Working Women in U.S. Society

Rutgers University: 37:575:309:01

Spring 2026

Mondays, 2:00 - 5:00 PM

Scott Hall 106, College Avenue

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course explores the experiences of working women in U.S. society through the lens of social justice, workplace dynamics, and social identities. We will examine how systems of power, cultural norms, and human differences shape women's roles, opportunities, and challenges in the workforce.

Using a mix of discussion, group projects, and critical analysis, students will evaluate:

- Public policies that impact women workers
- Workplace inequalities and biases
- Barriers to leadership and inclusion

Big Questions & Central Themes

- How do social inequalities, cultural beliefs, and institutional policies shape women's work experiences?
- What strategies can help create more equitable and inclusive workplaces?
- How do race, gender, class, and other aspects of identity intersect to shape opportunity and power?

At the heart of this course is a focus on intersectionality, a framework for understanding how multiple forms of identity and inequality interact in shaping women's participation and leadership at work.

Learning Objectives

This course covers Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR), and Labor Studies and Employment Relations (LSER) Department learning objectives.

Rutgers Core Objectives

- **CCD 2:** Analyze contemporary social justice issues and systems of social power.
- **SCL 1:** Understand theories of human culture, identity, and social systems.
- **SCL 2:** Use social scientific reasoning to analyze real-world questions.

SMLR Objectives

- Apply relevant theories in workplace contexts.
- Evaluate workplace issues, public policy, and management decisions.

LSER Department Objectives

- Understand key theories and concepts.
- Apply them to current labor developments.
- Analyze how human difference shapes work experiences.

Required Readings

All readings will be posted on Canvas. There is no textbook to buy.

Course Format

This is a discussion-based seminar, with a mix of:

- In-class discussions
- Short lectures
- Videos and group activities

We will use Rutgers Canvas for everything:

- Log into rutgers.edu
- Use your NetID and password
- Click on the course: 37:575:309:01
- All announcements, readings, assignments, and resources will be posted there

Participation & Engagement

To do well in this course:

- Show up and participate in discussions
- Do the readings before class
- Engage with others and think critically
- Group work is part of your learning - bring your voice to the table.

Basic Needs Security: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support.

Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable doing so. I will help you find resources. Other family/close relations may occur. Mental health is a key component of a sustainable life. It is sometimes necessary to miss class for physical or mental health reasons. Let me know in advance or as soon as possible if you are missing assignments for any health or quality-of-life reasons. If you need assistance, please communicate early and often.

Pro-tip: *Communicate early and often. Life happens; just keep me in the loop*.

Discussion: Success in the course requires active engagement during discussions. This is where we will learn from each other, test the authors' theories, and formulate and test our own.

Students' success in written assignments will depend on their active engagement, including involvement in discussion.

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. For more information, see the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy.

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videos, 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 the distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted on 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. Similarly, these copyright protections extend to the original papers you produce for this course. If I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your written consent. Finally, as the instructor for this course, I have a 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.

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 they are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation at https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. 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 accommodation with them as early as possible in your semester. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the Office of Disability Services (ODS) website at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form. This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for

accommodation based on the impact of disability should refer to the [Rutgers ODS.](Rutgers%20ODS) and then contact me privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible.

Turnitin: Students agree that by taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to [turnitin.com.](turnitin.com) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site. Students who disagree should contact me immediately.

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.

Communication/Email/Electronic Devices: Feel free to email me with questions, concerns, ideas, and/or issues that may arise during the semester. Remember to check the syllabus or Canvas resources for general questions before contacting me. I will reply to most emails within 24 hours. Students are responsible for checking announcements and updates on Canvas.

Utilizing the James B. Carey Library: The 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.

Course Assignments

Students will complete two group projects and three independent written assignments in this course. All writing assignments are due on Sundays at 11:59 p.m. More detailed instructions for each assignment will be posted on Canvas.

Late Assignments

Assignments will be considered late at midnight. Assignments will lose two points for every day that they are late.

One-time 24-hour extension: **Each student can use ONE 24-hour extension on any assignment due during the semester, no questions asked.** Students may use this extension for any assignment except the group assignments. Each assignment is due on Sunday at 11:59 pm. If you would like to use your extension, you must submit a Word document with the statement, "I would like to use my one-time 24-hour extension". Each extension starts at midnight and ends at 11:59 pm on Monday.

Individual Assignments	Points
Positionality Paper (2 pages)	15
Reflection Paper (2 pages)	15
Group Assignment	
Group Project	25
Final Paper	
The Choice 2024 (5–7 pages)	25

Engagement	
Participation, Attendance & Survey Completion *(includes day-to-day participation, attendance, and completing the mid-semester survey — survey itself = 3 points extra credit folded into this category)*	20
Total	100

The following schedule is subject to change:

Week 1 (January 26)	**Introductions**
Week 2 (February 2)	**Intersectionality: Race, Class, and Gender in the Workplace** **Readings** 1. Asmelash, L. (2023). 'Intersectionality' Has Become a Hot-Button Topic in Recent Years. Here's What It Means. 2. Brah, A., & Phoenix, A. (2004). Ain't I a woman? Revisiting intersectionality. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 5*(3), 75–86. **Videos** 1. Crenshaw, K. (2016, December 7). *The urgency of intersectionality.*
Week 3 (February 9)	**History and Legal Structures** 1. Yellen, J. L. (2017, May 5). *So we all can succeed: 125 years of women's participation in the economy* [Speech transcript]. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/files/yellen20170505a.pdf.
Week 4 (February 16)	**Women's Wages** **Positionality Assignment (TBD in class)** **Readings** 1. Goldin, C. (2015). How to achieve gender equality in pay. *Milken Institute Review, 17*(3), 24–33. **Videos** 1. Netflix. (2020, April 17). *Explained	Why women are paid less	FULL EPISODE	Netflix* [Video]. YouTube. 2. Vox. (2016, September 7). *The gender wage gap, explained* [Video]. YouTube.

	Additional Reading (in Discussions folder) 1. Glynn, S. J. (2018, April). *Gender wage inequality: What we know and how we can fix it*. Washington Center for Equitable Growth. https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/gender-wage-inequality.
Week 5 (February 23)	**Women's Work** **Readings** 1. Ferguson Melhorn, S., & Lucy, I. (2024, June 26). *Data deep dive: Women in the workforce*. U.S. Chamber of Commerce. https://www.uschamber.com. 2. Acker, J. (2006). Inequality regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations. *Gender & Society, 20*(4), 441–464.
Week 7 (March 2)	**Gender Bias in the Workplace** **Midterm Assignment Part 1: Women in the Workforce – Digital Storytelling (Topic Finalization Worksheet) due on (TBD)** **Readings** 1. Hancock, A.-M. (2009). An untraditional intersectional analysis of the 2008 election. *Politics & Gender, 5*(1), 96–105. 2. Ammerman, C., & Groysberg, B. (2022, September 16). *3 workplace biases that derail mid-career women. Harvard Business Review.*
Week 8 (March 9)	**Policy Spotlight: Hair and Uniform Policies** **Midterm Assignment Part 2: Women in the Workforce – Digital Storytelling due on (TBD)** **Readings** 1. Opie, T. (2018). Let my hair be me: An investigation of employee authenticity and organizational appearance policies through the lens of Black women's hair. *Fashion Studies*, *1*(1), 1-27. 2. Clomax, A. J., Mor Barak, M., Hancock, A. M., Dodge, J., Kintzle, S., Cox, R., ... & Castro, C. (2024). An Intersectional Analysis of Women's Experiences of Inclusion in the United States Army. *Sex Roles*, *90*(11), 1666-1680. **Additional Reading** 1. Chang, Y., & Cortina, J. M. (2024). What should I wear to work? An integrative review of the impact of clothing in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *109*(5), 755

Week 9 (March 16)	NO CLASS (SPRING RECESS)
Week 10 (March 23)	**Women in Leadership/ The Glass Ceiling** American Psychological Association. (2023, March 8). How female leaders make work better for everybody. Women in Leadership: Lessons in Working Smarter, Not Harder | Anila Khalique | TEDxDeMontfortUWomen
Week 11 (March 30)	**Women in Tech** Freedman, G., Green, M. C., Kussman, M., Drusano, M., & Moore, M. M. (2023). "Dear future woman of STEM": Letters of advice from women in STEM. International Journal of STEM Education, 10(20). Women In Tech Tell Us How To Fix The Industry's Gender Problem. Lorenz, T. (2023, August 24). How social media became a pink-collar job. Wired.
Week 12 (April 6)	**Women in Entertainment and Sports** Whipple, K., & Coleman, R. (2021). Facing the music: Stereotyping of and by women in U.S. music journalism. Journalism, 23(10), 2060-2078. Women's Sports Rising Roundtable | Variety Sports and Entertainment Summit
Week 13 (April 13)	**Work-Life Balance** Why Women Still Can't Have It All - The Atlantic Work Life Balance as Women's Labor — Pop Junctions
Week 14 (April 20)	TBD
Week 15 (April 27)	TBD
Week 16 (May 4)	End of Semester Discussion