

Introduction to Labor Studies and Employment Relations
Rutgers University, School of Management and Labor Relations
37:575:100:03: Spring 2024

Instructor: Professor Francis Ryan

Class Time and Place: Tuesday 10:20-1:20, Murray Hall 208

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Course Overview: This course gives a basic introduction to the field of Labor Studies and Employment Relations, focusing on an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the nature of work from both national and global perspectives. Incorporating sociology, management systems, labor and working class history, human resources, legal studies, literature, art, media and employment relations, we will analyze the ways that work has evolved from the industrial revolution to the twenty-first century. In this course, we will also focus on the experiences and perspectives of working people and their institutions, as well as those of management and human resources to learn a diverse range of perspectives on the contemporary workplace and how it has evolved over time.

This course addresses the Social Analysis (SCL) Learning Objectives of SAS:

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

Your progress toward understanding how work, workers, and forms of worker organization fit into these social science goals will be assessed through rubrics applied to written assignments and items on exams.

Required Book. The following required book is available for purchase at the Rutgers University Bookstore, operated by Barnes and Noble. It may also be purchased online.

Stephen Sweet and Peter Meiksins. *Changing Contours of Work: Jobs and Opportunities in the New Economy*. Pine Forge Press. 4th edition. Sage, 2021.

All readings, except for the text, are available on the class Rutgers Canvas site.

Once you are registered for the course, you will be granted access to the site. It is your responsibility to access course materials, including the reading assignments.

The syllabus, schedule and assignments are subject to change as the course evolves, and sometimes due to unforeseen schedule changes due to winter weather. *Please note: additional sets of readings that highlight contemporary issues developing during the course of the semester will be added to our activities.*

Course Requirements

Class attendance: You are expected to attend each class session, and to be on time. An attendance sheet will be passed out during each class; it is your responsibility to sign the sheet. Be punctual and plan to stay for the entire class. Students who repeatedly arrive late and leave at break will have their grades lowered. If you need to leave early, let me know; otherwise, you are expected to remain until the class is over. As the class is three hours long, we will have periodic breaks built into the scheduled time.

Participation: This class will utilize a variety of formats, with weekly discussion sessions one of the more important of these. 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. If you have a laptop computer, please feel free to bring it to class as a useful tool to augment in class readings and You Tube clips. You may not use any recording devices in this class.

Weekly online forums: Each week, on the class Canvas site, you will respond to posted questions related to the assigned readings. Your responses must be posted by class time each week—no extra time will be permitted for late work; no credit will be given for work not handed in on time. More details will be provided.

Missed Exams: All students are expected to take the scheduled in-class exams (midterm and final) at the designated times. Documented emergencies and personal matters will be taken into account for possible cases of rescheduling that arise.

Unless otherwise specified, all writing assignments should be submitted to me via Word document as an email attachment before class the day that they are due. Out of respect to those who meet this expectation, all late papers will be subject to downgrading.

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.

Grading Breakdown:

Class Participation and attendance (10%)
Written Assignment (10%)
Midterm Exam (20%)
Final Exam (20%)
Forums (20%)
Quizzes (20%)

Weekly Class Summaries:

Week 1: January 16: Introduction to the Course and Course Requirements

In this first meeting, we will have a chance to introduce ourselves, and to get a sense of what this semester's class will entail. We will discuss our past experiences as workers, and talk about our hopes for satisfying employment. What is a good job? What types of issues currently center on work in America today? How does labor studies, as field, contribute to and help us understand these issues?

Week 2: January 23: Exploring American Working Life: The "Old Economy" and Industrialism.

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 1, Mapping the Contours of Work, 1-27.

Lauren Hough, "I was a Cable Guy. I Saw the Worst of America," *HuffPost.com*, December 30, 2018.

Discussion on internships and the youth job market. In class presentation: Mayelin Torres, Rutgers SMLR Career Services.

In class exercise: Mapping and Defining Generational Differences:

Gen Z in the Workplace: How Should Companies Adapt?

What do Gen Z workers want at work?

In class reading: Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z Begins," *Pew Research Center*, January 17, 2019.

Week 3: January 30: Class Politics in the United States

Readings: Zweig, Michael (2000) *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*, ILR Press, 9-37. (The Class Structures of the United States)

Scott, J. and Leonhardt, D. (2005), "Shadowy Lines That Still Divide," in *Class Matters*, Henry Holt and Company, 1-26.

Jefferson Cowie and Lauren Boehm, "Dead Man's Town: "Born in the U.S.A.," Social History, and Working Class Identity," *American Quarterly* (June 2006): 353-378.

In-class Presentation: Bruce Springsteen: Finding the New Jersey experience in Working Class Culture.

"New Jersey and the Sopranos," Michael Aaron Rockland

Week 4: February 6: Income and Social Mobility

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 3, Economic Inequality, Social Mobility, and the New Economy, 63-95.

Andrew J. Cherlin, (2014) "The Fall of the Working Class Family: 1975-2010," from *Labor's Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class Family in America*.

Selected readings from *New York Times* on Child Labor in the United States.

In Class Focus: The Return of Child Labor? Policy and Disruption in the New Economy

Videos: *Fingers to the Bone: Child Farmworkers in the U.S.* and other short films.

Week 5: February 13: Power Dynamics, the New Economy, and the Future of Work

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 2, New Products, New Ways of Working and the New Economy, 29-61.

Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 4, Whose Jobs Are Secure? 97-128.

What Jobs Will AI Replace and What Can You Do About It? Rachel Pelta, *Forage*, December 1, 2023

Michael Lerner, "Worried About AI in the Workplace? You're Not Alone," September 7, 2023, American Psychological Association.

Rakesh Kochhar, Which U.S. Workers are More Exposed to AI on Their Jobs?, Pew Research Center, July 26, 2023

Steven Greenhouse, "Constantly Monitored: The Pushback to Against AI Surveillance at Work," *The Guardian*, January 9, 2024.

Week 6: February 20: Midterm Exam

Week 7: February 27: The Role and Function of Unions

Readings: Michael Yates, *Why Unions Matter* pp. 11-82.

Will Bedingfield, "Hollywood Writers Reached an AI Deal That Will Rewrite History," *Wired*, September 27, 2023.

Other selected articles on recent labor actions will also be provided.

In class exercise: Workplace Hazard Mapping Training

Week 8: March 5: Work, Race, Ethnicity and Equality

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 7, *Race, Ethnicity and Work: Legacies of the Past, Problems of the Present*. 205-244.

Steve Striffler, "Inside a Poultry Processing Plant: An Ethnographic Portrait," *Labor History* 43:3 (August 2002): 305-314.

Film: *At the River I Stand* (1993)

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10: March 19: Work, Gender, Equality

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 6, *Gender Chasms in the New Economy*, 159-203.

Ehrenreich, Barbara, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000): Selling in Minnesota.

Danielle J. Lindemann and Dana Britton, *Controlled Chaos: Focus Groups with Women Warehouse Workers in New Jersey* (2015)

Think Progress.org, "There's Even a Gender Gap in Children's Allowances"
<http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2014/04/23/3430025/gender-gap-allowance/>

In class screening: *Bread and Roses* (2000, Ken Loach, director)

Week 11: March 26: Work and Family

Readings: Sweet & Meiksins, Chapter 5, A Fair Day's Work?, 129-157.

Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," *The Atlantic*, (July/August 2012): 85-102

Tony Schwartz, "Women (and Men) Can Have it All," *Harvard Business Review*, June 25, 2012. Online

Francis Ryan, "You'll Never Walk Alone:" School Crossing Guards Associations and Labor Feminism in the Postwar United States," *Labor* 20 (1) (2023): 49-84.

In class screening: *I Love Lucy*, "Job Switching." (1952)

Week 12: April 2: New Frontiers of Work: Service Workers on the Front Lines of the Economy.

Readings: Bryant Simon, "Consuming Lattes and Labor, or Working at Starbucks," *International Labor and Working Class History* (Fall 2008): 193-211.

John Logan, "High-Octane Organizing at Starbucks," *New Labor Forum* (2022): Vol. 31 (3) 36-42.

Gino Canella, "Networked Unionism: Reframing the Labour Movement and Starbucks Workers United's Hybrid Organizing Practices," *Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society* Vol. 21 (1) 2023. Online.

Francis Ryan, "Journal of a Retail Worker" (1996-97)

Film: *The Big One* (1997, Michael Moore, director)

Week 13: April 9: New Frontiers of Work: Social Change and Workplace Policy Challenges

Readings: Stephen A. Sweet and Peter Meiksins, Chapter 8, Reshaping the Contours of the New Economy, 245-281.

Mia C. Hazie, Kevin P. Hill, Laurence M. Westreich, "Workplace Cannabis Policies: A Moving Target," *Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research* 7 (1) (February 2022): 16-23.

Week 14: April 16: Work and Sexuality

Readings: "Cracking the Gen Z Code: Attracting and Retaining Gen Z's LGBTQ+ Talent, Bank of America, 2023.

Sydney Cone, Kate Gold, Atoyia Harris, and Sehreen Ladak, "Workplace Conduct Still Needs Improvement After #MeToo," *Bloomberg Law*, October 24, 2022.

In class screening: *Pride* (2014, Matthew Warchus, director)

Week 15: April 23: Overview of Class and Review