

**LER 110 “Labor and Social Movements”
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 110 is an introductory course that explores the role of workers’ rights movements allying with community groups to seek broad public support, by studying five such movements: the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike led by Rev. Martin Luther King; the 2011 mass protests in Wisconsin; the 2011-12 Occupy Wall Street movement; the Fight for Fifteen movement of low-wage workers; worker centers; and the teachers’ upsurge in 2018-19.

Upon completing this course, you will know:

- How to analyze a social movement;
- The purpose, activities, and significance of a number of social movements for workers’ rights and economic justice;
- The historic example of a fusion of the labor and civil rights movements in the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike;
- The conditions facing low-wage workers and the Fight for Fifteen movement;
- The workers’ upsurge in Wisconsin in early 2011;
- The Occupy Wall Street movement in late 2011;
- The teachers’ upsurge in 2018 and 2019; and
- Worker centers

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 forums.

Segment	Days	Opens	Closes	Topic
1	9	January 17	January 25	The 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike
2	9	January 26	February 3	Wisconsin Workers
3	9	February 4	February 12	Occupy Wall Street
4	9	February 13	February 21	Fight for Fifteen
5	9	February 22	March 2	Teachers
6	8	March 3	March 10	Worker Centers

REQUIRED READING

There are no texts. All assigned reading is on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are 218 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 14	February 14	48
Extra Credit Essay	First day of class	March 10	10
Final Exam Part 1	March 14	March 14	48
Final Exam Part 2	March 14	March 14	32
			TOTAL 218

Course Grade Scale:

A+	98%	213-218	B+	88%	192-195	C+	78%	170-173	D+	68%	148-151
A	93%	203-212	B	83%	181-191	C	73%	159-169	D	63%	137-147
A-	90%	196-202	B-	80%	174-180	C-	70%	152-158	D-	60%	131-136
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COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING

SEGMENT 1

THE 1968 MEMPHIS SANITATION STRIKE

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

Reading

- Class Process file on course and discussion forum requirements
- “How to Start a Union at Your Company,” April 7, 2022 *Time* magazine
- “Why Unions Matter in America,” 2022, Interfaith Worker Justice and updated by LER
- “Martin Luther King Jr. and the Memphis Sanitation Strike” by Michael Honey in Major Problems in the History of American Workers (2002)
- “All Labor Has Dignity,” March 18, 1968 speech by Dr. King to striking Memphis sanitation workers
- “Sanitation strike veteran remembers past, cherishes progress,” February 17, 2008 *Memphis Commercial Appeal*
- “Martin Luther King was a Radical, Not a Saint,” by Prof. Peter Dreier, January 19, 2015 Huffington Post

Videos

- “At the River I Stand” documentary (56 minutes)
- Dr. King speaks to unionists at a SEIU 1199 conference, March 10, 1968 (8 minutes)
- 2008 interview with veterans of 1968 strike, *Memphis Commercial Appeal* (4 minutes)
- Excerpt from speech by Dr. King to striking Memphis sanitation workers, “I’ve been to the mountain top,” April 3, 1968 (2 minutes)

Assignments

- Post to the Introductions forum early in the segment.
- Make a first substantial post in Forum 1 “The 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike” 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

WISCONSIN

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

Reading

- We Are Wisconsin: The Wisconsin uprising in the words of the activists, writers, and everyday Wisconsinites who made it happen, edited by Erica Sagrans (2011), pages 35-36, 38-40, 49-52, 54-56, 58-60, and 281-286 (timeline)
- “Who were the leaders of the Wisconsin uprising?” by Lee Sustar in Wisconsin Uprising: Labor Fights Back (2012), edited by Michael Yates
- “A New American Workers Movement Has Begun,” by Dan La Botz, *Monthly Review* magazine
- “Heartbreak in the Heartland: Voices from Wisconsin,” June 6, 2012 *Labor Notes*
- “5 years after Act 10: Union membership, clout has suffered,” February 11, 2016 Madison State-Journal

Videos

- This is what democracy looks like (4 minutes)
- Madison protest movement February 15-17, 2011 (5 minutes)

Assignments

- Make a first substantial post in Forum 2 “The Wisconsin Workers Upsurge” 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

OCCUPY WALL STREET

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

Reading

- Occupying Wall Street: The Inside Story of An Action that Changed America (2011), pages 15-32 (“An Occupation is Born” and “The General Assembly”)
- “Here’s What The Wall Street Protesters Are So Angry About,” Business Insider website
- “What Can Unions Learn from the Occupy Movement?,” November 17, 2011 *Labor Notes* magazine
- “The 99% Versus Wall Street: Stephen Lerner on How We Can Mobilize To Be the Greedy 1%’s Worst Nightmare,” December 22, 2011 Alternet
- The Occupy Tumblr website (read some of the people’s signs)
- “6 facts about economic inequality in the U.S.,” February 7, 2020 FactTank

Videos

- The Participatory Democracy Process of Occupy Wall Street (8 minutes)
- Where do we go from here? On the 30th day of the NYC Occupation (3 minutes)
- “News Anchor Shows Americans Real Size of Wealth Gap -- Using American Pie” (4 ½ minutes)

Assignments

- Make a first substantial post in Forum 3 “Occupy Wall Street” 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 Tuesday, February 14. This is an essay exam taken on Canvas that is open for 60 minutes. You must begin the exam by 10:59 p.m. to have the full time to finish the exam. Read the Midterm Exam directions.

SEGMENT 4

FIGHT FOR FIFTEEN

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

Reading

- “The Fight for Fifteen,” chapter 16 in labor journalist Steven Greenhouse’s Beaten Down Worked Up (2019)
- “Dignity: Fast Food Workers and a New Form of Labor Activism,” September 15, 2014 *New Yorker* magazine.
- “Living Wages, Rarity for U.S. Fast-Food Workers, Served Up in Denmark,” October 27, 2014 *New York Times*
- “\$15 Wage in Fast Food Stirs Debate on Effects,” December 4, 2013 *New York Times*
- “McDonald's Can't Figure Out How Its Workers Survive on Minimum Wage,” July 16, 2013 *The Atlantic* magazine
- “The Fight for 15 Is Creating a Fighting Labor Movement for the 21st Century,” September 3, 2015 *In These Times*
- “How a bunch of Starbucks baristas built a labor movement,” April 8, 2022 Vox
- “Why do Starbucks workers want to unionize? We ask 4 workers in downtown Cleveland,” January 11, 2022 Cleveland.com

Videos:

- Low wage workers talk about their lives (9 minutes)
- Chicago Fast-Food Workers Go On Strike (September 2014, 5 minutes)
- Hundreds Arrested as Growing Fast-Food Workers' Movement Strikes for Living Wage, Unionization (September 2014, 12 minutes)

Assignments

- Make a first substantial post in Forum 4 “Fight for Fifteen” 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

THE TEACHERS’ STRIKE WAVE

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

Reading

- “The 2018 Wave of Teacher Strikes,” by Stan Karp and Adam Sanchez, Summer 2018 *Rethinking Schools* magazine
- “Teachers Catch #RedForEd Fever,” chapter 20 in labor journalist Steven Greenhouse’s Beaten Down, Worked Up (2019)

Video

- Interviews with a dozen Oklahoma teachers who are quitting their profession (8 minutes)

Assignments

- Make a first substantial post in Forum 5 “The Teachers’ Strike Wave” 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

WORKER CENTERS

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

Reading

- “Workers’ Centers: Front Lines Against Wage Theft,” chapter 7 in Wage Theft in America by Kim Bobo (2011)
- “The Lowest Rung,” chapter 12 in The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker by Steven Greenhouse
- “Workers Organize, but Don’t Unionize, to Get Protection Under Labor Law,” September 6, 2015 *New York Times*
- “The Workers Defense Project, a Union in Spirit,” August 10, 2013 *New York Times*
- “Behind the minimum wage fight, a sweeping failure to enforce the law,” February 28, 2018 Politico

Videos

- “Worker Centers Confront Wage Theft,” Workaday Minnesota (3 minutes)
- “Wage Theft: The Crime Wave No One Talks About,” Interfaith Worker Justice and Arise Chicago Worker Center (5 minutes)

Assignments

- Make a first substantial post to Forum 6 “Worker Centers” 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 Tuesday, March 14. This is an essay exam that you take on Canvas. The exam is in two parts. Part 1 is six short answer questions. Part 2 is a longer essay on one topic. Each part is open for 60 minutes. Read the Final Exam directions.

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