

LER 590 CER

# Comparative Employment Relations Systems

Spring 2020  
Thursday 2 PM – 4:50 PM

LER 51

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Office hours: by appointment or just stop by.

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.

## GOALS OF THE COURSE:

- To analyze how institutional arrangements are different across countries and why such differences emerge
- To problematize the underlying assumption that there is a shared path of capitalist development of employment relations
- To analyze the effects of globalization on local employment relations
- To understand future trends in the employment

## COURSE EVALUATION:

- Attendance and participation: 20%
- Mid-term exam: 20%
- Group project: 40% (including group presentation and final report)
- Group case discussion: 10%
- Individual presentations: 10%

## REQUIRED TEXT:

Greg J. Bamber, Russell D. Lansbury, Nick Wailes, and Chris F. Wright. 2014.  
*International & Comparative Employment Relations* (6<sup>th</sup> 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

### Attendance and Participation (20%)

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.

***Please do not confuse attendance with participation.*** While on-time attendance is important, active participation in the class discussion is evaluated separately.

The breakdown for the grade is as follows:

***Attendance (10 points):*** 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 (10 points):** I encourage students to actively participate in class discussion. A full credit will be awarded to students who make a contribution that moves the discussion forward in an insightful way. Students who miss class without a valid excuse or behave in a disruptive way will receive “zero” points. 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.

### **Mid-term Exam (20%)**

I will give you instructions in class.

### **Group Project (40%)**

I will assign students to **small groups** in the second week of class. As a group, you will work on a group project as well as group discussion. For the group project, I ask each group to pick one of the countries that we will discuss between week 9 and week 13 and investigate into employment relations systems of the country. Based on your research, think about what will be most important employment issues to consider if a US (or any other national) company wants to do business in the country. In your presentation, you need to provide a thoughtful analysis of the challenges a foreign company needs to be aware of before it enters the country of your choosing, and suggest practical HR strategies to overcome those challenges.

At the end of the semester, each group will submit a report based on their analysis.

The breakdown for the group project grade is as follows:

**Group presentation (20 points):** Each group will make a presentation in the week when their chosen country is discussed. After my lecture, I will give 20-30 minutes to the presenting group to present their materials (and then, a designated discussion group will be in charge of leading the discussion). Since this is a group project, it is important that all team members participate. **I encourage the presenting group to come see me in advance to discuss their plan.**

**Group final report (20 points):** Please write **no more than 20 pages** in length, double-spaced, in 12-point font, and with margins of 1 inch.

I would like to emphasize that group projects are wonderful opportunities for you to develop your people skills. You will be working with others all the time in the workplace, and as an HR professional, you will need more people skills than others. In the final class, I will ask you to **evaluate your own and other members’ contribution** to the group work. So, try to be a responsible and friendly team member.

### **Group Case Discussion (10%)**

Each week, there is a case reading. I will lead the case discussion in the weeks before the mid-term exam. Starting from Week 9, I ask students to work as a group to propose discussion questions based on the case reading and lead the discussion in class. More detailed instructions will be given in class.

### **Individual Presentations on “Employment Issues in the Headlines” (10%)**

I intend to give enough opportunities for students to develop their presentation skills. Unlike group presentations for which students have to work together, individual presentations are under a complete control of individual students, offering them a great opportunity to experiment on new styles of public speaking and test innovative methods of delivering materials. For this assignment, which I call “employment issues in the headlines,” students find an article that discusses a current employment issue in the country to be discussed in class, and make a presentation on it. Students are given three opportunities for these individual presentations after the mid-term exam (from Week 9 to Week 13).

During the 5 weeks after the mid-term exam (from Week 9 to Week 13), students will make one group presentation on a country of their choosing, one group case discussion on another country, and three individual presentations on the rest of the countries.

### **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!

Cell phones and electronics should be turned off at all times  
(Please talk to me if you need an exception to this rule).

### 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 (Jan 23) Introduction**

Introduction to the course

### **Week 2 (Jan 30) How to study employment relations from a comparative perspective**

Chapter 1: Introduction in *ICER*.

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

- Meet the group members and select a country (to be discussed between Week 9 and Week 13) for a group presentation and final report

### **Week 3 (Feb 6) No Class**

- Pick a country for a group case discussion (Between Week 9 and Week 13) & Note that the rest of the three countries are for individual presentations on employment issues in the headlines (Between Week 9 and Week 13)

### **Week 4 (Feb 13) Labor standards in the global market**

Frederick Mayer and Gary Gereffi. 2010. "Regulation and Economic Globalization: Prospects and Limits of Private Governance," *Business and Politics* 12(3) Article 11.

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

Class activity – Private vs. public regulations

### **Week 5 (Feb 20) Anglo-American LME: “Employment at will” in the US**

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.

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

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

### **Week 6 (Feb 27) Asian CME: Lifetime employment in Japan**

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*.

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

Class activity – Aggressive Retsuko

### **Week 7 (March 5) European CME: Co-determination in Germany**

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)

**Case:** Alexandra Spitz-Oener. 2017. “The Real Reason the German Labor Market Is Booming.” *Harvard Business Review*.

Class activity – Volkswagen factory in Chattanooga, TN

### **Week 8 (March 12) MID-TERM EXAM**

### **Week 9 (March 19) Spring Break**

### **Week 10 (March 26) UK**

Chapter 2 in *ICER*.

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

### **Week 11 (April 2) Denmark**

Chapter 9 in *ICER*.

**Case #1:** Ton Wilthagen. 2011. “Flexicurity: Riding Into the Future.” IESE-INSIGHT MAGAGINE.

**Case #2:** PBS NewsHour Special. “Lincoln Electric.”

### **Week 12 (April 9) France**

Chapter 7 in *ICER*.

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

### **Week 13 (April 16) China**

Chapter 12 in *ICER*.

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

### **Week 14 (April 23) India**

Chapter 13 in *ICER*.

**Case:** Debi S. Saini. 2016. “A Popular HR Chief Burned to Death: People Management Dynamics at the Indian Subsidiary of Suzuki LTD.” Asian Case Research Centre. University of Hong Kong.

### **Week 15 (April 30) Class Recap**

Peer evaluation & Course evaluation

### **Week 16 (May 7) Final Paper Due**