

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
(www.soci.ucalgary.ca)**

SOCIOLOGY 461 (WORKER MOVEMENTS & LABOUR UNIONS)

Course Outline, Winter 2013

Safewalk/Campus Security: 220-5333, ANYTIME

This course makes use of Blackboard to communicate information to students. To access Blackboard, go to: blackboard.ucalgary.ca OR my.ucalgary.ca

Instructor: Tom Langford
Office: SS 954 Phone: 220-5043

Email: langford@ucalgary.ca

Office Hours between 11 January and 15 April: Mondays 1:00-1:30 p.m., Fridays 4:30-5:00 p.m., or by appointment. (Cancelled on Monday 18 February, Friday 22 February and Friday 29 March.)

Email guidelines: Please use email to inform me of something important (e.g., you are sick and will be missing the next class), to ask a question that I can answer with a simple Yes or No (Is there a final examination in the course?) or to book an appointment outside of the scheduled times for questions. For more complicated questions and discussions, please speak to me in person.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Workers in capitalist relations of production survive by exchanging their labour power for a wage or salary. They are simultaneously dependent upon the success of their own employer and involved in ongoing (although sometimes latent) conflict with that employer over on-the-job safety, wages and benefits, job autonomy, and the amount of work that must be accomplished for a particular wage or salary.

One of the defining characteristics of capitalist societies is the joining together of workers in common cause, united by the similar circumstances of their lives and a moral interpretation that defines those circumstances as unjust. This course studies examples of worker organization and mobilization, using concepts drawn from the sociological literature on social movements. The course is thus about worker movements.

Worker movements have sometimes given rise to formal organizations such as labour unions, co-operative societies and political parties, but can also be observed in the everyday collective activities of workers in workplaces and communities. In studying worker movements we must necessarily study the role of labour unions in organizing workers' struggles against and accommodation to their conditions in capitalist society. Nonetheless, labour unions only constitute part of the story of worker movements.

This course will focus on worker movements and labour unions in the contemporary era of neoliberal corporate globalization. Many of the products that we purchase today in Calgary are made in distant parts of the globe. How has the shift of manufacturing to Majority World countries over the past thirty+ years affected labour unions in Canada and the United States? Has there been an upsurge in worker movements and labour organizing in the new centres for manufacturing in global commodity chains? What steps are Canadian unions taking today to ‘organize the unorganized’ and to revitalize the Canadian labour movement? Why and how have many governments in North America been eroding the legal rights and protections of labour unions?

In order to understand current developments both in Canada and other countries, however, we must also consider the history of workers’ struggles and organizing efforts. While this is not a labour history course, it includes some historical scholarship so that current developments can be understood in light of social changes between the mid-19th century and the present time. Finally, we will undertake the analysis of different theoretical approaches to understanding worker movements and labour unions.

Please keep the following points in mind as you are contemplating whether to take this course:

(1) There is a great deal to learn about this subject, and as a consequence students will be expected to carry a fairly heavy reading load.

(2) This is a seminar course. Your attendance and participation is essential to the success of the course. You will be expected to complete assigned readings and reading questions on schedule and actively participate in discussions on those readings during our seminars. If your schedule is such that it looks like you will be unable to make our classes on a regular basis, this is probably not the best course for you to take.

(3) There is a field trip scheduled for this course (to learn more about the historical and current worker movements in the coal mining communities in the Crowsnest Pass and Elk Valley). The dates/times for the field trip are: leaving Calgary on Saturday 16 March at 7 a.m. and returning to Calgary on Sunday 17 March at 6 p.m. [In the case of bad weather, the field trip will be rescheduled to the weekend of March 23/24.] A small part of the cost of the trip will be subsidized, but each student will be responsible for most of the cost. I estimate your cost at approximately \$90 for transportation, overnight accommodation and food. If you work on weekends, as a precaution please book off of both the March 16/17 and March 23/24 weekends. Please plan to get ahead in your other courses so that this field trip won’t interfere with your plans to get a 4.0 GPA this term. This is a MANDATORY field trip, so if it looks like you will be unable to participate then, unfortunately, you should look for another course to fit into your schedule.

REQUIRED READINGS

The two required books for the course, available through the Book Store, are:

Gorn, Elliott J. 2001. *Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Nowak, Mark, 2009. *Coal Mountain Elementary*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press.

You will also be assigned to read a number of scholarly articles and chapters, and occasional newspaper/magazine articles. Most of these readings will be available online through the U of C Library's website. Sometimes I will be able to post a direct link or a pdf in the "Course Documents" folder on Blackboard. When a reading is unavailable online, it will be placed on reserve at the TFDL (you'll have to sign it out and then make a photocopy). The schedule of assigned readings and reading questions will be posted in the "Seminar Prep" section on Blackboard, and updated throughout the term.

STUDENT EVALUATION

1. Preparation for and Participation in Seminars

Preparation will usually be judged by the quality of your contributions to seminar discussions although I reserve the option of holding a surprise quiz at the beginning of any class for which an assigned reading and reading questions are due to be completed that day. Surprise quizzes will be closed book, so be sure to review your notes prior to class. You will receive a zero on any surprise quiz that you miss unless you provide a medical note.

The quality of your participation is more important than the quantity; therefore you don't have to say a lot to get a good participation mark (although you do have to say something). Sometimes we will break into discussion groups for a few minutes in order to give everyone a chance to talk about an assigned reading and reading questions.

... value = 15%

2. Mid-Term Test, Friday 15 February, 12:00 to 12:50 p.m., in class

- (1) Format. Closed book. A mix of short answer, short essay and multiple-choice questions.
- (2) Content. All readings, lectures, films and discussions between Jan. 9 and Feb. 13

... value = 20%

3. Essay Proposal, due 25 February at 10:00 a.m. in the digital drop box

- A 300-word proposal for an essay on a topic of your choice (as long as it is directly relevant to workers movements and labour unions). The proposal should specify the research question(s) to be addressed in the essay and outline the tentative thesis/argument of the essay. It should also identify and briefly discuss the relevance of at least three scholarly sources (books or journal articles) that you will use for the essay. Your reference list does not count towards the 300-word limit.

- As an alternative you may choose to write an essay on one of the five "Suggested Essay Topics" that will be posted by February 1. In this alternate case, your proposal should be dedicated to discussing the relevance of at least three scholarly sources (books or journal articles) to the essay topic you have chosen.

- Consultation with the instructor is recommended as you are developing your research question(s).

... value = 5%

4. Participation in the Field Trip to the Crowsnest Pass on March 16/17 (in case of bad weather we will reschedule to March 23/24)

- see details in the "Course Overview and Objectives"
- further details will be communicated as the itinerary is confirmed

... value = 15%

5. Essay (due Monday 8 April at 10:00 a.m. in the digital drop box)

- (1) Topic: Unless you receive special permission from the instructor, you must write an essay based on the proposal you submitted on 25 February.
- (2) Style: You must follow the ASA (American Sociological Association) style of referencing sources. The ASA style includes page numbers in the citations in the text.
- (3) Length: Between 3,000 and 4,000 words, excluding references and title page. You must indicate the word count for your essay at the top of the first page. Essays that exceed the word count will be penalized 5 per cent of the assigned grade for every 200 words, or part thereof, over 4,000 words.
- (4) Submission: Please submit an electronic version of your essay in the Digital Drop Box available on Blackboard.
- (5) Due Date: Monday 8 April at 10:00 a.m. in the digital drop box.

... value = 35%

6. Final Quiz, Monday 15 April, 12:00 to 12:50 p.m., in class

- (1) Format: Closed book. A mix of short answer, short essay and multiple-choice questions
- (2) Content: All readings, lectures, films and discussions between 25 February and 12 April (including material covered during the field trip to the Crowsnest Pass)

... value = 10%

NOTE. There is no registrar-scheduled final examination in this course.

LETTER GRADE ASSIGNMENT

At the end of the course numerical marks are totalled and a final letter grade is assigned on the following basis:

Percentage Range	Letter Grade
49 or less	F
50-53	D
54-58	D ⁺
59-62	C-
63-66	C
67-71	C ⁺
72-75	B-
76-79	B
80-84	B ⁺
85-89	A-
90-94	A
95 or higher	A ⁺

IMPORTANT NOTES

(1) Late Penalty. Except in the cases of documented illness, or extenuating circumstances brought to the instructor's attention before the due date of the essay proposal or essay, a penalty of 5% of the assigned mark per day will be assessed any late work.

(2) How to arrange for deferred work at the end of a term.

Deferred Term Work Form:

Deferral of term work past the end of a term requires a form to be filled out. It's available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 102) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

(3) The quality of a student's writing is a factor in the evaluation of a student's work in this course.

(4) "Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge" (*Calendar 2012-13*, p. 48). Please review the University of Calgary's policies for dealing with student misconduct,

particularly plagiarism and cheating (see pp. 48-51 of the *Calendar*).

(5) Handing in work outside of class, return of work, and release of final grades.

1. Students are requested to use the Digital Drop Box to submit the essay proposal and essay. If a paper copy is submitted, the student should personally deliver it to the instructor. Papers will not be accepted in the main Sociology Department office.
2. Essay proposals and essays submitted through the digital drop box will be returned with comments by email. Paper copies of essay proposals and essays will not be returned through the main Sociology Department office. The Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place (i.e. outside an instructor's office, the department office etc.). Students who want any of their work returned by mail must supply a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the instructor. Otherwise unclaimed assignments will be available for pick-up only by making an appointment to see the instructor.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are available only online.

(6) **Ethics of Research:** Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

(7) **Academic Accommodation**

Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**

(8) The grades for a course component may be scaled to maintain equity among sections and to conform to departmental norms.

(9) **Emergency evacuations.** In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom please proceed to the assembly point in the Professional Faculties Food Court (alternate is the Education Block Food Court).

ASSIGNED READINGS and READING QUESTIONS

The schedule of assigned readings and reading questions will be posted in the "Seminar Prep" section on Blackboard, and updated throughout the term.