SYLLABUS

LBS 3001 – Introduction to Labor Studies

Semester   Florida International University
Time       Room
Instructor:                         
Office phone:                      
Home phone:                        
Fax #:                              
email:                              

Required Texts:

William M. Adler, Mollie’s Job (Touchstone - Simon & Schuster, 2000, paperback)

Barbara Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America (Owl Books, 2001, paperback)


Course Objectives:

This course will first introduce you to some central issues in the study of labor and work. You will learn what it is like to work at a low-wage job while trying to sustain yourself in doing so. The impact of “globalization” on jobs in the United States will also be explored, as we follow a job from one location to another as the company moves it in search of lower wages. You will also get a brief history of the highlights of the struggle of working people to secure a better life for themselves and their families, primarily through the formation of labor organizations. Finally, we will explore the role that unions can and might play in the economy and in the efforts of workers to obtain just and fair working conditions and compensation.

By the end of the course, you should have a good overview of these issues, and be able to intelligently analyze the questions raised by them. You will be able to detect the distinctive and common qualities between their own perspective and the perspectives of others. In particular, you will be expected to be able to:

• compare and contrast societal and cultural differences between “globalized” jobs in different societies, between the cultural conditions attendant to low-wage jobs and other jobs, and between the culture of employment at different periods in U.S. history.

• demonstrate understanding of, and be able to discuss, interrelated world conditions associated with local, global, international, and intercultural labor issues, trends, and systems.

• demonstrate willingness to develop solutions to address local, global, international, and
intercultural problems by exploring real life strategies for taking action within the context of your work life.

**Academic Misconduct Statement**

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Misconduct includes: Cheating – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. **Plagiarism – The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own.** Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

**Course Requirements:**

You are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class, and to be prepared to discuss them critically. (In general, you can expect to read 65-80 pages per week.) Your class participation is important, especially in a class like this where we will be discussing difficult questions with no easy answers. Class attendance and participation will count 10% toward your final grade. To also assure that you do the readings before each class, we may have a series of “pop quizzes” or “pop questions” or “web-discussions” on the readings for that class. Answering these will take a brief period of class time (perhaps 10 minutes or so). They will be irregular, and could happen any week or set of weeks. Your average grade on all of these combined will constitute another 10% of your final grade.

There will also be four (4) short written assignments, of 2 to 4 pages length, each worth 15% of your grade (total of 60% of final grade). These assignments will be posted in an on-line discussion board. You will be expected to draw from personal perspectives and work experiences as you compare these with the perspectives of others about the interrelationship between work life and employment conditions as they intersect with other social identities, such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality.

Be certain to complete the assigned readings, then work on your assignment. The papers will
call for analysis and comparisons and contrasts within their respective subject matters. When written assignments are made they will be due at the next class session. Assignments handed in late without prior permission from the instructor will be penalized 1/2 of a grade (A- turns into a B+, a B+ turns into a B, B into a B-, B- into a C+, etc.).

One final essay exam will be given; it will be a final exam at the end of the semester. It will ask you to apply what you have learned about questions facing workers in today’s global environment. Again, it will require analysis from you; in particular, it will require you to demonstrate effective comparisons and contrasts between (1) early U.S. working life and culture and later periods to other international job development; (2) employment culture and conditions in low-wage and non-low-wage jobs; and (3) working conditions in different countries for “globalized” jobs and multinational corporations. It will consist of 2-4 essay questions, probably three questions. This test will account for the final 20% of your final grade.

**READINGS**

**SESSION/DATE:**

**TOPICS AND READINGS**

1. Administration of the course; Course Overview; Self-Introductions; Possibly a video and/or short writing assignment in class

2. Ehrenreich, pp. 1-75. Low-wage work in Florida
   (ASSIGNMENT 1) IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL BE HANDED OUT A ONE QUESTION INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT TO RESPOND TO BY THE NEXT CLASS).

   (WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE FROM LAST WEEK’S CLASS)

4. Ehrenreich, pp. 151-221. Wall Mart; what does it all mean?
   “Eyes on the Fries” video and economy discussion

5. Labor History project presentations
   (ASSIGNMENT 2) IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL BE HANDED OUT AN ASSIGNED AREA OF LABOR HISTORY TO RESEARCH, WRITE A PAPER, AND PRESENT ON IN CLASS).

6. Adler, Introduction and chapters 1-3. Early history of the plant and “Mollie’s job”
7. Adler, chapters 4-7. History of Paterson plant

8. Adler, chapters 8 - 11. Mollie’s job goes to Mississippi
   (ASSIGNMENT 3) IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL BE HANDED OUT A ONE
   QUESTION CURRENT EVENTS IN THE WORKPLACE
   ASSIGNMENT TO ANSWER BY THE NEXT CLASS).

   Free Trade video and discussion

10. Global immigration video and discussion

11. Reading assignment from the web on collective bargaining. We will do a
    “bargaining session” between students (workers) and teacher
    (management) over the “terms and conditions” of the class
    (ASSIGNMENT 4) IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL BE HANDED OUT A
    ONE QUESTION ASSIGNMENT TO ANSWER BY THE NEXT
    CLASS).

12. Class bargaining session exercise
    (WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE FROM LAST WEEK’S CLASS)

13. Workplace Hazards Body-mapping exercise and discussion
    (IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL BE HANDED OUT THE FINAL EXAM)

14. International Labor student reports

15. International Labor student reports

16. Final exam. Congratulations on successful completion of the
course!