
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance (Goal VI).

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department (LSER):

- Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations (Goal 1).
- Apply those concepts, and substantive institutional knowledge, to understanding contemporary developments related to work (Goal 2).

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.

September 8: 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 September 15.

September 12: Work and Our Lives

- Lecture and class discussion on the contours of work in the U.S.
- Assign discussion groups.

READING:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 1.

September 15: Family Histories

- Group discussions on your family interview assignments and how they relate to course themes.
- Family interview assignment due in class.

READINGS:

- Studs Terkel, “Introduction,” “Mike Lefevre: Steelworker,” and “Dolores Dante: Waitress” from *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (1972) and *Studs Terkel’s Working: A Graphic Adaptation*, adapted by Harvey Pekar and edited by Paul Buhle (2009) (Sakai).

September 19: Work in the “New Economy” part 1

- Film: *The Big One* (directed by Michael Moore, 1997).
- Hand out and discuss written assignment #1 (due in class October 6).

READING:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 2.

September 22: Work in the “New Economy” part 2

- Discussion of *The Big One*.

READING:

- Peter Capelli et al., “The Employment System that Died” and “How the World Began to Change,” from *Change at Work* (1997) (Sakai).

September 26: Social Class and Culture

- Lecture and class discussion on the theories, ideologies, structures, and experiences of class in New Jersey and the U.S.

READINGS:

- Janny Scott and David Leonhardt, "Shadowy Lines That Still Divide," *New York Times*, May 15, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/15/us/class/shadowy-lines-that-still-divide.html>
- Michael Yates, "The Injuries of Class," *Monthly Review*, January 2008: <http://monthlyreview.org/2008/01/01/the-injuries-of-class/>
- Kurt Loder, "The Rolling Stone Interview: Bruce Springsteen on 'Born in the U.S.A.,'" *Rolling Stone*, December 6, 1984: <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-rolling-stone-interview-bruce-springsteen-on-born-in-the-u-s-a-19841206>

September 29: Economic Inequality

- Group activity: what would ideal wealth distribution look like and why?
- Review of the causes and consequences of inequality.

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 3.
- Michael Zweig, "Looking at the Underclass," from *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret* (2000) (Sakai).

October 3: The Industrial Revolution and the Origins of the Labor Movement

- Film: *The Grand Army of Starvation* (directed by Stephen Brier, 1987).
- Group discussions: What has changed and what has remained similar about the politics of poverty and work between 1877 and today?

READING:

- William Brucher, "Labor Unions and Strikes" in *Conflicts in American History, Volume 6: The Roaring Twenties, Great Depression, and World War II, 1920-1945* (2010) (Sakai).

October 6: The New Deal and the Rise of the Labor Movement

- Lecture on the New Deal and the growth the labor movement in the 1930s and 1940s.
- Video excerpt from *Mean Things Happen*, part of *The Great Depression* PBS documentary series.
- Written assignment #1 due in class.

READINGS:

- Jack Metzgar, "Getting to 1959" from *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered* (2000) (Sakai).

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.

October 10: Employment Rights and Job Security in the United States part 1

- “Know Your Rights” – in class quiz and discussion.

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 4.

October 13: Employment Rights and Job Security in the United States part 2

- Lecture and discussion of major workplace labor laws and regulations, including the at-will doctrine and its exceptions, antidiscrimination, and wage and hour laws.
- Is it a violation? Group activity on the Fair Labor Standards Act.

READINGS:

- Excerpts from Lewis Maltby, “Wrongful Discharge and Employment at Will” and “The Rights You Have” from *Can They Do That?* (2009) (Sakai).
- Thomas MacMillan, “More Employees Sue Restaurants in Wage Disputes,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 17, 2015: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/more-employees-sue-restaurants-in-wage-disputes-1439856006>
- 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/>

October 17: Worker Safety and Health

- Film: *Can't Take No More* (produced by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 1980).
- Discussion of occupational safety and health.
- Midterm exam overview.

READINGS:

- Workers’ Memorial Day Interview with the Hoyt Family, New Jersey Work Environment Council, April 24, 2016: <http://www.njwec.org/PDF/Press/2016/InterviewHoytfamilytranscriptWEC.pdf>
- Sarah Maslin Nir, “The Price of Nice Nails,” *New York Times*, May 7, 2015: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/nyregion/at-nail-salons-in-nyc-manicurists-are-underpaid-and-unprotected.html>

October 20: MIDTERM EXAM (IN-CLASS)

October 24: Work, Race, Ethnicity, and Equality part 1

- Film: *At the River I Stand* (directed by David Appleby, Allison Graham, and Steven Ross, 1993).

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 7.

October 27: Work, Race, Ethnicity, and Equality part 2

- Discussion of historical and contemporary issues surrounding race and employment.

READINGS AND AUDIO STORY:

- Sonali Kolhatkar, “Black Lives Matter... and Black Jobs Matter, Too,” Common Dreams/Truth Dig, April 6, 2015: <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/04/17/black-lives-matter-and-black-jobs-matter-too>
- 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>

October 31: Gender and Work

- Presentation on the relationships between gender, working conditions, and employment opportunities.
- In-class discussion on “occupational ghettos,” “the glass ceiling,” and possible remedies.

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 5.
- Barbara Ehrenreich, “Selling in Minnesota” from *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (2000) (Sakai).

November 3: Work and Family

- Guest presentation on the movement for paid family leave by Yarrow Willman-Cole, Program Coordinator of the Working Families Program at the Center for Women and Work, Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations.

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 6.
- “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>

November 7: Immigration and Labor part 1

- Discussion of immigration and labor issues in the U.S.
- Film excerpts from *Bread and Roses* (directed by Ken Loach, 2000).

READINGS:

- 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)

November 10: Rutgers 250th Anniversary Event – Bhairavi Desai (OPTIONAL-Attend if you can!)

- Public presentation by guest speaker Bhairavi Desai, Executive Director of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, <http://www.nytw.org/>
- This event will be held from 1:40 to 3:00 pm, location TBA. Regular class from 12:00 to 1:20 pm will be cancelled.

READINGS:

- Robert Struckman, “Taxi! Taxi! Cabbies Form Unlikely Union,” AFL-CIO, <http://www.aflcio.org/Features/Innovators/Taxi!-Taxi!-Cabbies-Form-Unlikely-Union>

- Sarah Kessler, “Taxi and Uber Drivers, Once Mortal Enemies, Join Forces in New Labor Dispute,” *Fast Company*, February 19, 2016: <http://www.fastcompany.com/3056857/taxi-and-uber-drivers-once-mortal-enemies-join-forces-in-a-new-labor-dispute>

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.

November 14: Unions 101

- “Union knowledge” in class quiz and discussion.
- Presentation on the structure of the labor movement in the U.S. and New Jersey.

READINGS:

- “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 the National Labor Relations Act (Sakai).

November 17: Unions and Collective Bargaining

- 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:

- Michael Yates, “Collective Bargaining” in *Why Unions Matter* (1998) (Sakai).
- “Employer/Union Rights and Obligations,” National Labor Relations Board: <http://www.nlr.gov/rights-we-protect/employerunion-rights-and-obligations>

November 21: Collective Bargaining Simulation

- Bring first drafts of contract proposals to class.
- In-class preparation with your team: assign roles, revise, and finish contract proposals.
- Hand out and discuss written assignment #2 (due in class December 5).

TUESDAY November 22: Collective Bargaining Simulation continued (Note: Thursday classes meet today)

- Begin bargaining!

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24: THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 28: Collective Bargaining Simulation continued

- Continue bargaining and reach a final settlement with the other side... if possible!
- Hand-in contract language bargained in class and notes from bargaining.
- Complete online peer and self-assessment for collective bargaining exercise (due by December 1).

December 1: Organized Labor Today

- Guest presentation on union organizing and strikes by Joel Brooks, organizer for Health Professionals and Allied Employees (HPAE-AFT, AFL-CIO).
- Begin studying for final exam!

READINGS:

- Olivia Rosane, “Nursing Home Workers Strike Against Givebacks,” *Labor Notes*, July 16, 2012: <http://www.labornotes.org/blogs/2012/07/seiu-1199-nursing-home-workers-strike-against-givebacks>
- Adolph Reed, “Doubling Down in Atlantic City,” *Jacobin*, August 11, 2016: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/08/atlantic-city-trump-icahn-union-strike-bankruptcy/>

December 5: Organized Labor Tomorrow

- Written assignment #2 due in class.
- Discussion of “Union avoidance” strategies by employers and counter-measures by unions.
- Online peer and self review for collective bargaining exercise due.

READING:

- Harold Meyerson, “If Labor Dies, What Next?,” *The American Prospect*, September 13, 2012: <http://prospect.org/article/if-labor-dies-whats-next>

December 8: 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.
- Continue studying for final exam!

READINGS:

- Sweet and Meiksins, chapter 8
- 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/2012/0912blaskeygasper.html>

December 12: Final Exam Review

- Overview of major course themes and review of final exam topics.
- Continue studying for final exam!

FINAL EXAM – DATE AND TIME TBD