

**LER 100-B “INTRODUCTION TO LABOR STUDIES”
Spring 2023. Three Credits. Online Seminar Taught on Canvas
First Eight Weeks Class. January 17 to March 10**

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

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ABOUT THE COURSE

LER 100 looks at economic, political, and workplace issues facing working people. The course analyzes who is “working class” versus “middle class” in America, and images of work and workers. The class analyzes U.S. employment laws and contemporary workers’ issues, using Wal-Mart as a case study. We then study unions and debate theories of labor relations. We review the history of labor unions and working people. Then the course analyzes responses to racial and sexual harassment in the workplace, and concludes by looking at a labor-management conflict, the 2012 Chicago teachers’ strike.

Course learning goals include an analysis of:

- Images of workers, social class, and unions in the media, entertainment, public opinion, and political discourse;
- Key issues facing American working people today and U.S. employment and labor laws;
- Wal-Mart as an example of employment relations in America;
- The goals, administration, and structures of unions, how workers organize unions, and collective bargaining;
- Competing theories of labor relations;
- An introduction to the history of American labor unions and working people;
- Racial and sexual harassment in the workplace; and
- The 2012 Chicago teachers’ strike as a case study in labor-management relations.

The course is divided into six segments. Each segment’s lecture highlights important material from the assigned reading, adds new information, and introduces the discussion forum.

Segment	Days	Opens	Closes	Topic
1	9	January 17	January 25	Work, Workers, and Social Class
2	9	January 26	February 3	Workers’ Issues
3	9	February 4	February 12	Unions and Theories of Labor Relations
4	9	February 13	February 21	U.S. Labor and Working Class History
5	9	February 22	March 2	Race and Gender in the Workplace
6	8	March 3	March 10	Chicago Teachers

REQUIRED READING AND VIDEOS

There are no texts to purchase for this class. All reading and videos are on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are 220 possible points in this course. Please read the Class Process file for details on exams, extra credit papers, forum participation requirements, and forum grading.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Date Opens</u>	<u>Date Closes</u>	<u>Points</u>
6 Discussion Forums	First day of segment	Last day of segment	90
Midterm Exam	February 13	February 13	50
Extra Credit Essay	First day of class	March 10	10
Final Exam	March 13	March 13	80
		TOTAL	220

Course Grade Scale:

A+	98%	215-220	B+	88%	193-197	C+	78%	171-175	D+	68%	149-153
A	93%	204-214	B	83%	182-192	C	73%	160-170	D	63%	138-148
A-	90%	198-203	B-	80%	176-181	C-	70%	154-159	D-	60%	132-137
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COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING

SEGMENT 1 WORK, WORKERS, AND SOCIAL CLASS

Segment 1 runs 9 days from Tuesday, January 17 to Wednesday, January 25

Reading

- Class Process file on course and discussion forum participation requirements
- “The Challenge of Working Class Studies” pages 1-17, in What’s Class Got To Do With It? by Michael Zweig
- “Class in America,” by Gregory Mantsios, 2006
- “Class Unconsciousness: Stop Using ‘Middle Class’ to Depict the Labor Movement,” by Nelson Lichtenstein, Spring 2012 *New Labor Forum*
- Receptionist Sharon Atkins pages 57-60; Sanitation Worker Roy Schmidt pages 150-153; Bus Driver Will Robinson pages 274-279; Bank Teller Nancy Rogers pages 344-351; and Auto Workers Phil Stallings and Jim Grayson pages 221-232, in Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do by Studs Terkel (1972)

Assignments

- Post to the Introductions forum early in the segment.
- Make a first substantial post in Forum 1 by the sixth day of the segment on Sunday, January 22 to earn the full 3 “timing” points in forum grading. Posting later will lead to a reduction in points. Post at least three substantial posts during the segment.

SEGMENT 2: WORKERS’ ISSUES AND WAL-MART

Segment 2 runs 9 days from Thursday, January 26 to Friday, February 3

Reading

- Early in the segment, take the Practice Test on employment laws. It is an MS Word file on the segment’s Canvas page. Read the question and guess at the answer, then click to read the answer and explanation. Then click again to go to the next question. Your posts should both demonstrate you did the assigned reading and took this practice test.

- “You Have The Right To Remain Silent: Freedom of Speech in the Workplace,” chapter 1 in Can They Do That? Retaking Our Fundamental Rights in the Workplace by Lewis Maltby
- “Wal-Mart: The Low-Wage Colossus,” chapter 8 in The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker (2008) by Steven Greenhouse
- “Don’t Blame Econ 101 for the Plight of Essential Workers: They’ve been systematically devalued for years. But they don’t have to be,” May 13, 2020 Atlantic magazine
- “Wal-Mart: The Low-Wage Colossus,” chapter 8 in The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker (2008) by Steven Greenhouse
- “‘You can’t pay bills on \$12 an hour’: Walmart employees left out of raises,” October 28, 2021 The Guardian
- “Amazon and Walmart have raked in billions in additional profits during the pandemic, and shared almost none of it with their workers,” December 22, 2020 Brookings Institution

Assignments

- Make a first substantial post in Forum 2 by the sixth day of the segment on Tuesday, January 31 to earn the full 3 “timing” points in forum grading. Posting later will lead to a reduction in points. Post at least three substantial posts during the segment.

SEGMENT 3 UNIONS and LABOR RELATIONS

Segment 3 runs 9 days from Saturday, February 4 to Sunday, February 12

Reading

- Chapter 1 “What are Unions?” in The Union Members Complete Guide, by Michael Mauer
- “Why Unions Matter in America,” 2022, by LER faculty and Interfaith Worker Justice
- “A Look at How Unions Lift Workers,” by Steven Greenhouse, “November 22, 2021 American Century Foundation
- “Is Organized Labor Making a Comeback?,” by Steven Greenhouse, April 4, 2022 The Atlantic magazine
- “How Amazon and Starbucks Workers Are Upending the Organizing Rules,” May 31, 2022 *In These Times* magazine
- Pages 42-67 “Four Schools of Thought on the Employment Relationship,” from chapter 2 in “Labor Unions: Good or Bad?” in Labor Relations: Striking a Balance by John Budd (2008)

Assignments

- Make a first substantial post in Forum 3 by the sixth day of the segment on Thursday, February 9. Posting later will lead to a reduction in points. Post at least three substantial posts during the segment.
- The Midterm Exam is accessible from 6:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. on Monday, February 13. This is a short essay exam that you take on Canvas. There are five questions that are each worth up to 10 points. The exam is open for 50 minutes. Read the Midterm Exam directions.

SEGMENT 4 U.S. LABOR AND WORKING CLASS HISTORY

Segment 4 runs 9 days from Monday, February 13 to Tuesday, February 21

Reading

- Pages 37-41 “The Labor Problem” from chapter 2 in “Labor Unions: Good or Bad?” in Labor Relations: Striking a Balance by John Budd (2008)
- “17 Lessons of U.S. Labor History” (5 pages)
- “The Haymarket Square Riot” (1886) (6 pages)
- “The Strike at Homestead Mill” (1892) (7 pages)

- “The Uprising of the 20,000” (1909-12) (5 pages)
- “The 1936-37 Strike That Brought America’s Most Powerful Automaker to its Knees” (5 pages)
- “Memorial Day, 1937” (4 pages)

Videos

- Video 1: The Fight for the eight-hour day and the 1886 Haymarket events
A 15 minute PBS documentary excerpt in three parts
- Video 2: The 1892 Homestead Steel Strike
A 15 minute History channel excerpt
- Video 3: The 1909-10 women’s garment workers strike in New York City, and the 1912 Triangle Shirt Waist Factory Fire.
A 15 minute excerpt from the documentary “Century of Women”
- Video 4: Autoworkers sit-down in their factories to win union recognition in 1937.
A 15 minute excerpt from the PBS documentary “Walter Reuther and the Rise of the UAW”
- Video 5: Steel workers organize a union in the late 1930s.
A 25 minute documentary “Mean Things Happening” from the PBS Great Depression series (Start at 25 minutes into the video)

Assignments

- Make a first substantial post in Forum 4 by the sixth day of the segment on Saturday, February 18. Posting later will lead to a reduction in points. Post at least three substantial posts during the segment.

SEGMENT 5 RACE AND GENDER IN THE WORKPLACE

Segment 5 runs 9 days from Wednesday, February 22 to Thursday, March 2

Reading

- Chapter 11 “The African American Workers” in Staley: The Fight for a New American Labor Movement by Steven Ashby and C.J. Hawking
- Aftermath chapter, and pages 286-288, in Staley, by Ashby and Hawking
- Questions and Answers on Workplace Racial Harassment, Workplace Fairness
- “The Ideal Worker is Not Your Mother,” pages 71-96 in Overwhelmed: How to Work, Love, and Play When No One Has the Time, by Bridgit Schule (2014)
- Questions and Answers on Workplace Sexual Harassment, Workplace Fairness
- Read what interests you from recent New York Times’ articles on the Me Too movement

Assignments

- Make a first substantial post in Forum 5 by the sixth day of the segment on Monday, February 27. Posting later will lead to a reduction in points. Post at least three substantial posts during the segment.
- The optional extra credit paper is due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, March 10. Students must submit and get approval for a paper topic by Friday, March 3.

SEGMENT 6 ANALYZING A LABOR CONFLICT: CHICAGO TEACHERS

Segment 6 runs 8 days from Friday, March 3 to Friday, March 10

Reading

- A Fight for the Soul of Public Education: The Story of the Chicago Teachers Strike by Steven Ashby and Robert Bruno (2016 Cornell University Press)
 - “Chicago School Teachers,” Chapter 3 (excerpt - 9 pages)
 - “The Contract Campaign,” Chapter 6 (26 pages)
 - “Chicago Teachers’ Strike,” Chapter 10 (24 pages)

Video

- Highlights of the CTU Strike, Labor Beat, including interviews with teachers on the picket lines and images of the pickets and marches (26 minutes)

Assignments

- Make a first substantial post to Forum 6 by the fifth day of the segment on Tuesday, March 7. Posting later will lead to a reduction in points. Post at least three substantial during the segment.
- The optional extra credit paper is due in Assignments by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, March 10. Students must submit and get approval for a paper topic by Friday, March 3.
- The Final Exam is accessible from 6:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. on Monday, March 13. This is a short essay exam that you take on Canvas. There are eight questions that are each worth up to 10 points. The exam is open for 80 minutes. Read the Final Exam directions.

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