

Semester:	Spring 2026
Course Number and Sections:	37:575:338:90
Course Title:	Occupational Safety and Health
Location:	Online - non-synchronous
Course Instructor:	Ashley Conway, Assistant Teaching Professor
Contact Information:	Primary - use Canvas; secondary - aconway@smlr.rutgers.edu
Office Hours and Location:	Online by appointment
Text:	No required text

Course Description

Work has an impact on physical and psychological health. In this course, students will explore the health and safety issues of various types of work and gain an understanding of the current state of occupational safety and health in the United States and globally, including the enforcement of laws regulating occupational safety and health, and the role of workers, unions, and employers. The historical, economic, and cultural forces contributing to and inhibiting solutions to occupational safety and health problems will be analyzed. Students will also examine how aspects of work interact with race and ethnicity, social and economic class, immigration status, and gender to create workers' health and safety outcomes.

Learning Objectives

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department

- Apply employment relations concepts and substantive institutional knowledge to understanding contemporary developments related to work. (Goal II) *Assessment: quizzes*

School of Management and Labor Relations

- Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experience of work. (Goal V) *Assessment: discussions*
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance. (Goal VI) *Assessment: discussions*

Course Grading

A=90-100; B+=85-89; B=80-84; C+=75-79; C=70-74; D=60-69; F=59 and lower

Activity	Number	Percent of course total	Points that can be earned
Week 1 assignments	Discussion, survey, academic integrity quiz, info literacy exercise	10	100
Journal entries	5 @50 points each	25	250
Online discussions	3 @ 150 points each	45	450
Exams	2 @ 100 points each	20	200
Total		100%	1,000 points

Points have no absolute meaning, and in the end, I will use my judgment in translating points into grades for the course. Implicitly, that means that grades are “curved” in the sense that they are comparative. The comparison is both to other students taking the class this semester and to those who took the class in the past. In addition, I may increase or decrease a grade for exceptional (positive or negative) class participation and performance, ordinarily by one level (e.g., between B and B+). Grading rubrics for each assignment are available on Canvas. **Extra credit is not offered in this course.**

Journal entries – 5 @ 50 points each,

Five entries related to the course content, work safety, and health news events, and personal or work-related experiences will be submitted to an online journal. Journal entries are read only by me.

Online discussions – 3 @150 points each

In Part I of the online discussions, students will have two weeks to prepare and submit an initial post to the discussion. The initial post requires preparing a brief topic presentation, such as authoring a paper or creating a presentation to share with group members. In Part II, students have a week to read group members’ initial posts and construct replies communicating questions, insights, analysis, and feedback in a threaded asynchronous (not “real-time”) discussion. The *Online Group Discussion Guidelines and Grading Rubric* document provides an in-depth explanation of how to participate in online discussions successfully and how discussion submissions are evaluated. Late submissions of up to one week are allowed but will be assessed a point penalty. Late submissions of more than one week will not be accepted.

Exams: 2 @ 100 points each

Timed exams of 90 minutes include true/false, matching, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and essay questions. Exams are non-cumulative and must be taken online in the Canvas course site during the open period. Collaboration is not allowed, but the exams are ‘open book.’ Make-up exams submitted within one week of the due date will be assessed a 25%-point penalty. Make-up exam submissions of more than one week will not be accepted.

Information literacy and critical thinking skills

Throughout the semester, the critique of news and information sources is emphasized. Students will vet their chosen sources for accuracy and credibility. Students’ original thinking and the formation of positions on issues are key learning outcomes for the course; therefore, the use of AI tools and programs is prohibited. Discussion posts and journal entries will be thoroughly checked for originality by the instructor and AI detection programs, as needed.

Class participation

This is an interactive class; students must adhere to due dates to effectively interact with others in the class. Students should inform me of personal situations or emergencies that may interfere with participation in the class. As soon as a problem arises, message me using Canvas. An online class provides schedule flexibility, but students are responsible for managing their time and participating in class each week. Students will be given adequate time to complete assignments and exams; therefore, travel and participation in sporting events or other types of commitments will not be granted extensions or special consideration. **No extra credit will be granted.**

Contributing to the learning environment

Students are expected to contribute to the creation of an environment that fosters mutual respect, courtesy, and civility by adherence to class norms for discussion, debate, and all interpersonal interactions. Expressions of hatred or contempt based on race, color, national and ethnic origin, age, gender and gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability will not be overlooked, nor will they be tolerated.

Course communications

Students are responsible for accessing course materials on Canvas and participating as instructed. Rutgers email and Canvas email should be checked frequently throughout the study week for class announcements or updates. Automatic email and announcement notifications are available on Canvas. Students are responsible for promptly replying to my emails that request a response. **Please inform me of emergencies or problems that may affect participation or performance in the course. The sooner I know, the easier it will be to develop a plan to ensure that coursework is completed successfully.**

Class cancellations

Because this is a fully online course, most Rutgers class cancellations will not affect virtual class attendance and participation.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is vital to the mission of Rutgers, to education at Rutgers, and membership in the Rutgers community. It is a core value that supports trust among students and between students and teachers. Academic integrity is also a shared value; administration, faculty, and students each play a vital part in promoting, securing, and nurturing it.

Academic dishonesty is not an individual act that affects only the students involved. It violates communal trust, impacts other members of the community, and is an offense against scholarship. For this reason, any instance of cheating or plagiarism will be dealt with harshly.

Honesty matters. As a shared value, administration, faculty, and students each play a vital part in promoting, securing, and nurturing it. See the Rutgers Academic Code and Academic Oath at:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

From the Office of Disability Services

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: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus 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 as possible in your courses. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS website at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Rutgers' Resources for Success

The faculty and staff at Rutgers are committed to your success. Successful students tend to seek out resources that enable them to excel academically, maintain their health and wellness, prepare for future careers, navigate college life and finances, and connect with the RU community. Resources that can help you succeed and connect with the Rutgers community can be found at success.rutgers.edu, and nearly all services and resources that are typically provided in-person are now available remotely.

Technical Assistance

Helpdesk: Rutgers Office of Information and Technology

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

Call: 833-OIT-HELP

Class Outline by Week

Subject to change – always refer to Canvas for the most up-to-date information

Week	Topic	Assignments
1 1/21-1/27	Orientation to the Course and Introductions	Week 1 assignments due – 2/3
2 1/28-2/3	A Look Back: Work Safety and Health History	<i>Case: The Triangle factory fire</i> Discussion #1 – initial post due 2/10
3 2/4-2/10	Occupational Safety and Health Concepts	<i>Case: On the trail of an outbreak- cholera in 1831 London</i> Continue Discussion #1 – initial post due 2/10 Journal #1
4 2/11-2/17	The Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Understanding Federal Agencies	<i>Case- Change at McWane Foundry</i> Continue Discussion #1-make replies-discussion ends 2/17
5 2/18-2/24	Work Health and Safety: Policy, Politics, and Power	<i>Case: Manville, NJ, contamination and asbestos regulation in the U.S.</i> Discussion #2 – initial post due 3/3 Journal #2

6 2/25-3/3	The Economics of Worker Safety and Health	<i>Case: The BP Gulf disaster</i> Continue Discussion #2 – initial post due 3/3
7 3/4-3/10	Right-to-Know and Workers' Compensation	<i>Case: Toms River, NJ, contamination and citizen activists</i> Continue Discussion #2 – make replies-discussion ends 3/10 Exam #1 – opens 3/4 closes /10
8 3/11-3/13 and 3/23-3/24	Ethics and Work Safety and Health	<i>Case: Ethical decision-making in the pandemic – workers, vaccines, and the duty to serve</i>
9 3/25-3/31	Safety and Health in the Entertainment Industry	<i>Case: CTE in professional and collegiate football</i> Discussion #3 – initial post due 4/7 Journal #3
10 4/1-4/7	Protecting Workers' Psychological Safety	<i>Case: 9/11 and post-traumatic stress disorder in first responders</i> Discussion #3 – initial post due 4/7
11 4/8-4/14	Safety and Health in a Changing Climate	<i>Case: Working in extreme weather conditions – firefighters in California</i> Continue Discussion #3-submit replies, discussion closes 4/14
12 4/15-4/21	Global Work Safety and Health	<i>Case: Global supply chains and worker health and safety</i> Journal #4
13 4/22-4/28	Evaluation Week and Reflection on Course Learning	Take Exam #2 – opens 4/22 and closes 4/28 Journal #5
14 4/29-5/4	Course Evaluation	Complete 2 course evaluations All coursework must be submitted by 5/4

Readings

Note: this list is included in the syllabus to give students an idea of the type of readings that will be assigned. The reading assignments will change.

Adam-Poupart, A *et al.* (2013) The impact of climate change on occupational safety and health. *Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et en sécurité du travail (IRSST)*.

Block, Sharon and Nayak, Raj. (27 March 2025). How work and workers can influence heat action plans: Experts from Harvard Law School share lessons from international and interdisciplinary perspectives on heat adaptation and the climate crisis. *Harvard Climate Blog*.

Blouin, Lou. (6 March 2023). AI's mysterious 'black box' problem, explained—University of Michigan-Dearborn News.

Bingham, E. (1983). Right to Know Movement. *American Journal of Public Health*, 73(11): 1302.

Bogage, Jacob. (13 February 2023) In a tight labor market, some states look to another type of worker: Children. *Washington Post*.

Cha, M. *et al.* (2021) Workers and communities in transition: Report of the Just Listening Project. *Labor Network for Sustainability*.

Chivers, C.J. (24 June 2024) The Mayday call: How one death at sea transformed a fishing fleet. *New York Times*.

Cohen, Ilana. (2 June, 2023) To curb climate change, young people are growing the green jobs market. Links to an external site. *The Nation*.

Dorman, P. (2000). The economics of safety, health, and well-being at work: An overview. *InFocus Program on SafeWork, International Labour Organization*.

Editorial board. (23 May 2020). The plight of essential workers in the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Lancet*, Vol. 395.

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. (2001). Corporate responsibility and safety and Health at work.

Eyres, H. (7 April 2020) How coronavirus has led to the return of the precautionary principle. *News Statesman*.

Fisher E, Flynn MA, Pratap P, Vietas JA. (24 June 2024) Occupational Safety and Health Equity Impacts of Artificial Intelligence: A Scoping Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

Grabell, M. & Berkes, H. (2015). The Demolition of Workers Comp. *ProPublica and National Public Radio*.

Gerstein, T. (6 September 2020) Other people's rotten jobs are bad for them. And for you. *New York Times*.

Goodell, J. (2010). The Dark Lord of Coal Country. *Rolling Stone*, 1119, 82–128.

Haedickie, M. (6 May 2020) To understand the danger of COVID-19 transmission in meatpacking plants look to the industries history. *The Conversation*.

Hirsch, L. & Corkery, M. (4 November 2021) How Tyson Foods Got 60,500 Workers to Get the Coronavirus Vaccine Quickly. *New York Times*.

International Labor Organization. (2012) The COSH Movement and Right to Know. *Encyclopedia of Occupational Safety and Health*, 4th Ed. (59).

Johnson, J. (March 2021) Former OSHA head, David Michaels, calls for transformation of U.S. worker safety. *Chemical and Engineering News*, Vol. 99, Issue 24.

Kindy, Kimberly. (9 September 2020). More than 200 meat plant workers in the U.S. have died of COVID-19. Federal regulators issue two modest fines. *Washington Post*.

Leibenluft, J. and Olinsky, B. (2020). Protecting worker safety and economic security during the COVID-19 reopening. *Center for American Progress*.

Lazar, Wendi & Yorke, Cody. (25 April 2023) Watched while working: Use of monitoring and A.I. in the workplace increases. *Reuters*.

Levenstein, C. & Dunn, M. (2005). Show me the money: Cost-benefit analysis in the work environment. *New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Safety and Health Policy*, 15 (3).

Loewenson, R. (2001). Globalization and occupational health: A perspective from Southern Africa. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 79(9).

Lorenz, Taylor. (1 September 2003). There are almost no protections for the internet's child stars. *Washington Post*.

Lucchini, Roberto & London, Leslie. (2014). Global Occupational Health: Current challenges and the need for urgent action. *Annals of Global Health*, Volume 80, Issue 4, pp. 251-256.

Medina, Eduardo. (12 April 2025). In South Carolina, a once thriving textile hub is baffled by Trump's tariffs. *New York Times*.

McNeil, Taylor. (10 June 2021). The health hazards of an uncertain job schedule. *Tufts Now, Tufts University*.

McOwer, Joel. (March 16, 2020). COVID-19 and climate change: A healthy dose of reality. *Green Biz*.

Michaels, D. & Monforton, C. (2005) Manufacturing uncertainty: Contested science and the protection of the public's health and environment. *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 95, No. S1, pp. S39-S48.

Mock, Jillian. (June 2020). Psychological trauma is the next crisis for coronavirus health workers. *Scientific American*.

National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. (1997) Protect your family: Reduce contamination at home. Publication #97-125.

Nazaryan, Alexandar. (24 May 2013). A Town Plagued by Water. *The New Yorker*.

New Jersey Work Environment Council (2008). Still at risk: Protecting New Jersey jobs, families, and hometowns from toxic chemical disaster.

Occupational health and safety and the precautionary principle collective bargaining language. July, 2007. *Ontario Federation of Labor*.

Occupational exposure limits – One tool in a risk assessment. University of Wisconsin - Madison, Office of Chemical Safety.

O'Donnell, Jimmy. (3 September 2020). Essential workers during COVID-19: At risk and lacking union representation. *Brookings Institute*.

Pasani, Joseph & Olsen, Alexandria. (20 July 2020). As companies keep workers in the dark on COVID-19 cases, some employees are turning into amateur sleuths to track virus cases. *Chicago Tribune*.

Rosner, D. (2000). When does a worker's death become a murder? *American Journal of Public Health*, 90(4): 535-540.

Ruggeri, Amanda. (9 July 2017) How climate change will transform business and the workforce. *Future Now, BBC*.

Seyfarth, S., et al. (December 4/2024). Change at OSHA During Second Trump Administration? Seyfarth Workplace Safety and Environmental Law Alert Practice Group.

Silverstein, M. (2008) Getting home safe and sound: The Occupational Safety and Health Administration at 38. *American Journal of Public Health*, 98, 3, 416-423.

Skeet, Ann. (27 March 2020) How the coronavirus pandemic inspires us to be more ethical at work and in life. *Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University*.

Stix, Gary. (10 September 2020) Emotional labor is a store clerk confronting a maskless customer. *Scientific American*.

Tan, Rebecca and Cabato, Regine. (28 August 2023) Behind the A.I. boom, an army of overseas workers in digital sweatshops. *Washington Post*.

The Woman Behind the New Deal. *The Francis Perkins Center*. Retrieved 1/15/2024 from: <https://francesperkinscenter.org/learn/her-life>

Trumbull, Mark. (March 9, 2020). Why COVID-19 is likely to change globalization, not to reverse it. *Christian Science Monitor*.

Westfall, M. 2009. Cancer in auto factories: An interview with Mike Bennett. *Cornell University ILR School*.