

SPL 581.01 Labor and Labor Movements in the Contemporary World



Spring 2016
Tuesdays btw. 14:00-17:00 // NFB 204
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, by appointment

This course is on labor and labor movements in the contemporary world of neoliberal capitalism. It is based on the sociological literature on work, social class, and labor movements, as well as fewer pieces from allied disciplines. After an introduction to basic concepts and issues, firstly we will explore the contemporary conditions of work and employment throughout the world and their troubling impacts for workers and societies. Secondly, we will investigate the nature, dynamics, and dilemmas of labor movements with a historical perspective and examine contemporary struggles and quests of workers for better conditions and dignity. The last part will be on the Turkish experience, which will cover major issues of the Turkish labor history in a nutshell and the contemporary state of Turkish labor movement.

Questions to be explored include: What is “class” and what is its significance? What is “class consciousness”? What is “class struggle” and what is at stake in it? What is significant, passionate, moral, or promising about it? Is working-class agency limited to resistance or not? How have labor movements emerged historically, and how do processes of labor movement formations vary across societies and over time? What are the real reasons and motivations of workers to resist individually, or to participate in collective resistances? What forms of collective organization have working classes adopted and how do these vary over time and space? What are the dynamics between labor movements and social policies of national/local states? What is the culture of new capitalism? How and why did we end up here? Are the working conditions of millions destined to keep deteriorating except for a lucky, high-skilled minority? How do inequalities among workers (skill, race, gender, nation) affect labor movements? What is intersectionality and what is it good for? What are the prospects for a labor movement revival around the globe? Is it all about the Chinese workers? What are the peculiarities of the Turkish experience, if any?

REQUIREMENTS

I. Memos

Participants are expected to read each week's assignments before the class and to write **seven** "memos" on them. In these memos, I expect you to write what you find most thought-provoking in the readings and come up with a couple of discussion questions that you would like to discuss in the class. Criticisms but also appraisals or bewilderments will be guiding for you to write the memos. If there is a concept in the texts that you find particularly significant, you are welcome to focus on it by exploring why it is so important for the theories of class and/or labor movement and connecting the concept to other readings. Be critical, generous, and thoughtful, and try to show your reader that you were engaged with the readings. You can be sure that these memos will help you to organize and record your engagement with the readings. They will be very useful for you, while writing your final paper or when you will turn back to the readings for other projects in the future. Average length of these memos should be around 300 words. I expect you to send them to me by email (alpkan.birelma@gmail.com) **until each Monday night (23:59 at the latest)**. I will compile all memos for the week into one document and send it to all participants of the class each Tuesday morning before 10:00. I expect you to go over this document before coming to class. Fulfilling these two requirements on time are key to ensure the quality of discussions during the class. Late memos are not accepted, since they will not be useful in facilitating class discussion. I will not accept the weekly memo of a participant who is physically absent in the class that week. Failing to hand in memos will affect your grade. In the class, I will give you my responses to your memos. I expect you to write seven memos and they will constitute 21 per cent of your final grade (3 points for each).

II. Final paper

The rest of the evaluation will be based on an original research paper around 4000 words you write.

Before **March 7** you'll be expected to discuss with me during my office hours about the possible topic(s) you plan to write your paper (5 points). Before **April 4** you'll be expected to decide on your topic and write a draft around 500 words (6 points). Before **April 25** you'll give a detailed outline of your paper with subheadings around 1000 words and a bibliography (8 points). You'll get my written responses for your draft and outline.

The final paper will constitute 60 per cent of your final grade. **Deadline: June 1.**



READING LIST

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Week: Introduction (Feb. 7)

2. Week: Major figures, issues and approaches (Feb. 14)

Thompson, Edward P. (1963) *The Making of the English Working Class*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., pp 9-14.

Wright, Eric Olin (2005) "Foundations of a Neo-Marxist class analysis," in Wright, Eric Olin (ed.), *Approaches to Class Analyses*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 4-31.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1995) "Strikes and Political Action," in *Sociology in Question*, London: Sage Publication, pp 168-176.

Terkel, Studs (1974) *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do*, New York: Ballantine Books, pp. xiii-xxx.

II. CONTEMPORARY CONDITIONS OF WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

3. Week: The culture of the new capitalism (Feb. 21)

Sennett, Richard (2006) *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 1-130.

Pialoux, Michel and Stephane Beaud (1999) "Permanent and Temporary Workers," Pierre Bourdieu (ed.) *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 257-266.

4. Week: The workplace & the political economy of the new capitalism (Feb. 28)

Weil, David (2014) *The Fissured Workplace*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 7-27.

Bengtsson, Erik and Magnus Ryner (2015) "The (International) Political Economy of Falling Wage Shares: Situating Working-Class Agency," *New Political Economy*, 20(3), pp. 406-430.

Tilly, Chris and Peter Evans (2015) "The Future of Work: Escaping the Current Dystopian Trajectory and Building Better Alternatives," in Edgell, Stephen, Heidi Gottfried and Edward Granter (ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Work and Employment*, Los Angeles: Sage Publications, pp. 651-671.

5. Week: Precarity, informality and migrant workers (Mar. 7)

Standing, Guy (2011) "The Precariat," "Migrants: Victims, Villains of Heroes?" in *Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 1-25, 90-114.

Breman, Jan and Marcel van Linden (2014) "Informalizing the Economy: The Return of the Social Question at a Global Level," *Development and Change*, 45(5) [Debate: The 'Labour Question' in Contemporary Capitalism], pp. 920-940.

6. Week: Workers' health and safety (Mar. 14)

Quinlan, Michael (2015) *The effects of non-standard forms of employment on worker health and safety*, Geneva: ILO.

Kerrissey, Jasmine and Jeff Schuhrke (2016) "Life Chances: Labor Rights, International Institutions, and Worker Fatalities in the Global South," *Social Forces* 95(1): 191-216.

III. BACK TO THEORY: INTERSECTIONALITY & RESISTANCE

7. Week: Two theoretical issues: Intersectionality and Resistance/Cooperation (Mar. 21)

Walby, Sylvia (2007) "Complexity Theory, Systems Theory and Multiple Intersecting Social Inequalities," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 37(4), 449-470.

Hodson, Randy (2001) *Dignity at Work*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-80.

IV. LABOR MOVEMENT

8. Week: Trade unions' origins and evolution in Europe (Mar. 28)

Hyman, Richard (2001) *Understanding European Trade Unionism: Between Market, Class and Society*, London: Sage Publications, pp. ix-xi, 1-65, 169-176.

Hyman, Richard (2015) "Three Scenarios for Industrial Relations in Europe," *International Labour Review*, 15(1), pp. 5-13.

9. Week: A global, historical overview (April 4)

Silver, Beverly (2003) *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. xiii-xv, 1-74.

Silver, Beverly and Sahan Savas Karakasli (2015) "Historical Dynamics of Capitalism and Labor Movements," in Della Porta, Donatella and Mario Diani (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

10. Week: The microsociology of labor movement (April 11)

Kelly, John (1998) *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*, London: Routledge, pp. 1-38.

Dixon, Marc and Vincent J. Roscigno (2003) "Status, Networks, and Social Movement Participation: The Case of Striking Workers," *American Journal of Sociology* 108(6), pp. 1292-1327.

Meyer, Rachel (2012) "Transforming Citizenship: The Subjective Consequences of Local Political Mobilization," *Political Power and Social Theory*, 23, pp. 147-188.

11. Week: Prospects on the 21st-century global labor movement (April 25)

Buroway, Michael (2010) "From Polanyi to Pollyanna: The False Optimism of Global Labor Studies," *Global Labour Journal*, 1, pp. 301-313.

Lee, Cheol-Sung (2012) "Associational Networks and Welfare States in Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, and Taiwan," *World Politics*, 64(3), pp. 507-554.

Chun, Jennifer Jihye and Rina Agarwala (2015) "Global Labour Politics in Informal and Precarious Jobs," in Edgell, Stephen, Heidi Gottfried and Edward Granter (ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Work and Employment*, Los Angeles: Sage Publications, pp. 634-650.

(Recommended) Lee, Ching Kwan (2016) "Precarization or Empowerment? Reflections on Recent Labor Unrest in China," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 75(2), pp 317-333.

V. TURKEY

12. Week: Basics of Turkish labor history (May 2)

Makal, Ahmet (2012) "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Çalışma İlişkileri," "Türkiye'de Tek Parti Döneminde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1920-1946," "Türkiye'de Çok Partili Dönemde Çalışma İlişkileri: 1946-1960," in Makal, Ahmet (ed.) *Çalışma İlişkileri Tarihi*, Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi, pp. 78-197.

Çelik, Aziz (2012) "Türkiye'de Çalışma İlişkilerinde Kurumsallaşma: 1960-1980," "Çalışma İlişkilerinde Esneklik ve Kuralsızlaşma: 1980-2010," in Makal, Ahmet (ed.) *Çalışma İlişkileri Tarihi*, Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi, pp. 198-227, 228-264.

13. Week: Current state of labor movement in Turkey (May 9)

Adaman, Fikret, Ayşe Buğra, and Ahmet İnel (2009) "Societal Context of Labor Union Strategy the Case of Turkey," *Labor Studies Journal*, 34(2), pp. 168-88.

Akan, Taner (2011) "The political economy of Turkish Conservative Democracy as a governmental strategy of industrial relations between Islamism, neoliberalism and social democracy," *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 33(2), pp. 317-349.

Birelma, Alpkın (2017) "Subcontracted Employment and the Labor Movement's Response in Turkey," in Durrenberger, Paul (ed.), *Uncertain Times: Anthropological Approaches to Labor in a Neoliberal World*, Boulder: University of Colorado (forthcoming).