

TEACHING DOSSIER

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McMaster University
Faculty of Social Science – Department of Labour Studies

Organization and the Experience of Work
LABR 3W03
Winter 2014

Class Time and Location:

Wednesdays, 7-10 pm
KTH 104

Instructor:

Konstantin Kilibarda
Office Hour: Wednesdays 5:30-6:30
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Course Description

Why is work organized as it is? What changes might take place in the future? What will this mean for workers' experiences and understandings of work? The course explores the nature of work in diverse sectors including (but not limited to): manufacturing, the service sector, the primary sector and the public sector. The course is divided into three sections respectively examining: (1) key standpoints / perspectives for understanding work; (2) snapshots of workers' experiences in key economic sectors; and (3) the role of everyday struggles in influencing our understandings of present realities and potential alternatives to capitalist work regimes. The course aims to deepen student understandings of the changing nature of work locally and globally.

Required Texts

1. Course Kit
2. Online Articles

Evaluation

Film Review (January 29)	- 10%
Weekly Study Question, WSQ (Week 2 – Week 11)	- 10%
Group presentation	- 20%
Major Research Paper Proposal (February 26) and Paper (April 2)	- 30%
Final Exam (date tba)	- 30%

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COURSE CALENDAR AND REQUIRED READINGS

WEEK 1

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Course overview; assignments; intersectionality; waged and unwaged labour.

In class videos: *Empleo* (Argentina), 7 mins + *Planet Money Makes a T-Shirt* (NPR).

SECTION I

FRAMEWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING WORK

WEEK 2

FEMINIST INSIGHTS: SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS OF 'WORK'

WSQ: What are the contributions of a feminist framework for our understanding of work?

- Canada's working moms still earning less, doing more than dads. (CBC News, 10 May 2012).
- Silvia Federici, "The reproduction of labour-power in the global economy, Marxist theory and the unfinished feminist revolution" (2010).
- J. Cameron and J.K. Gibson-Graham. "Feminizing the economy" (Community Economies 2003).
- Selma James (*DemocracyNow!*, start at 44 mins 50 sec; 10mins) [in class video].

WEEK 3

RACE, COLONIALISM AND THE LABOUR PROCESS

WSQ: How are the 'wages of whiteness' reflected in and shape Canada's labour market?

- Roediger, David. 1999. *Wages of Whiteness*. Chapter 2: "The Prehistory of the White Worker; Settler Colonialism, Race and Republicanism before 1800."
- The Myth of the Non-Existent Aboriginal Working Class in Canada (website).
- Block and Gallabuzi. 2011. *Canada's Colour Coded Labour Market* (Policy Alternatives).

WEEK 4

MARXIST APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING THE WORLDS OF WORK

WSQ: What issues in this week's readings are reflected in Diego Rivera's Detroit Factory Murals (1932-1933)? What issues are lacking in the readings that are represented in Rivera's Murals?

- EP Thompson, *The Making of the English Working-Class*. "A Sort of Machine." p. 807-832.
- Braverman, Harry. *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (Labour and Labour Power: p.31-40).
- McNally, D. (2006). "The commodity status of labour" in Laxer/Soron. *Not for sale*.
- Diego Rivera's *Detroit Factory Murals*. Audio/Video tour (focus on East Wall: *Images of Fertility* [B]; West Wall: *Half-Face / Half-Skull* [C], *River Banks of Detroit and Brazil* [B], *Manager and Worker* [D]; North Wall: *Conveyor belt* [E], *Motion of the workers* [H], *La Raza Cosmica* [J]; South Wall: *Hands* [B], *Mead L. Bricker* [C], *Miller Street Bridge* [G].

SECTION II

WORLDS OF WORK: SNAPSHOTS FROM KEY SECTORS

WEEK 5

THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND THE NEW ENCLOSURES

WSQ: What are the common challenges facing indigenous peoples, farmers and peasants across the three case studies for this week?

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- “Peasants as subaltern agents in Latin America” in Hobson and Seabrooke (2007).
- *New York Times*’ 3-part series on rural urbanization in China (Links to Part I; Part II, Part III).
- Oakland Institute Report. *Unheard Voices: The Human Rights Impact of Land Investments on Indigenous Communities in Gambella (Ethiopia)*.
- **In class video:** *The Garden* (2008).

WEEK 6

MANUFACTURING, DEINDUSTRIALIZATION, FLEXIBLE ACCUMULATION, AND THE GLOBAL ASSEMBLY LINE

WSQ: Have labour processes changed from the mid-20th century to the present? Explain.

- 1937 Sit-Down strikes in Flint (comic book, link).
- Bluestone and Harrison. 1982 *The Deindustrialization of America*. Chapter 1.
- Harvey, David. “Chapter 9: Fordism to Flexible Accumulation” in *The Postmodern Condition*.
- “In China, Human Costs Are Built Into an iPad.” (New York Times, 25 January 2012)
- **In class video:** *FaultLines: Made in Bangladesh* (2013).

WEEK 7

SERVICE SECTOR WORK: GROWTH, PRECARIETY, AND BULLSH*T JOBS

WSQ: What is ‘the precariat’? What is a working day like for precarious workers?

- Guy Standing. 2011. *The Precariat*. “Chapter 1: The Precariat,” pp. 1-25.
- “Working Lives” (Chapter 1) in Newman, Katherine S. 1999. *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*.
- Ursula Huws. 2003. “The Global Office: Information Technology and the Relocation of White Collar Work” in *The making of a cybertariat: virtual work in a real world*.
- “On the phenomenon of bullshit jobs” (Strike Magazine).
- “Bout to explode: a day in the life of a precarious worker” (Shift Magazine).

WEEK 8

PUBLIC SECTOR JOBS AND THE NEW AUSTERITY

WSQ: How has neoliberalism transformed work in the public sector? What strategies of resistance exist to the casualization of public sector work?

- Jane Stinson. 2010. “Labour Casualization in the Public Sector” (Pupo).
- Pupo and Noack. 2010. “Transforming the Public-Sector Workplace in Canada”
- Teachers: “How Chicago Teachers Got Organized to Strike,” Norine Gutekanst (website).

SECTION III

EVERYDAY STRUGGLES, INSIDE AND BEYOND THE WORKPLACE

WEEK 9 - ORGANIZING MIGRANT WORKERS AND LABOUR MIGRATION

WSQ: What are the main challenges facing migrant workers in North America?

- Mark Thomas. 2010 “Labour Migration and Temporary Work: Canada's Foreign Worker Programs in the ‘New Economy’” in Pupo (2010).
- Flecker, K. 2007. “Building ‘the world’s most flexible workforce.’” Briarpatch, 6-9.
- “My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant.” New York Times (11 June 2011).
- **In class video:** *El Contrato, 51 mins* (NFB).

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WEEK 10

DISCIPLINING 'SURPLUS' AND 'NON-PRODUCTIVE' POPULATIONS: SOCIAL ASSISTANCE, UNEMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY

WSQ: How are 'surplus' populations created? How are governments managing such populations and how are movements like the MdTD and OCAP responding?

- Zygmunt Bauman, Chapter 3: Are There Too Many of Them? (p.34-62)
- Broad and Hunter. 2010. "Work, Welfare and the New Economy: The Commodification of Everything" (OCAP Website).
- Chatterton, P. 2004 "Making Autonomous Geographies: Argentina's Popular Uprising and the 'Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados' (Unemployed Worker's Movement)." Geoforum.

WEEK 11

DEMOCRATIC WORKPLACES?

WSQ: Given this week's readings/video, what are your thoughts on workplace democracy? Do you think it could work at your workplace (or places you've worked)? Why or why not?

- Ness and Azzellini. 2011. *Ours to Master and to Own*. Introduction.
- "Zanon factory occupation - interview with workers" (website).
- Franke, R. W. 2003 "The Mararikulam Experiment: Women Owned Cooperatives in Kerala, India." GEO (May-June): 8-11.
- **In class video:** The Take (2004), 87mins.

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COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

FILM REVIEW ASSIGNMENT (10%) - January 29.

In 1,000 words provide an intersectional analysis of the film *24-Days in Brooks* (2007). The film can be found on reserve at the Mills Memorial Library. While watching the movie ask yourself: What kind conditions confront slaughterhouse workers working in Brooks (Alberta)? How are themes like race, gender, migration, labour / management relations portrayed in the film? How does the film affect our understandings of intersectionality? What are the main messages / lessons that that the director is trying to convey in this movie about these issues? Do you agree with the director's point of view?

WEEKLY SUMMARY QUESTIONS (10%) – Every Week.

Each week has a 'weekly summary question' (WSQ). You are to answer the question in 300 (min) to 500 words (max) drawing on the required readings, websites, videos, and interactive guides for the week. Students will be graded for their demonstrated knowledge of the assigned weekly materials and their ability to integrate these into a concise answer to the weekly question. Consider these exercises as useful study notes for the final exam.

GROUP RESEARCH, WRITING AND PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT (20%) – Weekly.

At the beginning of the year students will be grouped into 10 groups. Each group will be assigned a different week to present on. The task of your group is to find a local example in Hamilton illustrating a key aspect of the weekly readings (presenters are exempt from the 'weekly-summary' assignment). Students are expected to produce the following:

- A 20-minute presentation, as well as leading the discussion on the WSQ (an additional 10 minutes). Presentations will take place at the beginning of class and should be well researched. All group members are expected to participate in preparing the presentation though not all need to present (group self-evaluations will be distributed).
- The group is also to produce a 1,000-word paper outlining the key issues for the week and how these are reflected in Hamilton's present or its history (based on the group's presentation). Students can use interviews, primary source documents, or secondary sources for their papers and presentations. In addition to the research paper, students are to hand in a collective bibliography outlining sources used for the project.

MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER (30%) – February 26 (proposal) and April 2 (final paper).

Students are expected to hand in a major-research paper by the end of the term. The MRP should address a topic drawn from one of the major themes of the course and apply at least one of the theoretical perspectives from the beginning of the year. Students should hand in a 500-word MRP proposal by February 26, outlining their main research question, thesis and sources. The final papers are to be 3,000 words and should be well researched and argued. Students will be graded on their ability to integrate core ideas from the course into their paper and on the quality of the research done. Topics can include historical or contemporary issues related to the organization and experience of work in any sector or location.