

**Public Sector Employment Issues: 38:578:525:01**  
**Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations**  
**Fall 2017**

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Classroom: Labor Education Center 130-131  
Meeting time: Thursday 4:30-7:10

**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.**

In Class Reading: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, (1835) "Public Officers Under the Control of the Democracy in America," 167-173.

Sasha Volokh, "Are public-sector employees overpaid?," *Washington Post*, February 7, 2014

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: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, "Biography of an Ideal: A History of the Federal Civil Service, 2003 pp. 174-205  
<http://www.opm.gov/biographyofanideal/docs/TextOnlyVersion.pdf>

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

F. Ryan, *AFSCME's Philadelphia Story: Municipal Workers and Urban Power in the Twentieth Century* (Temple University Press, 2011) "Ward Politics and Municipal Labor in Philadelphia in the 1920s."

Vincenzo Caponi, "The Effects of Public Sector Employment on the Economy," *IZA World of Labor* (January 2017): 1-9

Jennifer Laird "Public Sector Employment Inequality in the United States and the Great Recession," *Demography* (2017) 54: 391-411.

Gregory B. Lewis and Sue A. Frank, "Who Wants to Work for the Government?" *Public Administration Review* July/August 2002 62:4

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

Readings: Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 1-86.

F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) "Individualism and Collectivism."

Milton Friedman, "Why Government is the Problem." (Hoover Institute, 1993)

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

Readings: Richard C. Kearney, *Labor Relations in the Public Sector* (New York: CRC Press, 2009): 47-80.

Joseph McCartin, "A Wagner Act for Public Employees Labor's Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism," *Journal of American History* 95:1 (June 2008): 123-148.

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

Readings: Kearney, "The Process and Politics of Public Sector Collective Bargaining," in *Labor Relations in the Public Sector*, pp 114-142.

Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 152-206.

## **Oct 12: In Class Midterm Exam.**

## **Oct 19: The Crisis in Federal Service: Contract Administration, Personnel Practices and the Merit System**

Readings: Peter B. Doehringer, Audrey Watson, Linda Kaboolian and Michael Watkins, "Beyond the Merit Model: New Directions in the Federal Workplace?" in *Public Sector Employment in a Time of Transition*, Industrial Relations Research Association Series, pp 163-199.

Jonathan Franzen, "Lost in the Mail," from *How To Be Alone: Essays* (2003)

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.

Ellen Dannin, "Cash Strapped Governments: Privatization as a Response to the Crisis of the Great Recession," and Mildred E. Warner, "Local Government Restructuring in a Time of Fiscal Stress," *Public Jobs and Political Agendas: the Public Sector in an Era of Economic Stress*, edited by Daniel J.B. Mitchell

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

Film: *We Are Wisconsin* (2012)

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

Readings: Eugene A. Paoline III, "Taking Stock: Toward a Richer Understanding of Police Culture," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 31 (2003): 199-214.

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)

Monica Davey and Mary Williams Walsh, "Billions in Debt, Detroit Tumbles into Insolvency," *New York Times* July 18, 2013.

Michelle Varnhagen, "U.S. Federal Pension Policy: Its Potential and Pitfalls," *Employee Pensions: Policies, Problems and Possibilities*, eds. Teresa Ghilarducci and Christian E. Weller, (Urbana, LERA, 2007): 163-185.

### **Nov 16: Tenure, Teacher Militancy and Education Issues**

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

Nicolaus Mills, "The Corporatization of Higher Education" *Dissent* (Fall 2012): 6-9;  
Aaron Bady and Mike Konczal, "From Master Plan to No Plan: the Slow Death of Public Higher Education, 10-16.

John Shelton, "Against the Public: The Pittsburgh Teachers Strike of 1975-1976 and the Crisis of the Labor Liberal Coalition," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 2013 10:2 (2013): 55-75

Tom Alter, "'It Felt Like Community: Social Movement Unionism and the Chicago Teachers Union Strike of 2012," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 10:3 (2013): 11-25.

Rebecca Givan "Why Teachers Make Such Useful Scapegoats," *New Labor Forum* (February 2014): 68-75

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**

Readings: Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf and Todd Swanson, *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-First Century* (2001).

David Swindell and Mark S. Rosentraub, "Who Benefits from the Presence of Professional Sports Teams? The Implications for Public Funding for Stadiums and Arenas," *Public Administration Review* 58:1 (January-February 1998): 11-20.

**Dec 7: Final exam in class**

