

Please note: this is a provisional syllabus. An updated version will be distributed at our first meeting.

LER 590 PPF: The Past, Present, and Future of Work

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Spring 2019

Wednesday 2:00 – 4:50 pm

134 Armory

Instructor

Professor Dan Gilbert (gilbertd@illinois.edu)

Office hours (LER 207): Monday 2:45 – 4:45

Course Summary

This is a course about the changing organization and experience of work in the United States since the middle of the twentieth century. We will examine the dynamics of change and transformation that have shaped – and continue to shape – a wide range of workplaces and industries. Throughout the semester we will strive to understand historical, contemporary, and future transformations in American workplaces from the perspectives of workers themselves. Key case studies will include government employees, steelworkers, Silicon Valley software engineers, restaurant servers, and corporate interns. Our investigations of these and other industry-specific case studies will be informed by a semester-long engagement with major theoretical and interpretive frameworks for understanding the meaning and nature of work.

Required Books and Other Materials

We will read the following books, which are available for purchase at the Illini Union Bookstore:

Robert Bruno, *Steelworker Alley: How Class Works in Youngstown* (ILR Press, 1999)

John W. Budd, *The Thought of Work* (ILR Press, 2011)

Louis Hyman, *Temp: How American Work, American Business, and the American Dream Became Temporary* (Viking, 2018)

Saru Jayaraman, *Forked: A New Standard for American Dining* (Oxford, 2016)

Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy* (Verso, 2012)

Please note: the Budd & Hyman books are also available without charge as ebooks through the University Library.

****other readings and course materials will be available via our Compass site****

Course Requirements

1. Class participation (15% of final grade)

Discussions of the readings and other class materials will form the heart of our work together. Everyone's contributions to our discussions – by listening actively, posing thoughtful questions, offering informed opinions and analyses, and helping to nurture a productive space for shared learning – will be vital.

2. Weekly reading journal (10% of final grade)

Each student will maintain a reading journal on Compass throughout the semester. Journal entries will be opportunities to reflect on the course materials in response to prompts provided by the instructor. Journal entries will be short – approximately 250 words. Further details about this assignment will be distributed in class.

3. Weekly discussion questions (5% of final grade)

Each week, everyone will submit at least one discussion question to a shared forum on Compass by no later than 24 hours prior to class. Discussion questions should be designed to provoke thoughtful discussion of the week's materials. Further details about this assignment will be distributed in class.

4. Seminar leadership (10% of final grade)

Twice over the course of the semester every student will help lead discussion. Seminar leadership will include a short presentation (highlighting key themes from the week's reading and highlighting its relevance to real-world examples of your own choice), along with facilitation of discussion, drawing on the questions submitted by other members of the class.

5. Contributions to our Course Blog (5% of final grade)

For the weeks in which you are responsible for helping to lead the discussion (see #4, above), you will create a post for our Course Blog (on Compass). Your post is an opportunity to reflect further on the issues at stake in the week's material, and on the questions and ideas that animated the discussion in class. Blog posts should be approximately 500 words. Further information about this assignment will be distributed in class.

6. Three (3) papers

Paper 1: Due Feb. 4 (15% of final grade)

This first paper, of approximately 3-4 pages, will be an opportunity to reflect on the central themes of Louis Hyman's book, *Temp: How American Work, American Business, and the American Dream Became Temporary*. A detailed assignment will be distributed in class.

Paper 2: Due April 1 (15% of final grade)

This paper, of approximately 3-4 pages, will be an opportunity to apply one or more of the theoretical insights elaborated in *The Thought of Work* to a historical or contemporary case study of your own selection. A detailed assignment will be distributed in class.

Paper 3: Due May 3 (Friday) (25% of final grade)

This paper, of approximately 5-7 pages, will be an opportunity to conduct independent reading and research on the dynamics of change and transformation in an industry, workplace, workers' movement, or community of your own choice. A detailed assignment will be distributed in class. We will devote substantial class time at the end of the semester to collective and independent work on this assignment.

Attendance and Late Assignment Policies

Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss class (such as in the case of an illness, a family emergency, etc.) please contact Professor Gilbert prior to your absence. Multiple unexcused absences will negatively impact your final grade.

Late assignments will not receive credit, unless there are significant extenuating circumstances.

Grading Scale

A	94 - 100
A-	90 – 93.9
B+	87 – 89.9
B	84 – 86.9
B-	80 – 83.9
C+	77 – 79.9
C	74 – 76.9
C-	70 – 73.9
D+	67 – 69.9
D	64 – 66.9
D-	60 – 63.9
F	below 60

Technology in the Classroom

You are expected to complete the assigned reading prior to class. Since we will discuss the reading during class, it is vital that you bring the reading with you, either in paper or electronic form. You are welcome to use a laptop or a tablet in order to reference the assigned reading and conduct other appropriate class business. Use of technology for other purposes is strictly prohibited.

Academic Integrity

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign *Student Code* should also be considered as a part of this syllabus. Students should pay particular attention to Article 1, Part 4: Academic Integrity. Read the Code at the following URL: <http://studentcode.illinois.edu/> .

Academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade. Every student is expected to review and abide by the Academic Integrity Policy: <http://studentcode.illinois.edu/>. Ignorance is not an excuse for any academic dishonesty. It is your responsibility to read this policy to avoid any misunderstanding. Do not hesitate to ask Professor Gilbert if you are ever in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, or any other breach of academic integrity.

Students with Disabilities

To obtain disability-related academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the course instructor and the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) as soon as possible. To contact DRES, you may visit 1207 S. Oak St., Champaign, call 333-4603 (V/TDD), or e-mail a message to disability@uiuc.edu. More information is available at the following URL: <http://www.disability.illinois.edu/>.

Course Schedule

****Note:** additional readings will be announced in class, and posted to Compass**

I: STARTING POINTS

January 16: Course Introduction

January 23: The Making of the Postwar Workplace

Reading: Louis Hyman, *Temp* (1st half)

January 30: The Unmaking of the Postwar Workplace

Reading: Louis Hyman, *Temp* (2nd half)

****February 4 (Monday): Paper #1 Due**

II: THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND CASE STUDIES

February 6: Work as Curse / Work as Freedom (case study: sanitation / public service workers)

Reading:

John Budd, "Work as a Curse" and "Work as Freedom" (from *The Thought of Work*, pp. 19 - 42)

Joseph A. McCartin, "'Fire the Hell Out of Them': Sanitation Workers' Struggles and the Normalization of the Striker Replacement Strategy in the 1970s," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, vol. 2, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 67 - 92

Michael K. Honey, "'I am a Man': Unionism and the Black Working Poor," from *Black Workers Remember: An Oral History of Segregation, Unionism, and the Freedom Struggle* (University of California Press, 1999): 286 - 321

February 13: Work as Commodity / Work as Citizenship / Work as Disutility (case study: the "Wages for Housework" movement)

Reading:

John Budd, "Work as a Commodity," "Work as Occupational Citizenship," and "Work as Disutility" (from *The Thought of Work*, pp. 43 - 88)

Silvia Federici, "Wages for Housework in Historical Perspective," in Silvia Federici & Arlen Austin, eds., *The New York Wages for Housework Committee 1972-1977: History, Theory and Documents* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2017): 12 – 28

Robert Bruno, "Introduction: His Silence Broken," from *Steelworker Alley* (pp. 1 – 18)

February 20: Work as Identity (case study: steelworkers)

Reading:

John Budd, "Work as Identity" (from *The Thought of Work*, pp. 142 - 161)

Robert Bruno, *Steelworker Alley* (remaining chapters)

February 27: Work as Personal Fulfillment (case study: construction workers)

Reading:

John Budd, "Work as Personal Fulfillment" (from *The Thought of Work*, pp. 89 - 106)

Mike Rose, selections from *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker* (10th Anniversary Edition – Penguin, 2014)

- Preface & Introduction (pp. xi – liv)
- "Two Lives: A Welder and a Foreman" & "Rethinking Hand and Brain" (pp. 116 – 66)

March 6: Work as a Social Relation (case study: Silicon Valley)

Reading:

John Budd, "Work as a Social Relation" (from *The Thought of Work*, pp. 107 - 125)

Emily Chang, "Not Just a Pretty Face," "From Nerd to Bro: How Tech Bypassed Women," and "Google: When Good Intentions Aren't Enough," from *Brotopia: Breaking up the Boys' Club of Silicon Valley* (Portfolio/Penguin, 2018), pp. 1-40; 67-104

March 13: Work as Caring for Others (case study: the restaurant industry)

Reading:

John Budd, "Work as Caring for Others" (from *The Thought of Work*, pp. 126 - 142)

Saru Jayaraman, *Forked* (selections)

Britta Lokting, "The Misadventures of an Idealistic Restaurant in Cut-Throat New York," *New York Times*, December 21, 2018

March 20: NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

March 27: Work as Service (case study: Wal-Mart)

Reading:

John Budd, "Work as Service" and "Conclusion: Work Matters" (from *The Thought of Work*, pp. 162 - 186)

Bethany E. Moreton, "It Came from Bentonville: The Agrarian Origins of Wal-Mart Culture," in Nelson Lichtenstein, ed., *Wal-Mart: The Face of Twenty-First Century Capitalism* (New Press, 2006): 83 - 106

Robert E. Quinn and Anjan V. Thakor, "Creating a Purpose-Driven Organization: How to Get Employees to Bring Their Smarts and Energy to Work," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2018, p. 78-85

****April 1 (Monday): Paper #2 Due**

III: CONCEPTUALIZING THE FUTURE OF WORK

April 3: Assessing the “Future of Work” Debates

Reading:

Selections from McKinsey & Company’s analyses of the future of work

Sarita Gupta, Stephen Lerner, and Joseph A. McCartin, “It’s Not the ‘Future of Work,’ It’s the Future of Workers That’s in Doubt,” *American Prospect*, August 31, 2018

Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation* (start reading)

April 10: Higher Education and the Future of Work

Reading:

Ross Perlin, *Intern Nation* (finish reading)

Anne Trumbore, “Education Must Meet the Needs of a Flexible, Versatile Workforce,” *The Hill*, December 21, 2018

April 17: Creative Constructions of Work’s Past, Present, and Future

Reading:

Nikil Saval, “The Office and its Ends,” from *Cubed: A Secret History of the Workplace* (New York: Anchor Books, 2014): 278 – 311

April 24: Individual Consultations on Final Projects

May 1: Final Presentations

**** May 3 (Friday):** Final Paper Due