

Syllabus
LATINO WORKERS IN THE U.S.
Labor Studies and Employment Relations
School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University
Spring 2026

Course Number: 37:575:307:92
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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine Latino Workers in the U.S. with a focus on globalization, immigration, and the proliferation of low-wage work.

The topics we will explore include:

- Immigration theories and why people come.
- The history of migration and migration policy in the U.S.
- Current immigration laws in the U.S.
- The impact of globalization.
- How undocumented Latino immigrants manage and survive in the U.S.
- The employment and labor rights of immigrant workers.
- Racialized labor markets, subcontracting and low wage industries.
- Efforts to organize through unions and worker centers to improve wages and working conditions.
- Fixing a broken system.

II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Core Curriculum Learning Goal

CCD-1. Analyze the degree to which forms of human differences and stratifications among social groups shape individual and group experiences of, and perspectives on, contemporary issues. Such differences and stratifications may include race, language, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, abilities, or other social distinctions and their intersections.

Labor Studies & Employment Relations Learning Goal

Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experience of work (6).

School of Management & Labor Relations Learning Goal

Evaluate the context of workplace issues, public policies, and management decisions. (V)

Instructor's Goals

- Know and understand fundamental social science, historical, and legal perspectives, theories, and concepts relating to immigration.
- Understand how the global economy and the movement of capital impacts the lives of workers and all but guarantees their movement across borders, legally and illegally.
- Understand how our diverse backgrounds and cultures shape our experiences perspectives, and expectations of work.
- Improve our critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills.

III. EXPECTATIONS

Preparation

We will be covering a lot of ground over the course of the semester so please do watch the weekly Riff (a video of me providing a prep for what you can expect and be looking for in each week of class); complete the reading/viewing assignments and the Questions to Consider; and participate in the weekly Open Forum discussions.

Participation

The weekly Open Forum discussions will provide you with opportunities to talk to each other, discuss what you have learned from the readings and viewings, as well as stimulate further discussions that create “peer-to-peer” learning opportunities. See below for more information on the weekly Open Forums.

Communications

In previous online courses I would send students weekly emails that included reminders for the upcoming week of class along with any updates, adjustments and/or reworking of the syllabus, but I have found that students often miss the emails or don't really pay much attention to them. So, instead of weekly emails, you will find all of this information at the top of the weekly Overview & Activities page. And if you have questions or need clarifications, please feel free to contact me via email or text, and I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours.

When emailing always include “Latino Workers in the U.S. Online” in the subject line of your email.

IV. EVALUATION

Final grades will be based on the following:

Course Survey/Introductions	30pts	
Questions to Consider Summaries	360pts	24 @15pts per Question
Open Forums (Topic Recaps)	180pts	15pts per forum (12)
Mid-Term	150pts	Take Home Essay
Final Exam/Ted Talks	280pts	A video recorded presentation (Ted Talk)
Total Points	1,000pts	

Questions to Consider (24 @ 15pts = 360pts)

For each week of class, you will find “*Questions to Consider*” and they will be posted with each weekly reading assignment. We will use them as the basis for all class work and my “riffs”—*mini lectures that will include an overview for each week of class and a theme or point of emphasis to keep in mind while you are doing the readings and viewings.*

You will be required to **answer two (2) “Questions to Consider”** for each weekly reading assignment—including weeks 2-13. One question will be assigned and the other will be up to you to pick from the remaining questions. Each **Questions to Consider is worth 12 points of your final grade (for a total of 360pts)**. The Questions to Consider will help you write your midterm exam and develop your Ted Talk. Your weekly answers to the Questions to Consider must be uploaded to Canvas by the end of each week of class. Your answers must be a minimum of 250 words per answer, and you are encouraged to write more. (**Note:** The total 250-word count will not include repeating the questions you answer, and I will read your answers and keep in touch on an as needed basis. Also, please be aware that your answers to the Questions to Consider will be reviewed by “*Turnitin*.” You will also need to provide citations with your answers and the citations must include specific page or page numbers (no more than 3 pages can be cited together. Detailed instructions for writing answer to the Questions to Consider will be included with each week’s assignment.

You will find the Questions to Consider very useful for helping you know what to look for in the readings. They will help you develop your essay for the midterm exam, the essential information you will need to complete your Ted Talk at the end of the semester.

As a matter of “practice” I would encourage you to start each week of class, by reading all the Questions to Consider and then try to answer them while you are doing the readings. It will make you a more active reader and it will obviously make it easier to answer the required two Questions to Consider. If you take this approach, it will also make it easier for you to engage the class discussion in the Open Forum. And if you know the answers to the Questions to Consider, you won’t have any problem writing good midterm essay or developing your Ted Talk.

Open Forums (12 @ 15pts = 180pts)

For each week of class (Weeks 2-13) you will participate in the Open Forum discussion. To be clear, Open Forums are not busywork, and they are not simply about “posting to post.” They are designed to help you learn more deeply by thinking *with* others, not just alongside them. I will provide a prompt for each forum but only as a way to get conversations going. You won’t be required to respond to the prompt, it will be there to use as a starter (if necessary) for each week of conversation.

When participating in Open Forum discussions you should include your experience or that of family and friends! And when you take a position, try to back it up with facts, data and examples from the readings and viewings. My hope is that you will use the

forums to **work through ideas out loud** by explaining concepts in your own words and along the way **developing critical thinking skills** by responding to different interpretations and viewpoints. The forums will also encourage you to do some “low stakes academic writing where it has less to do with perfect writing and more to do with learning from each other through sharing experiences, asking questions and gaining new insights that might have an impact on your own thinking.

The goal is to use the Open Forums to make connections to course readings, riffs, documentaries, etc. and engage respectfully with classmates—even when there is disagreement. In doing so, you are building skills that matter not only in college, but in workplaces, communities, and civic life. Your voice matters here. The quality of the course depends on your curiosity, engagement, and willingness to think critically—together.

It is important to note that in the course of all conversations, we need to be respectful of each other. You don't always have to agree—in fact, I would encourage you to take bold positions and yes, disagree—but you must give full attention and consideration to other points of view.

Mid-Term Exam (200pts)

The midterm will be written take-home exam that will cover all course readings, Riffs, Questions to Consider, films, documentaries, etc. You will write an essay that responds to a prompt. You will have one week to complete the assignment. It's important to note that you will only be able to use the assigned readings and viewing materials to complete the exam. You will not be allowed to use any outside sources! I will make this point again and again when we get to the mid-term. All the instructions for how to complete the midterm will be included with the prompt.

Ted Talk Final Exam (200pts)

The Ted Talk (Final Exam) presentation, will be a 5-7 minute video where you will have the opportunity to answer a prompt that encompasses what you have learned in the course regarding the work experiences of low wage Latino temp workers, meatpackers, cooks and bus persons. When you do your Ted Talk you will not be allowed to read from a script or use cue cards. So, you will need to prepare! When you watch a Ted Talk, you'll see that the person giving the talk is trying to convey, that they know what they are talking about and want to give an important message to the audience (in this case it will be me). As with the midterm, you will utilize the course readings, Riffs, Questions to Consider, films, documentaries, etc. You will have one week to complete your Talk. And again, it's important to note that for your Talk, you will only be able to use the assigned readings and course materials. You will not be allowed to use any outside sources!

V. RU ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

(<https://policies.rutgers.edu/B.aspx?BookId=11914&PageId=459231>)

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational, research, and clinical missions,

and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community.

The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- make sure that all work submitted in a course, academic research, or other activity is the student's own and created without the aid of impermissible technologies, materials, or collaborations (*see Use of AI Prohibited below*)
- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, images, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with the student's interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students ethically, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This principle requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the ethical standards and professional code of conduct in the field for which the student is preparing.

Use of AI is Prohibited

Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, GPT-4, DALL·E and other AI-based content creation platforms, are strictly prohibited in answering Questions to Consider and/or completing take-home exams. This prohibition does not extend to AI-powered tools commonly used for proofreading, grammar correction, accessibility checks, Microsoft Word's grammar correction tool, Grammarly, TurnItIn Draft Coach, and Google. Violations of this policy will be treated as academic dishonesty, in accordance with the Rutgers' Academic Integrity Policy on plagiarism and cheating. Please consult with me before using any form of technology that could raise concerns about academic integrity.

VI. RU LEARNING CENTERS

“Rutgers is committed to your success and offers free academic services to all students. The Learning Centers provide tutoring, study groups, and review sessions for your courses. They also host workshops and provide individual academic coaching to help you further develop your study strategies and self-management skills. To learn more about how the LCs can help you succeed, visit rlc.rutgers.edu.”

VII. 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.

VIII. STATEMENT OF 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, immigration policy, etc. and all who partake in the course should feel encouraged to express their views in an open, civic forum.

IX. COURSE READINGS

There is one book to buy for this course (Front of the House, Back of the House by Eli Reville Yano Wilson) but you will not need it until later in the semester. All other readings for this course will be available on Canvas.

X. SYLLABUS

PART I: IMMIGRATION HISTORY, THEORY AND WHY THEY COME

(WEEK 1) TUESDAY, JANUARY 20TH

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Readings:

Review Course Syllabus

Assignments:

Intro Quiz (Tell me about yourself) **(30pts)**

Forum Intros (Introduce yourself to the other members of your group and explain the advice you would give to the family in Why They Come) **(30pts)**

(WEEK 2) TUESDAY, JANUARY 27TH

TODAY'S LATINO IMMIGRANTS AND WHY THEY COME (THEORIES)

Readings:

Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone. Chapter 2: "*Principles of Operation: Theories of International Migration*"; Beyond Smoke and Mirrors, Mexican Immigration in An Era of Economic Integration, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2006.

Abrahm Lustgarten, NYTimes Magazine/ProPublica: *The Great Climate Migration*, 2020

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/23/magazine/climate-migration.html>

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: Theories of migration—Week 2 **Open Forum** (15pts)

(WEEK 3) TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD

THE HISTORY OF MIGRATION IN THE U.S. AND WHO GETS IN TODAY

Readings:

Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone. Chapter 3: “*System Assembly: A History of Mexico-U.S. Migration*” Beyond Smoke and Mirrors, Mexican Immigration in An Era of Economic Integration, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2006.

Mae M. Nagai, *How Grandma Got Legal*, Los Angeles Times, May 16, 2006.

Martínez, Óscar, *The Beast, Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail*, Verso, 2014.

Viewings:

Documentary—The 800-Mile Wall (?)

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: What we can learn from the history and U.S. policy on immigration—
Week 3 **Open Forum**

PART II: GLOBAL CAPITALISM (NEO-LIBERALISM) AND MIGRATION

(WEEK 4) TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH

GLOBAL CAPITALISM AND MIGRATION

Readings:

Jeffrey Kaye, Moving Millions: How Coyote Capitalism Fuels Global Immigration, Chapter 3, *Migrants in the Global Marketplace*, John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2010.

Ruth Gomber-Munoz, Labor and Legality, Chapter 2, *Why Is There Undocumented Migration?* Oxford University Press, 2011

David Bacon, Illegal People, Chapter 3, *Displacement and Migration*, Beacon Press, 2008.

Viewings:

Documentary: The Other Side of Migration

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: The mobility of capital and workers—Week 4 **Open Forum** (15pts)

(WEEK 5) TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH

GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS, AND RACIALIZED LABOR MARKETS (PART 1)

Readings:

Richard McIntyre, Are Worker Rights Human Rights? **Chapter 3: *Not Only Nike Is Doing It***

NJ Star Ledger, The Invisible Workforce

Supply Chains, Temp Towns and Low Wage Work

Viewings:

Vise News Investigation—Permanently Temporary: The Truth About Temp Labor

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: Low wage labor markets and Temp Towns like New Brunswick, NJ—Week 5 **Open Forum** (15pts)

(WEEK 6) TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH

GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS, AND RACIALIZED LABOR MARKETS (PART 2)

Readings:

Weil, David, The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad for So Many and What Can Be Done to Improve It, Chapter 1: The Fissured Workplace and Its Consequences, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2014

Immigration Raids in Edison NJ (NYTimes Aug 2025)

The Middlemen Linking Migrants to Your Shopping Cart (Nov. 2024)

Viewings:

Documentary—We Are Not Machines

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: Corporations, globalization and low wage work—Week 6 **Open Forum** (15pts)

(WEEK 7) TUESDAY, MARCH 3RD

LOW WAGE WORK-BEARDSTOWN, ILLINOIS, MEATPACKERS

Readings:

Faranak Miraftab, Global Heartland, Displaced Labor, Transnational Lives and Local Placemaking, Chapter 1: *Welcome to Porkopolis*, pp. 26-53; Chapter 3: *Michoacán's Largest Export is People*, pp. 78-93:

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: Working in the meatpacking facility at Beardstown, Ill—Week 7
Open Forum (15pts)

Mid-Term Take Home Assignment (200pts)

(WEEK 8) TUESDAY, MARCH 10TH

LOW WAGE WORK-BEARDSTOWN, ILLINOIS, MEATPACKERS (CONTINUED)

Readings:

Faranak Miraftab, Global Heartland, Displaced Labor, Transnational Lives and Local Placemaking, Chapter 4: Winning the Lottery in Togo, pp. 94-112; Chapter 5: *“The First Third World City of the U.S.”*, pp. 113-129

Viewings:

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: (continued) Working in the meatpacking facility at Beardstown, Ill—Week 8
Open Forum (15pts)

Mid-Term Take Home Assignment Due (200pts)

SPRING BREAK MARCH 16TH – 20TH (NO CLASS)

PART III: LOW WAGE WORK AND LIVING IN THE U.S.A.

(WEEK 9) TUESDAY, MARCH 24TH

LOW WAGE WORK-BEARDSTOWN, ILLINOIS, MEATPACKERS (CONTINUED)

Readings:

Faranak Miraftab, Global Heartland, Displaced Labor, Transnational Lives and Local Placemaking, Chapter 6: *Global Restructuring of Social Reproduction*, pp. 130-157; Chapter 7: *We Wanted Workers*, pp. 160-185; and Chapter 8: *We Got People*, pp.186-208.

Viewings:

Documentary— PBS Frontline: COVID-19s Hidden Toll

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: “Agency” among immigrants living and working in Beardstown, Ill—
Week 9 **Open Forum** (15pts)

(WEEK 10) TUESDAY, MARCH 31ST

LOW WAGE WORK, RESTAURANTS (PART 1: FRONT OF THE HOUSE, BACK OF THE HOUSE)

Readings:

Eli Revelle Yano Wilson, Front of the House, Back of the House, Race and Inequality in the Lives of Restaurant Workers, Introduction, pp. 1-22, Producing Difference, pp. 23-81, Worlds Apart, pp. 82-104

Viewings:

(Optional) “The Bear” (Season 1 Episode 1)...on Hulu

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: The divide between “the front of the house” and “the back of the house”—Week 10 **Open Forum** (15pts)

(WEEK 11) TUESDAY APRIL 7TH

LOW WAGE WORK, RESTAURANTS (PART 2: FRONT OF THE HOUSE, BACK OF THE HOUSE)

Readings:

Eli Revelle Yano Wilson, Front of the House, Back of the House, Race and Inequality in the Lives of Restaurant Workers, Brown-Collar Careers in the Back of the House pp. 105-131, Mobility Pathways and Closed Doors, pp. 132-158, Conclusion, pp. 159-174

Viewings:

(Optional) “The Bear” (Season 2 Episode 5)...on Hulu, needs a subscription

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: The work of Cooks in the back of the house—Week 11 **Open Forum** (15pts)

(WEEK 12) TUESDAY, APRIL 14TH

LOW WAGE WORK, RESTAURANTS (PART 2: THE BUSBOYS)

Readings:

Ruth Gomber-Munoz, Labor and Legality, Chapter 3: *Jumping and Adjusting to Life Under the Radar*, and Chapter 4: *Friends, Networks and Households*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

Viewings:

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: Social networks and how workers and employers organize racialized labor markets—Week 12 **Open Forum** (15pts)

(WEEK 13) TUESDAY, APRIL 21ST

LOW WAGE WORK, RESTAURANTS (PART 3: THE BUSBOYS AND “A BETTER LIFE”)

Readings:

Ruth Gomber-Munoz, Labor and Legality, Chapter 5: *Working Hard*, and Chapter 6: *Identity, Dignity and Esteem*, Oxford University Press, 2011

Viewings:

Documentary: The Hand That Feeds

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: The tradeoffs and compromises that undocumented workers make at work and in their communities—Week 13 **Open Forum** (15pts)

Ted Talk Video (Final Exam) Assignment, due May 4, 2026

PART IV: WORKER RIGHTS, ORGANIZING AND THE CURRENT DEBATE

(WEEK 14) TUESDAY, APRIL 28TH

ORGANIZING IMMIGRANTS (WORKER RIGHTS, UNIONS AND WORKER CENTERS PART II)

Readings:

Gross and Compa, Human Rights in Labor and Employment Relations: International and Domestic Perspectives, Chapter 1: *Takin' it to the Man: Human Rights at the American Workplace*, Labor and Employment Association, 2009.

Immanuel Ness, Immigrants, Unions, and the New U.S. Labor Movement, Chapters 2 and 3: *Unions and Immigrant Worker Organizing: New Models for New Workers*, Temple University Press, 2005

Viewings:

Documentary: Food Chains

Assignments:

Answer two **Questions to Consider** (30pts)

Discussion: Organizing immigrants in the U.S. based on worker rights as human rights and the implications for immigrants and undocumented workers—Week 14

Open Forum (15pts)

Ted Talk Videos (Final Exam) due May 4, 2026