



Geography/Labor Studies 497H: Labor in the Global Economy: U.S. and South African Perspectives

Time: Wednesdays, 9am-12noon

Location: 007A Sparks Building

Instructor: Chris Benner

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:30-4:30pm or by appointment

Course Description

This course focuses on how the nature of work is changing in the global economy, and the implications for economic opportunity and inequality in both South Africa and the United States. It is a reading-intensive course dealing with the theoretical literature on rapid economic restructuring and how this is shaping work and employment.

Course Structure

The course consists of three main parts. Part one consists of series of comparative case studies that explore processes of restructuring in various industrial sectors in both the US and South Africa. Part two examines the response of labour to this restructuring, at the local (both US and South Africa), regional (Southern African and Northern American) and global scale. Part three then examines theoretical frameworks for trying to understand these changes in the world of work and the major restructuring that has taken place on the global scale.

Aims of the Course

This course aims to develop a framework for understanding the nature of contemporary processes of economic restructuring and its impact on the world of work. Drawing on research in both South African and US context, key case studies in the changing nature of work will be examined. This will provide a deeper understanding of how broad macro-level changes in the nature of contemporary capitalism are mediated by the variety of technological, political, and socio-economic factors in particular industries and geographic contexts. An in-depth look at workers' responses to these changes at different scales (local, regional, global) will help deepen our understanding of the contested nature of workplace restructuring while exploring promising strategies for improving working conditions.

At the end of the course you should:

- Have a broad understanding of how processes of globalisation and work restructuring are affecting workers;

- Be able to think critically and theoretically about workplace restructuring and its implications on working conditions; and
- Be able to contribute to developing appropriate strategies for improving working conditions in both the developed and developing world context.

Video-Conferences

During the first half of the semester, all course sessions will include video-conference discussions with honours students (fourth year undergraduate) at the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, South Africa. Discussions in these video-conferences will center on the similarities and differences in South Africa and the US in relation to the themes of the particular session.

Course convenors in South Africa are Andries Bezuidenhout and Eddie Webster, from the Sociology of Work Program.

Course Requirements:

1. *Everyone will be added to a class listserv:* L-GLOBAL-LABOR@LISTS.PSU.EDU
This listserv will form the basis for communicating about class readings and to provide a forum for on-going discussion of issues raised in the classroom. Messages to the list should be sent to: L-GLOBAL-LABOR@LISTS.PSU.EDU
2. ***Class participation (25% of final grade):*** This course will involve a high-level of discussion in class, and your active participation in these discussions is essential. For each session, there will be some assigned reading(s) that everyone is expected to read, and a range of additional readings from which everyone will be expected to choose one to read and share with the class. In addition, once during the semester, you will be responsible for preparing a 2-3 page memo analyzing the key readings. By midnight of the Monday prior to each class session, you will be expected to circulate on the list-serve your analysis, which will then become the basis for class discussion.
3. ***Final research paper (75% of final grade):*** Students should produce a 20-30 page research paper which addresses a topic of their choice related to the themes of the course. For students interested in conducting research on labor market dynamics and restructuring of work in Pittsburgh, there are opportunities for partnering with local unions and community organizations in your research. A one-page research proposal should be turned in by Wednesday, September 28th.

Learning Environment and Academic Integrity:

The University's policy statement on academic integrity reads in part:

“Academic integrity mandates the pursuit of teaching, learning, research, and creative activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. An academic

community that values integrity promotes the highest levels of personal honesty, respect for the rights, property, and dignity of others, and fosters an environment in which students and scholars can enjoy the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment neither to engage in acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception, nor to tolerate such acts by other members of the community.” <http://www.psu.edu/oldmain/prov/academicintegrity.htm>

Plagiarism, cheating, knowledge of these without reporting them, or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course and referral for further disciplinary action. In all written work, you must reference and attribute sources. If you have any questions as to what may or may not constitute plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, please see the instructor or the assistant. Any violations of academic integrity will be dealt with following the University’s procedures, which are described in detail at <http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html>

Course Texts:

Many of the readings will be drawn from the following texts, which should be available from the bookstores, and will also be available on reserve at the EMS library in 105 Deike Building:

Webster, Eddie and Karl von Holdt, eds. (2005) *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition* (Durban: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press)

Silver, Beverly (2003) *Forces of Labor* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press)

Class schedule (subject to change):

PART ONE: INTRODUCING THE ISSUES

August 31: Seminar Introduction, Class Introductions

Osterman, Paul (1999) *Securing Prosperity: The American Labor Market: How It Has Changed and What to Do about It*. (Princeton, NJ: Century Foundation Book) Chapter 2: The Changing Structure of the American Labor Market.

Burawoy, Michael (1985) *The Politics of Production* (New York: Verso) Introduction: Bringing Workers Back in.

September 7: Conceptualising Labor in the Global Economy

Silver B. 2003. *Forces of Labor: Workers’ Movements and Globalization since 1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-3.

PART TWO: CASE STUDIES OF THE LABOR PROCESS - COMPARING THE USA AND SOUTH AFRICA

September 14: A Theoretical Basis for Understanding Labour in a Global Context – A Discussion with Beverly Silver (Professor of Sociology, Johns Hopkins University)

Silver B. 2003. *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 4-5

Extra:

Burawoy, M. 2003. 'Where next For Labor?' *Critical Solidarity*, 3(3): 2-4.

Burawoy, M. 1985. *The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes Under Capitalism and Socialism*. London: Verso. Read the chapter on 'The Hidden Abode of Underdevelopment'.

September 21: Comparative case studies in agriculture

United States:

Wells, Miriam J. 1996. *Strawberry Fields: Politics, Class, and Work in California Agriculture*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. [Chapter 1 \(Class Relations and the Organization of Work\)](#) and [Chapter 7 \(Sharecropping and Labor Control: The Role of Politics\)](#).

South Africa:

Ewert, J. & Du Toit, A. 2004. 'New Faultlines in the Countryside: Restructuring in the Western Cape Wine Industry.' In: Webster, EC. & Von Holdt, K. (eds.). *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition*. Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

Klerck, G and Naidoo, L. 2003. 'In Search of Greener Pastures: Trade Unionism in the Agriculture Sector.' In: Bramble, T. and Barchiesi, F. (eds.). *Rethinking the Labour Movement in the New South Africa*. England: Ashgate Publishers.

September 28: Comparative case studies in manufacturing

United States:

Parker, Mike. 1996. "Industrial relations myth and shop-floor reality: the 'team concept' in the auto industry", in Lichtenstein, Nelson and Howell John Harris, eds. *Industrial Democracy in America: The Ambiguous Promise* Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Brown, Clair, Michael Reich and David Stern. 1993. "Becoming a high-performance work organization: the role of security, employee involvement and training". *International Journal of Resource Management* Vol. 4, No. 2. May

Milkman, R. 1997. *Farewell the Factory: Auto Workers in the Late Twentieth Century*.

South Africa:

Bezuidenhout, A. 2004. 'Post-colonial Workplace Regimes in the Engineering Industry in South Africa.' In: Webster, EC. & Von Holdt, K. (eds.). *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition*. Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

Masondo, D. 2004. 'Trade liberalisation and the restructuring of work: The case of BMW.' In: Webster, EC. & Von Holdt, K. (eds.). *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition*. Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

October 5: Comparative case studies in retail

United States:

Schlosser, Eric. 2002. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. New York: Harper-Collins. Chapter 3 (Behind the Counter),

Clarck, PF. *What price Wal-Mart?* Available online at <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04018/262404.stm>

Bernhardt, Annette. 1999. "The Future of Low-Wage Jobs: Case Studies in the Retail Industry" *IEE Working Paper No. 10*. New York: Columbia University

South Africa:

Kenny, B. 2001. "'We are nursing these jobs': The impact of labour market flexibility on South African retail sector workers.' In: N. Newman, J. Pape & H. Jansen (eds). *Is there an alternative? South African workers confronting globalisation*. Cape Town: Ilrig.

Kenny, B. 2004. 'The Market Hegemonic Workplace Order in Food Retailing.' In: Webster, EC. & Von Holdt, K. (eds.). *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition*. Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

Miller, D. 2004. 'Transition in the Post-apartheid Regional Workplace: Shoprite in Zambia.' In: Webster, EC. & Von Holdt, K. (eds.). *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition*. Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

PART THREE: LABOUR RESPONSES TO RESTRUCTURING

October 12: Comparative case studies in labour organising – local and national responses

United States (selections):

Debate on recent AFL-CIO Split:

Restore the American Dream: Building a 21st Century Labor Movement that Can Win (official position of Change To Win coalition. <http://www.changetowin.org/>)

Benson, Herman (2005) “AFL-CIO Split poses the question: Must Labor Bureaucratize to Win?” *Union Democracy Review* #157

Bacon, David (2005) “Labor Needs a Hard Left Turn: An Interview with Bill Fletcher”

Other analyses/initiatives:

Herzenberg, S. 2002. ‘Reinventing the US Labour Movement, Inventing Post-Industrial Prosperity: A Progress Report.’ In: Jose, A.V. (ed.). *Organised Labour in the 21st Century*. Geneva: ILS.

Benner, C. & Dean, A. 2000. ‘Labor in the New Economy: Lessons from Labor Organizing in Silicon Valley.’ In: Carre, F., Ferber, M., Golden, L. & Herzenberg, S. (eds.). *Nonstandard Work Arrangements and the Changing Labor Markets: Dimensions, Causes, and Institutional Responses*. (Industrial Relations Research Association 2000 Annual Research Volume).

Fletcher, B. & Hurd, R. 2000. ‘Is Organizing Enough? Race, Gender and Union Culture.’ *New Labor Forum* Vol. 6, Spring/Summer. http://www.qc.edu/newlaborforum/html/6_article2.html

Blackwell, Angela Glover and Kalima Rose, 1999. ‘Overcoming the Obstacles: Forging Effective Labor-Community Alliances.’ *New Labor Forum*, vol. 5, Fall/Winter.

Labor Notes Forum on “Organizing: What’s Needed”. Contributions from: Jeff Lacher, Sam Smucker, Stephen Lerner, Daisy Rooks, David Cohen, Kate Bronfenbrenner, Suzanne Wall, Ken Paff, Sid Shniad, Steve Early, Peter Olney, Kim Moody, Lenny Gentle, Allen Gottheil, Ed Rothstein, and Erin Bowie. <http://www.labornotes.org/archives/2003/organizing.html>

Olney, Peter. 2002. ‘The Arithmetic of Decline and Some Proposals for Renewal.’ *New Labor Forum*. Vol 10, Spring/summer 2002. http://www.qc.edu/newlaborforum/html/10_article7.html

Luce, Stephanie 2002. ‘Life Support: Coalition Building and the Living Wage Movement.’ *New Labor Forum*. Vol 20, Spring/summer 2002. http://www.qc.edu/newlaborforum/html/10_article81.html

Brecher, Jeremy and Tim Costello. 1998. 'Labor and the Challenge of the Dis-integrated Corporation.' *New Labor Forum*. Vol. 2. Spring/Summer.

South Africa:

Buhlungu, S. 2002. 'Comrades Entrepreneurs and Career Unionists: Organizational Modernisation and new Cleavages among COSATU Union Officials.' Friedrich Ebert Foundation Occasional Paper no. 17, Johannesburg.

Von Holdt, Karl. 2003. 'Social Movement Unionism: The South African case.' *Work, Employment and Society*

Webster, E. 2004. 'New Forms of Work and Worker Organisation: A Durban Case Study.' In: Webster, EC. & Von Holdt, K. (eds.). *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace: Studies in Transition*. Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

October 19: Comparative case studies in labour organising – Regional cooperation

North America:

Delgado, Hector. 2000. "Immigrant Nation: Organizing America's Newest Workers". *New Labor Forum*. Vol. 7. Fall/Winter 2000.

Milkman, Ruth. 2000. "Immigrant Organizing and the New Labor Movement in Los Angeles" *Critical Sociology* Vol. 26, No. 1/2

Johnson, Paul. 1999. "Rethinking cross-border employment in overlapping societies: A Citizenship Movement Agenda" Chapter 4 of Forum for Transnational Employment. (Davis, CA: California Institute for Rural Studies) Web-site: <http://www.cirsinc.org/fte.html> See also: The Citizenship Project: <http://www.newcitizen.org>

[Alexander, Robin and Peter Gilmore](#). 1994. "The Emergence of Cross-Border Labor Organizing" Originally published in NACLA Report on the America, July/August 1994. Reprinted in AFSC *The Maquiladora Reader*.

Southern Africa:

Maserumule, B. & Miller, D. 2000. 'Understanding Regionalism in Post-apartheid Southern Africa.' *South African Labour Bulletin* vol 24, no. 6.

Bond, Patrick, Darlene Miller and Greg Ruiters. 2001. 'The Southern African Working Class: Production, Reproduction and Politics.' *Socialist Register 2001: The global working class at the Millennium*. New York: Monthly Review Press

October 26: Comparative case studies in labour organising: Global cooperation

Munck, R. *Globalisation, Labour and the "Polanyi Problem"*. Paper Presented at Congress on labour movements, University of Sherfields, United Kingdom.

Lambert, R. and Chan, A. 1999. 'Global Dance: Factory Regimes, Asian Labour Standards and Corporate Restructuring.' In Waddington, J. (ed.), *Globalization and Patterns of Labour Resistance*. London & New York: Mansell.

Lambert, R. and Webster, E. 2001. 'Southern Unionism and the New Labour Internationalism.' *Antipode*, 33(3): 337-361.

PART THREE: THEORETICAL ISSUES AND MACRO OVERVIEW OF WORK RESTRUCTURING

November 2: Service Economy and Emotional Labor

Herzenberg, Stephen, John Alic and Howard Wial (1998) *New Rules for a New Economy: Employment and Opportunity in Postindustrial America* (Ithaca: ILR Press) Chapter 1-3

Hochschild, Arlie (1983) *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: UC Press) Chapter 1.

November 9: Post-Fordism and Flexibility

Harvey, D. 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell. Read *Part II* on "The political-economic transformation of late twentieth century capitalism."

November 16: Work, globalization and 'informational capitalism'

Benner, Chris. 2002. *Work in the New Economy: Flexible Labor Markets in Silicon Valley*. Oxford: Blackwell Press. Chapter 1.

Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers. Selections.

November 23: No class, Thanksgiving Break

November 30, December 9: Student Presentations