

LER 590 CER

Comparative Employment Relations Systems

Spring 2021
Thursday 2 PM – 4:50 PM

Please go to the Compass2g course website to find a link to the class meeting.

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COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course examines employment systems in selected developed, newly industrialized, and developing economies. We will discuss how distinctive labor market institutions emerged in the context of economic development and evolved through interactions with the global economy. Topics include management-labor relations, and the roles of firms, national governments, and international organizations in shaping employment systems. Emphasis will be placed on the analytical tools needed to make multi-country comparisons, to link theory and practice, and to understand the reasons for major changes in the nature of employment relations.

I have two goals for this course. First, I want to familiarize you with the different systems of employment relations and broaden the horizon of your knowledge about labor and employment relations. By doing so, I expect you to be able to confidently communicate the diverse ways of managing employment relations. Second, I want to help you apply the theoretical knowledge you obtained from the class to empirical realities. In other words, I hope that this class provides practical knowledge that you can use when faced with a context different from your own.

COURSE EVALUATION:

- Exam #1: 20%
- Exam #2: 20%
- Peer teaching: 10%
- In-class activity reports: 10%
- Group paper: 20% (including peer evaluation)
- Group presentation: 10%
- Attendance and participation: 10%

REQUIRED TEXT:

Greg J. Bamber, Russell D. Lansbury, Nick Wailes, and Chris F. Wright. 2014.
International & Comparative Employment Relations (6th edition). Sage publications.

All readings listed in this syllabus (except for the chapters from the textbook) are available online for download or purchase. I may also post additional materials during the semester when there are new developments of interest to relevant topics. *It is your responsibility to check course website regularly.* I also encourage students to suggest items that may be of interest to the class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Exams

There will be 2 in-class exams, each worth 20% of your course grade. Exam questions will be derived from class discussion and course readings. The exams will be open book and comprised of essay, short answer, and multiple choice questions.

Peer Teaching on “Employment Issues in the Headlines”

For this assignment, students will take responsibility for presenting “Employment Issues in the Headlines” and facilitating discussion for their assigned week. Students will present in assigned groups of 2-3 (see last page of the syllabus). In brief, student groups will be asked to: (1) Present a current employment issue in the country of the week; (2) analyze the topic/situation, placing particular emphasis on explaining what it means for HR/IR, employees and organizations, and why it matters; and (3) stimulate class discussion by posing a question for class discussion. The topic presentation should be 10 minutes long, and the facilitation of discussion should be 5 minutes long. We will discuss specific instructions for peer teaching in class. **Please note that there are NO MAKE-UPS for peer teaching. Please let me know by February 5th if your assigned date does not work for you. After February 5th, no changes to the schedule will be made.** Peer teaching is worth 10% of your grade.

In-Class Activity Reports

There will be 9 in-class activities which will ask you to write a short response to one or two discussion questions. Each will worth 1.25 points. Well-thought-out and well-written reports will receive a full credit; reports that provide answers that are insufficient and only partly relevant to the questions will receive half of the credit. Though you will submit 9 reports, your grade will be based on your best 8 scores. **That is, you are allowed to drop your lowest score. There is no make-up for activity reports, so if you miss class this will count as a dropped quiz score.** In total, these reports are worth 10% of your grade.

Group Project – Paper and Presentation

For this project, you will work outside of class in teams of 2-3 students. I ask each group to pick one of the non-US countries that we will discuss in this class and think about HR/IR-related challenges a US company may face if it wants to do business in the country. Your presentation and final report should focus on the “challenges” as well as “HR/IR strategies” to overcome those challenges. These two components must be included in the presentation and the final report.

Key Paper Components

1. **Introduction:** Describe the company (either hypothetical or actual) and introduce your focal topic (i.e., the HR/IR challenges you think the company is likely to face in the country of your choosing) (no more than 1 page)
2. **Overview of the Employment Relations System:** Describe the most important characteristics of the country’s employment relations system (no more than 2 pages)
3. **Challenges:** Describe the main HR/IR challenges the company is likely to face (2 pages)
4. **Recommendations:** Make recommendations for addressing the HR/IR challenge(s) you identified (2-3 pages)
5. **Implementation Considerations:** Describe two considerations for implementation of your recommendations – i.e., what challenges should the company anticipate as they implement your recommendations (1 page)
6. **Conclusion** (no more than a ½ page)

The breakdown for the group project grade is as follows:

Final paper: Each group will turn in one report. Papers should be **no more than 10 pages** in length, double-spaced, in 12-point font, and with margins of 1 inch. Papers will be evaluated based on how well the key paper components are addressed. An electronic copy of the paper should be submitted via Compass2g by the end of May 6th. To ensure fairness to all team members, each person will be asked to complete and turn in a “peer evaluation” of their teammates. The paper and peer evaluation are worth 20% of your grade (paper=15%, peer evaluation=5%).

Presentation: Each group will have approximately 12-15 minutes with time for questions. Since this is a group project, it is important that all team members participate. Students are expected to prepare for the presentation as if they are preparing to present to an HR/IR manager, vice-president, or other key stakeholder. Professionalism is expected (dress, preparation, etc.). The format should follow that of the paper. The presentation is worth 10% of your grade.

Attendance and Participation

Class discussion is a critical ingredient in your learning for this course, for which we all bear collective responsibility. Class participation provides an opportunity to develop oral communication skills, to present your ideas concisely and persuasively, and to respond

effectively to the comments of others. While I will lead class discussions, I do not intend to subject you to three hours of intense lecturing each week, but rather encourage you to offer insights and thoughts on the material assigned.

Most issues, cases and problems do not have one “right” answer, though some answers are more correct than others. Consequently, being “right” or “wrong” should not be your concern when participating. **I am interested in your point of view** and, if the consensus differs from your viewpoint, that in no way diminishes the value of your comments. Critically listen to the arguments of your fellow students and if you disagree, speak and explain how and why your viewpoint differs. In general, I will assess class participation based on the *quality* of your contributions in class, and the professionalism of your conduct (attendance, punctuality, preparedness, and showing respect to all section members and their class contributions). The quality and frequency of contributions depend on a number of issues, such as one’s ability to draw on course materials productively, to advance or sharpen in-class discussion and debate, and to use logic, precision, and evidence in making arguments. Therefore, speaking too much without adding value will be as detrimental to your grade as not speaking at all, and behaving in a disruptive manner will be most detrimental to your grade.

Attendance (5%): Each student is allowed to miss no more than **ONE** class in the semester for any reason (sickness, interview, etc.). No excuse is needed but I appreciate an email notice. For any additional class you miss I will deduct **1.5** points from your final grade. Any tardiness/leaving class early will count as missing half a class.

Participation (5%) -- Please do not confuse attendance with participation. While on-time attendance is important, active participation in the class discussion is evaluated separately. When you are in the physical classroom, you may ask questions to me, respond to other students’ questions, and comment on student presentations. A full credit will be awarded to students who make a contribution that moves the discussion forward in an insightful way. When you attend the class through zoom, I encourage you to actively use the chat window to share thoughts. After each class, I will count the number of relevant participation in the chat window and use it to calculate your attendance scores.

Students who miss class without a valid excuse or behave in a disruptive way will receive “zero” participation point. If you have concerns about your ability to participate during class discussions, or are unaccustomed to participating in class, **please contact me immediately**. I can help you to improve your ability to participate, but only if you contact me **early** in the course for assistance.

Grading Scale

A+	97-100%
A	93-96.9%
A-	90-92.9%
B+	87-89.9%
B	83-86.9%

B-	80-82.9%
C+	77-79.9%
C	73-76.9%
C-	70-72.9%
D+	67-69.9%
D	63-66.9%
D-	60-62.9%
F	Below 60%

OTHER THINGS OF WHICH YOU SHOULD BE AWARE

The following lists some procedural items that are in your best individual interest and in the interest of the class as a whole. Please take this information into account. Your consideration will help make the course more worthwhile—and fun—to all participants!

Absence Policy

If you miss class, it is **your responsibility** to find out from your classmates what was covered, and to obtain copies of any handouts and/or assignments. Make-up exams will be given **only** if arranged well in advance, and if I believe that your situation warrants it. You are more likely to gain my sympathy if you contact me as soon as possible to let me know about catastrophic or unexpected events, instead of just not showing up.

Lateness and Courtesy

Arriving late or leaving early can be disruptive, particularly given the importance of student participation and in-class discussion in this course. Such behavior is also discourteous to the class when it makes it necessary to repeat material. Therefore, please come to class on time, and, if you must arrive late or leave early for a particular session, please let me know in advance.

Ethical Behavior

Cheating or other breaches of ethical behavior will not be tolerated. I do not wish to have to act on any unethical case. Nevertheless it is in the best interest of the class that such offenses not to be allowed to interfere with the learning process. University provisions for the punishment of unethical behavior are such that a guilty student may fail the course, be brought before the Disciplinary Committee, or be expelled.

Enrollment in this course indicates you have read and accepted the terms of this course outline.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (January 28) Introduction

Syllabus

Week 2 (February 4) How to study employment relations from a comparative perspective

Chapter 1: Introduction in *ICER*.

Class activity #1 – Let’s share some stories of surprising norms regarding employment relations

Week 3 (February 11) Labor standards in the global market (Peer Teaching Group #1)

Stephen J. Frenkel and Duncan Scott. 2001. “Compliance, Collaboration, and Codes of Labor Practice: The *adidas* Connection.” *California Management Review*.

Class activity #2 – Private vs. public regulations

Week 4 (February 18) Anglo-American LME: “Employment at will” in the US (Peer Teaching Group #2)

Chapter 3 in *ICER*.

Peter Cappelli. 1999. *The New Deal at Work: Managing the Market-Driven Workplace*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press. pp.18-37.

PBS Frontline “The Pension Gamble” (<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/the-pension-gamble/>)

Class activity #3 – Choosing between a defined benefit and defined contribution plan

Week 5 (February 25) Asian CME: Lifetime employment in Japan (Peer Teaching Group #3)

Chapter 10 in *ICER*.

Chiaki Moriguchi and Hiroshi Ono. 2003. “Japanese Lifetime Employment: A Century’s Perspective.” In *Institutional Change in Japan: Why It Happens, Why It Doesn’t*.

Boris Groysberg et al. 2018. “Womonomics in Japan.” Harvard Business School Case 9-417-002.

Class activity #4 – What can women do to break the glass ceiling in the Japanese workplace?

**Week 6 (March 4) European CME: Co-determination in Germany
(Peer Teaching Group #4)**

Chapter 8 in *ICER*.

Joel Rogers and Wolfgang Streeck. 1994. “Workplace Representation Overseas: The Works Councils Story,” in *Working Under Different Rules*, ed. by Richard Freeman, New York: Russell Sage Foundation. (READ pp. 97-117)

Class activity #5 – Can Americans use German VET model?

Week 7 (March 11) EXAM #1

**Week 8 (March 18) UK
(Peer Teaching Group #5)**

Chapter 2 in *ICER*.

Barbara Petrongolo. 2016. “Brexit and the UK labour market.” CentrePiece.

Class activity #6 – What is happening with Brexit?

**Week 9 (March 25) Denmark
(Peer Teaching Group #6)**

Chapter 9 in *ICER*.

Ton Wilthagen. 2011. “Flexicurity: Riding Into the Future.” IESE-INSIGHT MAGAGINE.

Class activity #7 – What would flexicurity look like in the U.S.?

**Week 10 (April 1) France
(Peer Teaching Group #7)**

Chapter 7 in *ICER*.

Morten Bennedsen. 2017. “To Reduce Unemployment, French President Macron Reforms the Labour Market.” INSEAD case IN1452.

Class Activity #8 – Labor unions in French workplaces

**Week 11 (April 8) China
(Peer Teaching Group #8)**

Chapter 12 in *ICER*.

Lynne Sharp Paine. 2008. “Haier Hefei Electronics Co. (A).” Harvard Business School Case 9-308-075.

Class Activity #9 – TBA

Week 12 (April 15) Exam #2

Week 13 (April 22) Project Consultation (Non-Optional)

In-Class Project Team Discussion and Consultation

Week 14 (April 29) Group Presentations

Week 15 (May 6) Group Paper

