Course Overview: The current crisis of the public sector workplace—centered in part on such issues as pension defunding, contract impasses, school reform, civil service and debates over unionization, privatization and taxation—is at the heart of our national political discussion. This class will provide an introduction to some of these important issues, place the contemporary debates in a historical, cultural and sociological perspective, and define the trends in recent scholarship. While the clash over government services and the work structures that provide them seems new, the origins of this debate have deep roots in U.S. political theory and history. We will explore these matters in depth and examine how contemporary scholars in management and industrial relations have contextualized this dynamic.

Course Guidelines:

Class attendance: As a graduate-level course that meets in seminar once a week, your attendance is critical. You are expected to attend each class session, and to be on time. Please be punctual and plan to stay for the entire class. If you are unable to make it to class, or need to leave early, please let me know ahead of time.

Participation: This class will utilize a variety of formats. Each week, I will provide an overview of the topic in the first half of the class, and invite open dialogue during this process. After the break period, the class will engage in discussion of the assigned readings for the week. Of course, 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. Please keep notes of you readings and class discussions. I ask that you do not use any recording devices in this class.

Public sector media presentations: Public sector matters and events are widely covered in the media, and this seminar will address current issues that develop during the course of the semester. To help facilitate this, and to encourage your involvement in shaping the topics the class will address, each student will present a brief overview of a news item encountered on the internet, newspaper, television story, blog or other media source. Further information will be provided in class.
**Missed Exams:** All students are expected to take the scheduled in-class exams (midterm and final) at the designated times.

**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.

**Sakai:** This course uses the web-based classroom management system. Please utilize Sakai to access each week’s readings. Other readings as specified can be downloaded via the Rutgers Library Journal website, or public access on line.

Several texts provide the foundation for this class and you are responsible for procuring individual copies of these books.

**Grading:**

- In class mid-term exam: 20%
- Participation: 20%
- In class final: 20%
- Final paper: 25%
- Class Presentation: 15%

Separate handouts will explain the expectations for the final paper.

Please note that this syllabus may change during the course of the semester. Additional in-class readings will be handed out from time to time as related to developments in the issues we are exploring from week to week during the semester.

**Sept 7: Introduction and Overview of the Course.**


Mardee Handler, “Public Sector Employment: 5 Common Misconceptions,” from *Careers in Government* website.
Discussion Theme: Cultural perceptions of government sector employment.

**Sept 14: Public Workers in Historical Perspective: Civil Service, the Spoils System and the Political Economy of Service**

**Readings:**
- Excerpt from J.T. Salter, *Boss Rule* (1935)

**Sept 21: Government Sector Employment: Conflicting Viewpoints**

**Readings:**
- Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 1-86.
- Milton Friedman, “Why Government is the Problem.” (Hoover Institute, 1993)

**Sept 28: Public Sector Employee Issues and the Law**

**Readings:**
Oct 5: Collective Bargaining and Arbitration in the Public Sector


Harvey, Brief History of Neoliberalism, 152-206.

Oct 12: In Class Midterm Exam.


In class exercise: Postal Reform Debate—Popular Perception and Scholarship.

Presentation by Julie A. Peters, Director, James B. Carey Library.

Oct 26: Public Sector Unions and the Fiscal Crisis

Readings: Jeff Keefe, Research on public vs. private sector pay differentials in New Jersey.


Film: We Are Wisconsin (2012)

Nov 2: Police Officers and Public Service in the 2010s


See Sakai for additional postings.
In class presentation: “Angels at the Intersections:” The Crossing Guard in the American Imagination

Nov 9: The Public Sector Pension Crisis

Readings: Katie Benner, “The Public Pension Bomb,” in Fortune May 12 2009

Selections, Roger Lowenstein, While America Aged (2008)


Nov 16: Tenure, Teacher Militancy and Education Issues

Readings: Stephen Sawchuk “States strive to overhaul teacher tenure,” Education Week, April 7, 2010.


In Class Discussion: Blackboard Unionism: History and Debate

Nov 21: Charter Schools and Public Finance

Film: Waiting for Superman

In Class Readings: Selected critical responses to Waiting for Superman.

Nov 30: Taxation and the Challenge of Regionalism


Dec 7: Final exam in class