

**INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS**  
**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY 37:575:100:02 Tentative - Subject to Change**  
**Fall 2017**



**Classroom:** Room 003, Janice H. Levin Building (JLB), Livingston Campus, 94 Rockefeller Road, Piscataway, NJ 08854

**Course schedule:** Tuesdays, 10:20 am – 1:20 pm, September 5 – December 12, 2017

**Final Exam:** TBD

**Instructor:**

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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 study the changing nature of work due to technological change, the economic cycle, social class, immigration, race, ethnicity and gender. We will also study the past and present of unions and the role collective bargaining plays in addressing labor 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.

**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).

### **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 Week 2 before our class meets on September 12, complete the reading for Week 3 before our class meets on September 19, 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. Your grade for attendance and participation will decline each time you are absent, late, or leave early. If you have a legitimate reason for your absence, lateness or need to leave early, it must be provided in writing in advance or immediately after the occurrence. All absences must be reported via the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>. Not all absences will be excused.
4. **Participate in discussions and group activities.** Students will be divided into groups for breakout sessions and projects. 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.
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. Use of phones is prohibited during class. Computers may only be used for note-taking or other designated in-class activities.
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: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

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**7. Required Readings:** The textbook is available at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore on the College Avenue Campus:

Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*, Third Edition. Sage 2016.

Note: The third edition contains updated chapters and information that are not in the second edition.

All other readings 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: 37:575:100:02 and then click on Resources on the menu on the left side of the page.

## **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) consisting of true/false, multiple choice, and short essay questions. Both are closed book. The midterm exam is worth 20% of your course grade and the final exam is worth 25% of your course grade.

**The syllabus, schedule, and assignments are subject to change as the course evolves.**

## **Weekly Class Schedule**

### **Unit I: The Situations Facing Working People**

#### **Week 1, September 5: Introduction and Course Requirements**

- Review syllabus and discuss course expectations, assignments, and goals.
- 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 Week 2.

#### **Week 2, September 12: Work and Our Lives**

- Lecture and class discussion on the contours of work in the U.S.
- Group discussions on your family interview assignments and how they relate to course themes.
- Family interview assignment due in class.

#### **READINGS:**

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

#### **Week 3, September 19: Class Politics in the United States**

- Presentation and discussion: Bruce Springsteen: Finding the New Jersey Experience in Working Class Culture.

- Hand out and discuss written assignment #1 (due in class Week 5, October 3).

**READINGS:**

- Michael Zweig, “The Class Structure of the United States,” *The Working Class Majority: America’s Best Kept Secret* (2000) (Sakai).
- 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>
- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 2

**Week 4, September 26: Income and Social Mobility**

- Lecture, discussion, and group activities on economic inequality and its effects on social mobility.

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 3
- Heather Boushey and Shawn Fremstad, “The Wages of Exclusion: Low-Wage Work and Inequality,” *New Labor Forum* 17 (2) 9-19 (Sakai).
- Michael Zweig, “Looking at the Underclass,” *The Working Class Majority: America’s Best Kept Secret* (2000) (Sakai).

**Week 5, October 3: Power Dynamics and the New Economy**

- Film and group discussion: *The Big One* (1997, dir. Michael Moore)
- Writing assignment #1 due in class
- Overview of midterm (Week 6, October 10)

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapter 4
- Peter Cappelli et al., “The Employment System that Died” and “How the World Began to Change,” *Change at Work* (1997) (Sakai)
- Chris Brooks, “New Economy, Old Organizing: An Interview with Kim Moody,” <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/08/freelancer-gig-economy-logistics-manufacturing-unions>

**Week 6, October 10: MIDTERM EXAM (IN-CLASS)**

**Unit II: Employment Rights, Diversity, and Work**

**Week 7, October 17: Employment Rights and Job Security in the United States**

- “Know Your Rights” – in class quiz and discussion of major workplace labor laws and regulations.
- 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).
- David Weil, “Lots of Employees Get Misclassified as Contractors. Here’s Why It Matters,” *Harvard Business Review*, July 5, 2017 (Sakai)
- 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/>

**Week 8, October 24: Gender, Work, and Family**

- Lecture and discussion on the relationships between gender, working conditions, and employment opportunities.
- Guest presentation on the movement for paid family leave by Yarrow Willman-Cole, Program Coordinator of the Working Families Program at the Rutgers Center for Women and Work.

**READINGS:**

- Sweet and Meiksins, *Changing Contours of Work*, chapters 5 and 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>

**Week 9, October 31: Work, Race, Ethnicity, and Equality**

- Film: *At the River I Stand* (directed by David Appleby, Allison Graham, and Steven Ross, 1993).
- Discussion of historical and contemporary issues surrounding race and employment.

**READINGS:**

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

**Week 10, November 7: Immigration and Labor**

- Discussion of immigration and labor issues in the U.S.
- Film excerpts from *Bread and Roses* (directed by Ken Loach, 2000).
- Hand out and discuss written assignment #2 (due in class Week 13, April 19).

**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)

**Unit III: Improving Working People’s Lives: Collective Bargaining, New Forms of Organizing and Activism, and the Future of Work**

**Week 11, November 14: Unions and Collective Bargaining**

- “Union knowledge” in class quiz and discussion on unions and collective bargaining.
- Presentation on the structure of the labor movement in the U.S. and New Jersey.
- Hand out Collective Bargaining simulation assignment guideline and assign bargaining teams.
- In-class preparation with your team: assign roles and begin contract proposals.
- Write first drafts of contract language proposals individually outside of class.

**READINGS:**

- “The Union Difference,” AFL-CIO website: <http://www.aflcio.org/Learn-About-Unions/What-Unions-Do/The-Union-Difference>
- “Union Members – 2016,” Bureau of Labor Statistics website: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>
- Excerpts from the National Labor Relations Act (Sakai).

**No Class on Tuesday, November 21 (Thursday classes meet on Tuesday because of Thanksgiving)**

**Week 12, November 28: Collective Bargaining Simulation**

- Begin 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, self, and team assessment for collective bargaining exercise, due Week 13. Reminder: written assignment #2 due Week 13 also!

**Week 13, December 5: Organized Labor Today and Tomorrow**

- Presentation and discussion on union organizing and activism.
- Online peer, self, and team assessment for collective bargaining exercise due.
- Written assignment #2 due.

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

**Week 14, December 12: 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.
- Study 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>

**FINAL EXAM – DATE AND TIME TBD**