

GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS TODAY

Labor Studies and Employment Relations 38:578:562:90
Fall 2026, asynchronous online

SYLLABUS

Class Meetings:

No regular synchronous meetings

- Weekly interactions via Canvas
- Office hours as synchronous option

Instructor:

Prof. Tobias Schulze-Cleven, PhD

Janice Levin Building, Room 226

Email: tobias.schulzecleven@rutgers.edu

Phone: 848-932-1740

Course Overview:

This course introduces you to the comparative analysis of shifting employment relations around the world. Not only will you learn about different countries and continents, the course will also acquaint you with theories and concepts that help you better understand how the regulation of work has evolved. We will pay particular attention to the role of institutions in mediating diverging interests at the workplace and channeling the universal politics of work into unique patterns. This focus includes reflections on how labor relations actors can engage with institutions in multiple ways. By taking the class, students will gain a better appreciation of global differences and commonalities in employers' strategies for human resource management, workers' modes of collective organization, and the approaches used by state authorities to regulate labor markets.

SMLR Learning Objectives:

- V. Understanding Context: Evaluate the context of workplace issues, public policies, and management decisions.

Instructor's Learning Objectives:

After taking the course, the student will be able to:

- Explain and distinguish different theories and their core concepts in the field of global employment relations today.
- Apply these theories to contemporary employment relations around the world and match conceptual tools to specific analytical purposes.
- Compare and contrast employment relations systems in a variety of countries and discuss transnational trends.
- Use knowledge about theoretical approaches and empirical developments to make arguments for/against particular policies.

Course Requirements (details at the end of the syllabus):

This is a graduate-level course, and there will be a focus on reading, reflection and discussion. Throughout the different modules, there will be plenty of opportunity for you to share the outcome of your own engagement with the material and learn through interaction.

Your grade in this class will be made up of the following components:

Pass/Fail Discussion Forum Entries (modules 1, 2, 3, 13)	20%
Graded Discussion Forum Entries (modules 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12)	40%
Group Project (modules 6 and 7)	20%
Final Essay (module 14)	20%

COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE

SECTION 1

Introduction

The first section introduces students to the globally comparative analysis of employment relations. We begin in the first module with exploring basic features of the employment relationship. Module 2 probes the purpose of cross-national comparison and gives you an initial taste for the power of that approach by turning to employment relations in neighboring Canada, which we will compare with those in the United States. The third module deepens our conceptual repertoire, introducing three distinct frameworks for analyzing “national industrial relations system.”

Module 1 (Sep 1 – 6): Welcome and Agenda for the Course

Colling, Trevor and Michael Terry. 2010. “Work, the Employment Relationship and the Field of Industrial Relations.” In Trevor Colling and Michael Terry, eds. *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice*. Chichester: Wiley, 3-25.

De Stefano, Valerio. 2026. “Silicon Valley’s Anti-Democratic Turn Begins at Work.” *Social Europe*, April 16.

Supplemental:

Josh Bivens and Ben Zipperer. 2024. “Unbalanced Labor Market Power Is What Makes Technology – Including AI – Threatening to Workers,” Economic Policy Institute, March 28

Gilman, Nils. 2026. “The University After AI.” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 31.

McIvor, Méadhbh. 2026. “My Students Weren’t Human. They Were Ghosts.” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 3.

Manturuk, Kim. 2026. “The Best Defense Against AI Cheating... Is a Class Worth Taking.” *Inside Higher Ed*, April 13.

Module 2 (Sep 7 – 13): Comparisons, including with Canada

Eidlin, Barry. 2015. “Class vs. Special Interest: Labor, Power, and Politics in the U.S. and Canada in the Twentieth Century.” *Politics & Society* 43(2): 181-211.

Simmons, Erica S. and Nicholas Rush Smith. 2021. “Rethinking Comparison: An Introduction.” In Erica S. Simmons and Nicholas Rush Smith, eds. *Rethinking Comparison: Innovative Methods for Qualitative Political Inquiry*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1-27.

Supplemental:

Taras, Daphne G. and Scott Walsworth. 2020. “Employment Relations in Canada.” In Greg J. Bamber, Russell Lansbury, Nick Wailes and Chris F. Wright, eds. *International & Comparative Employment Relations: Globalization and Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 75-105.

Card, David and Richard Freeman. 1994. “Small Differences that Matter: Canada vs. the United States.” In Richard Freeman, ed. *Working under Different Rules*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 189-222.

Katz, Harry C and Alexander J. S. Colvin. 2020. “Employment Relations in the United States.” In Greg J. Bamber, Russell Lansbury, Nick Wailes and Chris F. Wright, eds. *International & Comparative Employment Relations: Globalization and Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 49-74.

Schaffer, Frederic Charles. 2021. “Two Ways to Compare.” In Erica S. Simmons and Nicholas Rush Smith, eds. *Rethinking Comparison: Innovative Methods for Qualitative Political Inquiry*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 47-63.

Module 3 (Sep 14 – 20): Three Frameworks for Comparative Analysis

Katz, Harry C., Thomas A. Kochan and Alexander J. S. Colvin. 2015. “A Framework for Analyzing Labor Relations.” In Harry C. Katz, Thomas A. Kochan and Alexander J. S. Colvin. *Labor Relations in a Globalizing World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 3-26. [IR]

Martin, Cathie Jo. 2014. “Getting Down to Business: Varieties of Capitalism and Employment Relations.” In Adrian Wilkinson, Geoffrey Wood and Richard Deeg, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Employment Relations: Comparative Employment Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 65-85. [VoC]

Arnholtz, Jens and Bjarke Refslund. 2024 “Power Resource Theory for Contemporary Society: A Research Framework.” In Jens Arnholtz and Bjarke Refslund, eds. *Workers*,

Power and Society: Power Resource Theory in Contemporary Capitalism. London: Routledge, 1-31. [LPR]

Supplemental:

IR Approach:

- Dunlop, John T. 1958. “An Industrial Relations System.” In *Industrial Relations Systems*. New York. Henry Holt, 43-62.
- Kochan, Thomas A., Harry C. Katz, and Robert B. McKersie. 1994 [1986]. “A Strategic Choice Perspective on Industrial Relations.” In *The Transformation of American Industrial Relations*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 3-20.

VoC Approach:

- Hall, Peter A., and David Soskice. 2001. “An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism.” In Peter A. Hall and David Soskice, eds. *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1–70.

LPR Approach:

- Schmalz, Stefan, Carmen Ludwig and Edward Webster. 2018. “The Power Resources Approach: Developments and Challenges.” *Global Labour Journal* 9(2): 113-134.
- Schulze-Cleven, Tobias. 2017. “Collective Action and Globalization: Building and Mobilizing Labour Power.” *Journal of Industrial Relations* 59(4): 397–419.

SECTION 2 Evolving National Employment Systems

The second section broadens the empirical lens to national industrial relations systems in Europe. Modules 4 and 5 focus on Germany and Denmark respectively, coordinated market economies with differential labor power resources. Module 6 examines how the continent’s national systems have evolved under the influence of neoliberalism and European integration. The module will also compare these developments with those in the United States, in turn producing an initial picture of evolving labor relations across the wealthy democracies.

Empirically, class discussions will highlight such features as patterns of wage-formation, linkages between national-level regulations and firm-level practices in labor management, as well as social cleavages in countries’ labor movement. Together, the four modules of section 2 will introduce students to important cross-national trends. A group project in modules 6 and 7 allows you to show what you have learned in the first half of the course.

Module 4 (Sep 21 – 27): Employment Relations in Germany

Keller, Berndt K. and Anja Kirsch. 2020. “Employment Relations in Germany.” In Greg J. Bamber, Russell D. Lansbury, Nick Wailes and Chris F. Wright, eds. *International &*

Comparative Employment Relations: National Regulation, Global Changes. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 179-207.

Schulze-Cleven, Tobias. 2017. "German Labor Relations in International Perspective: A Model Reconsidered." *German Politics & Society* 35(4): 46-76.

Reisenbichler, Alexander and Kimberly J. Morgan. 2012. "From 'Sick Man' to 'Miracle': Explaining the Robustness of the German Labor Market During and After the Financial Crisis 2008-09." *Politics & Society* 40(4): 549-579.

Supplemental:

Rothstein, Sidney A. 2018. "Unlikely Activists: Building Worker Power Under Liberalization." *Socio-Economic Review* 17(3): 573-602.

Rothstein, Sidney A. and Tobias Schulze-Cleven. 2020. "Germany After the Social Democratic Century: The Political Economy of Imbalance." *German Politics* 29(3): 297–318.

Diessner, Sebastian, Niccolo Durazzi and David Hope. 2022. "Skill-Biased Liberalization: Germany's Transition to the Knowledge Economy." *Political & Society* 50(1): 117-155.

Module 5 (Sep 28 – Oct 4): Employment Relations in Denmark

Alderman, Liz and Steven Greenhouse. 2014. "Living Wages, Rarity for U.S. Fast-Food Workers, Served Up in Denmark." *New York Times*, October 27.

Daemmrigh, Arthur and Thomas Bredgaard. 2012. "The Welfare State as an Investment Strategy: Denmark's Flexicurity Policies." In Ashok Bardhan, Cynthia A. Kroll and Dwight M. Jaffee, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Offshoring and Global Employment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 159-179.

Madsen, Jørgen Steen, Jesper Due and Søren Kaj Andersen. 2020. "Employment Relations in Denmark." In Greg J. Bamber, Russell D. Lansbury, Nick Wailes and Chris F. Wright, eds. *International & Comparative Employment Relations: National Regulation, Global Changes*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 208-236.

Supplemental:

Ibsen, Christian Lyhne, and Kathleen Thelen. 2017. "Diverging Solidarity: Labor Strategies in the New Knowledge Economy." *World Politics* 69(3): 409–47.

Ibsen, Christian Lyhne. 2025. "Denmark – Innovative Organising Strategies for Engaging Employers and Young People." In Kurt Vandaele and Bianca Luna Fabris, eds. *When Trade*

Unions Learn to Innovate: Case Study Evidence from Across Europe. Brussels: ETUI, 131-147.

Module 6 (Oct 5 – 11): Comparing National Trajectories

Baccaro, Lucio and Chris Howell. 2011. “A Common Neoliberal Trajectory: The Transformation of Industrial Relations in Advanced Capitalism.” *Politics & Society*, 39(4): 521-563.

Hassel, Anke, Jette Steen Knudsen and Bettina Wagner. 2016. “Winning the Battle or Losing the War: The Impact of European Integration on Labour Market Institutions in Germany and Denmark.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 23(8): 1218-1239.

Thelen, Kathleen. 2019. “The American Precariat: U.S. Capitalism in Comparative Perspective.” *Perspectives on Politics* 17(1): 5–27.

Supplemental:

Schulze-Cleven, Tobias and J. Timo Weishaupt. 2015. “Playing Normative Legacies: Partisanship and Employment Policies in Crisis-Ridden Europe.” *Politics & Society* 43(2): 269–299.

Ornston, Darius and Tobias Schulze-Cleven. 2015. “Conceptualizing Cooperation: Coordination and Concertation as Two Logics of Collective Action.” *Comparative Political Studies* 48(5): 555–585.

Diessner, Sebastian, Niccolo Durazzi, Federico Filetti, David Hope, Hanna Kleider and Simone Tonelli. 2025. “The Transition to the Knowledge Economy in Advanced Capitalist Democracies: A new Index for Comparative Research.” *Socio-Economic Review* 23(4): 2223-2252.

Schulze-Cleven, Tobias. 2018. “A Continent in Crisis: European Labor and the Fate of Social Democracy.” *Labor Studies Journal* 43(1): 46–73.

Module 7 (Oct 12 – 18): Review and Consolidation

SECTION 3 Shifting Actor Strategies

The third section delves more deeply into the shifting strategies by employers, unions and public authorities. These explorations build on past weeks by deepening our discussions on the countries we have focused on. Simultaneously, they broaden both the empirical and theoretical scopes of analysis.

Module 8 (Oct 19 – 25): Shifting Business/Employer Strategies

Lazonick, William. 2016. “Stock Buybacks and Executive Pay.” Video (21:37 min.)

Appelbaum, Eileen, Rose Batt and Ian Clark. 2013. “Implications of Financial Capitalism for Employment Relations Research: Evidence from Breach of Trust and Implicit Contracts in Private Equity Buyouts.” *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 51(3): 498-518.

Kuruvilla, Sarosh and Ernesto Noronha. 2016. “From Pyramids to Diamonds: Legal Process Offshoring, Employment Systems, and Labor Markets for Lawyers in the United States and India.” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 69(2): 354-377.

Supplemental:

Reddy, Niall. 2025. “‘Downsize and Distribute’ or ‘Merge and Monopolize’: A Critique of Corporate Financialization Theories.” *Review of International Political Economy* 32(6): 2147-2182.

Arun, Advait. 2026. “The SpaceX Sham.” *Dissent*, August 11.

Rose, Steve. 2026. “‘If we don’t fight back, we don’t have a future’: The journalist taking on the ‘tech fascists’ of Silicon Valley.” *Guardian*, August 5.

Tan, JS and Kathleen Thelen. 2025. “Cloud Capitalism and the AI Transition.” *Politics & Society*, online first.

Rahman, K. Sabeel, and Kathleen Thelen. 2019. “The Rise of the Platform Business Model and the Transformation of Twenty-First-Century Capitalism.” *Politics & Society* 47(2): 177–204.

Jackson, Jason. 2025. “Introduction.” In *Traders, Speculators, and Captains of Industry: How Capitalist Legitimacy Shaped Foreign Investment Policy in India*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1-15.

Module 9 (Oct 26 – Nov 1): Shifting Worker/Union Strategies

Hassel, Anke. 2015. "Trade Unions and the Future of Democratic Capitalism." In Pablo Beramendi, Silja Häuserman, Herbert Kitschelt and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds. *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 231-256.

Benassi, Chiara and Lisa Dorigatti. 2015. "Straight to the Core – Explaining Union Responses to the Casualization of Work: The IG Metall Campaign for Agency Workers." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 43(3): 533-555.

Doellgast, Virginia and Ines Wagner. 2022. "Collective Regulation and the Future of Work in the Digital Economy: Insights from Comparative Employment Relations." *Journal of Industrial Relations* 64(3): 438-460.

Supplemental:

Hyman, Richard and Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick. 2020. "Collective Representation at Work: Institutions and Dynamics." In Carola M. Frege and John E. Kelly, eds. *Comparative Employment Relations in the Global Economy*. London: Routledge, 282-313 (chapter 11).

Sneiderman, Marilyn and Secky Fascione. 2017. "Going on Offense during Challenging Times." *New Labor Forum*, online first.

Module 10 (Nov 2 – 8): Shifting State Strategies

Howell, Chris. 2016. "Regulating Class in the Neoliberal Era: The Role of the State in the Restructuring of Work and Employment Relations." *Work, Employment and Society* 30(4): 573-589.

Mabbett, Deborah. 2016. "The Minimum Wage in Germany: What Brought the State In?" *Journal of European Public Policy* 23(8): 1240-1258.

Agarwala, Rina. 2022. "Introduction." In Rina Agarwala. *The Migration-Development Regime: How Class Shapes Indian Emigration*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1-22.

Supplemental:

Marginson, Paul. 2020. "Regional Regulation: The European Union." In Carola M. Frege and John E. Kelly, eds. *Comparative Employment Relations in the Global Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 314-339 (chapter 12).

Arnholtz, Jens and Søren Kaj Andersen. 2017. "Extra-Institutional Changes under Pressure from Posting." *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, online first.

SECTION 4

Global Frontiers of Change

The fourth section adopts a global lens, expanding to both national-level developments in the two largest economies in the Global South and to transnational processes in global supply chains. A module each focuses on migration and authoritarianism in China (module 11), collective action by informal workers in India (module 12), and global labor governance (module 13). A final essay (module 14) allows you to show what you have learned in the second half of the course.

Module 11 (Nov 9 – 15): Migration and Authoritarianism in China

Gao, Helen. 2025. “The China That the World Sees Is Not the One I Live In.” *New York Times*, November 13.

Gao, Helen. 2018. “The Price of China’s Haphazard Urbanization.” *New York Times*, January 16.

Thomlinson, Harvey. 2018. “China’s Communist Party Is Abandoning Workers.” *New York Times*, April 2.

New York Times. 2013. “In China, a Staggering Migration.” Video. (2:24 min.)

Gallagher, Mary. 2017. “Authoritarian Legality at Work: The Workplace and China’s Urbanization.” In *Authoritarian Legality in China: Law, Workers, and the State*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1-20.

Supplemental:

Chan, Anita. 2017. “Migrant Workers’ Fight for Rights in China.” *Current History* 115(782): 209-213.

Wang, Dang and Arthur Kroeber. 2025. “The Real China Model: Beijing’s Enduring Formula for Wealth and Power.” *Foreign Affairs*, Sep/Oct.

Liu, Mingwei. 2020. “China.” In Carola M. Frege and John E. Kelly, eds. *Comparative Employment Relations in the Global Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 611-648 (chapter 23).

Module 12 (Nov 16 – 22): Collective Action of Informal Workers in India

Agarwala, Rina. 2008. “Reshaping the Social Contract: Emerging Relations between the State and Informal Labor in India.” *Theory & Society* 37(4): 375-408.

Cobble, Dorothy Sue. 2016. "Worker Mutualism in an Age of Entrepreneurial Capitalism." *Labour & Industry* 26(3): 179-189.

Supplemental:

Badigannavar, Vidu and Dona Ghosh. 2020. "India." In Carola M. Frege and John E. Kelly, eds. *Comparative Employment Relations in the Global Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 585-610 (chapter 22).

Choudhury, Kushanava. "The Kerala Consensus." *Dissent*, Winter 2026.

The Brian Lehrer Show. 2018. "How 'Informal Workers' Organize Globally." *WNYC*, April 12.

Module 13 (Nov 23 – Dec 6): Global Labor Governance (including Thanksgiving Break)

Hassel, Anke. 2008. "The Evolution of a Global Labor Governance Regime." *Governance* 21(2): 231-251.

Donaghey, Jimmy and Juliane Reinecke. 2018. "When Industrial Democracy Meets Corporate Social Responsibility – A Comparison of the Bangladesh Accord and Alliance as Responses to the Rana Plaza Disaster." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 56(1): 14-42.

Rianfrancos, Thea. 2021. "From Cases to Sites: Studying Global Processes in Comparative Politics." In Erica S. Simmons and Nicholas Rush Smith, eds. *Rethinking Comparison: Innovative Methods for Qualitative Political Inquiry*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 107-125.

Supplemental:

Fichter, Michael. 2020. "International Regulation: Standards and Voluntary Practices." In Carola M. Frege and John E. Kelly, eds. *Comparative Employment Relations in the Global Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 340-369 (chapter 13).

Baccaro, Lucio, and Valentina Mele. 2012. "Pathology of Path Dependency? The ILO and the Challenge of New Governance." *Industrial & Labor Relations Review* 65(2): 195-224.

Module 14 (Dec 7 – 17): Final Essay

Appendix: Further Information on Course Assignments & Class Rules

NO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON ASSIGNMENTS

Generative artificial intelligence (or better modern large language models, LLMs) have entered our world, becoming embedded in many of our daily activities. To be sure, they come with many benefits, including for learning through such tools as AI tutors. But all too heavy and “automatic” reliance on them can seriously undercut learning, and they pose fundamental challenges for an online asynchronous class such as this. How to deal with that challenge when avoiding them altogether can now seem inconvenient or even difficult?

Let’s be intentional in focusing on “old-school” ways of learning and engendering connection with our classmates. The instructor asks you to consciously forego the usage of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in this class. Struggling with understanding difficult texts, structuring materials you want to present, and (re-)drafting are all important steps in learning that should not be outsourced. While background use of AI aimed at the comprehension of material is tolerated, you are required to abstain from using AI assistance in your assignments and assessments. The focus in this class is on developing and demonstrating your core skills and knowledge. You are expected to generate and submit original, personally composed material for each assignment.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

While I encourage students to work together to understand theories and concepts, all written work must be your own. If you cite an author or use his/her ideas, please cite properly. Plagiarized assignments or evidence of cheating will result in a failing grade in the assignment and possibly in the course. Moreover, plagiarism may result in disciplinary action by the university.

COMMUNICATION

Students are expected to check their Rutgers email accounts regularly for class announcements. Students are responsible for all information communicated to them via email by the instructor. Feel free to contact the instructor via email with questions or concerns about the course. I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours. When emailing the instructor, always include “Global Employment Relations Today” in the subject line of your email.

INTELLECUAL PROPERTY

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university’s [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

As the instructor for this course, I have the responsibility to protect students' right to privacy. Classroom recordings of students will therefore be treated as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the U.S. federal law that governs access to educational information and records. Instructors and students must provide notification if any part of the course are to be recorded, and such recordings cannot be circulated outside the course.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation.

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Helpdesk: Rutgers Office of Information and Technology

Email: <https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support>

Call: 833-OIT-HELP

LIBRARY RESOURCES

SMLR's James B. Carey Library is a great resource when researching your assignments, learning how to cite your sources, and generally using information to achieve your goals. Feel free to reach out to Library Director Julie Peters (jpeters@smlr.rutgers.edu) with any questions you may have or visit: <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/about-smlr/carey-library>.