

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

SOCIOLOGY 461 (WORKER MOVEMENTS & LABOUR UNIONS)

Course Outline, Fall 2015

Safewalk/Campus Security: 220-5333, ANYTIME

This course makes use of Desire2Learn to communicate information to students. To access D2L go to: d2l.ucalgary.ca OR my.ucalgary.ca

Instructor: Tom Langford langford@ucalgary.ca Office: SS 924

Office Hours between September 8 and December 10:

Monday afternoons prior to class (but please send me an email to set up a time).

Thursday afternoons by appointment (please send me an email to set up a time).

NOTE: Office hours are cancelled on Thanksgiving (Monday Oct. 12), Thursday Nov. 12 (Reading Day), and Thursday Nov. 19 (Langford at Carleton University).

Email guidelines: Please use email to inform me of something important (e.g., you are sick and will be missing a class), to ask a question that I can answer with a simple Yes or No (e.g., is Chapter 12 of *Mother Jones* covered on the mid-term test), or to book an appointment on Monday or Thursday afternoons. For more complicated questions and discussions, please speak to me in person.

Classroom Decorum: We should all conduct ourselves in ways that are respectful of everyone else in our learning environment. How this general principle applies to coming to class late, using electronic devices during lectures, chit chatting with the person next to you, attempting to multitask during lectures, etc., will be discussed at our first class and whenever needed throughout the term. As the instructor, I will let you know (often right on the spot) if something you are doing disrupts my concentration. In addition, since you should be paying attention to seminar material at all times, I will not hesitate to ask you a question coming out of the flow of the discussion, whether you seem to be paying attention or not! Always be prepared to participate since you never know when I will call upon you.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

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 forty 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 otherwise 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) The course will include a field trip to the Crowsnest Pass to learn about: (a) the worker movement associated with the underground mines that produced steam coal for the CPR up until the end of the 1950s; and (b) the contemporary worker movement based on employment in the open-pit, mountaintop mines that produce metallurgical coal for export to Asian steel producers. The date of the field trip will be negotiated at our class on September 21 (the last day to add classes).

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- * identify the economic, social and political factors that spawned labour organizing and worker movements in North America between the mid-1800s and mid-1900s
- * discuss the historical importance of Mother Jones and draw lessons from Mother Jones' life for contemporary worker movements
- * compare and contrast the historic (associated with underground coal mining) and contemporary (associated with open-pit, mountaintop coal mining) worker movements in the Crowsnest Pass
- * analyze the organizational and political problems faced by labour unions in Canada in the current era of neoliberal, globalized capitalism
- * assess how stratification within the working class (e.g., class stratification, stratification involving racialized groups, gender stratification, etc.) affects the work of labour unions
- * project the future of labour unions in Canada over the next 35 years (to 2050)
- * analyze the global dimensions of contemporary labour struggles and organizing
- * identify and discuss the major theoretical approaches to understanding worker movements and labour unions

REQUIRED READINGS

There are three required books for the course. The first two are available through the Book Store:

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.

I am the co-editor of the third book, and the publisher allows me to sell it to students "at cost" (\$10). I send all of the money I collect directly to the publisher.

Norton, Wayne and Tom Langford (eds.). 2002. *A World Apart: The Crowsnest Communities of Alberta and British Columbia*. Kamloops: Plateau Press.

You will also be assigned to read a few 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 D2L. If 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.)

ASSIGNED READINGS, READING QUESTIONS and REQUIRED JOURNAL ENTRIES

The schedule of assigned readings and reading questions will be posted in the "Seminar Prep" section on D2L, 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 or a compassionate reason for the absence.

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. Participation in the Field Trip to the Crowsnest Pass

1. Date: To be determined at our class on 21 September

2. Further Details: To be communicated as the itinerary is confirmed

3. Required Assignment. In addition to participating in the field trip you will be required to submit a 500-word "reflection on what I learned" piece after the field trip, and participate in a seminar discussion based on those reflections at the class immediately after the trip.

4. Cost. We will car pool to the Crowsnest Pass. I expect your cost will be about \$20 for gas money and any money you spend on food and drink during the day. I will endeavour to get the Sociology Department to cover any costs of admission to exhibits and museums.

... value = 15%

3. Mid-Term Test, Monday 09 November, 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., in class

(1) Format. Closed book. A mix of short answer, essay, multiple-choice and true/false questions.

(2) Content. All course material between September 8 and November 9.

... value = 30%

4. Final Quiz, Monday 7 December, 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., in class

(1) Format. Closed book. A mix of short answer, multiple-choice and true-false questions.

(2) Content. All course material between 16 November and 7 December.

... value = 10%

5. Essay (due Monday 14 December at 11:59 p.m. in the digital drop box)

(1) Topic: You have two options. Either

(1) write on one of the topics assigned by Professor Langford (to be posted on D2L by September 30); or

(2) write on an original topic connected directly to worker movements and labour unions that has been approved in writing by Professor Langford. [INCENTIVE NOTE. Writing an essay on an original topic will give you a 1% bonus on your overall final grade in the course.]

In order to secure approval for an original essay topic, please submit a 500 word essay proposal that answers the following questions/tasks: what is the issue or question you plan to investigate and discuss in the proposed essay?; what do you find particularly interesting about this issue or question?; and identify and briefly discuss the relevance to your essay of three scholarly books or journal articles (your discussion should demonstrate that you have actually read these books/articles). **First versions of essay proposals must be submitted to the digital drop box no later than 11:59 p.m. on Sunday October 18.** While the first version of an essay proposal might be approved, it is more likely that the student will be invited to revise and resubmit the essay proposal. **The deadline for any resubmission is 11:59 p.m. on Sunday November 1,** again to the digital drop box. I will make a final decision on the approval of your proposed original essay topic no later than November 4.

(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 3,500 words, excluding references and title page. You must indicate the word count for your essay on the title page. Essays that exceed the word count will be returned to the author for editing down to 3,500 words, and penalized 5 per cent of the assigned grade.

(4) **Submission and Return:** Please submit an electronic version of your essay in the Digital Drop Box available on D2L.

(5) **Due Date.** Monday 14 December at 11:59 p.m. in the digital drop box.

... value = 30% (plus a 1% bonus for writing on an original topic)

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:

<i>Percentage Range</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Percentage Range</i>	<i>Letter Grade</i>
Less than 50	F	72-75	B-
50-53	D	76-79	B
54-58	D+	80-84	B+
59-62	C-	85-89	A-
63-66	C	90-94	A
67-71	C+	95 and 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, a penalty of 5% of the assigned mark per day will be assessed a late essay.

(2) A student who has a legitimate reason for being unable to write the mid-term test or final quiz must discuss an alternate course of action with the instructor. At his discretion, the instructor will transfer the percentage weight to another component of the course, or (most likely) set a make-up test or quiz. Make-up tests must be written as soon as possible at a scheduled Department of Sociology make-up test session.

(3) *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 <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/forms>

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).

(4) *Deferred Final Exam Form:*

Please note that requests to defer the Registrar-scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which is available at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/forms>

(5) "Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge" (*Calendar 2015-16*, p. 48). Please review the University of Calgary's policies for dealing with student misconduct, particularly plagiarism and cheating at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

(6) The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. You must contact me if you have any questions about the evaluation of your work, etc.

(7) Your mid-term test will be returned in class. You can also make an appointment to pick up your test from my office. If you would like to have the final quiz returned to you, please either (a) make an appointment to pick it up at Professor Langford's office; or (b) provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope so it can be returned by mail.

(8) Your essay must be submitted through the D2L Drop Box. No paper copy please. Your marked essay will be returned by email.

(9) Academic Accommodation

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (MSC 452, telephone 220-8237). Student Accessibility Services will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at: http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf

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

(11) **Ethics 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 Faculty 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.

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

(13) ***Emergency evacuations.*** In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of any classroom in Social Sciences, please proceed to the assembly point in the Professional Faculties Food Court. Please check the assembly point locations for all of your classes at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

(14) **Student Representation.** The 2015-16 Students' Union VP Academic is Stephan Guscott: email: suypaca@ucalgary.ca. The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: arts1@ucalgary.ca, arts2@ucalgary.ca, arts3@ucalgary.ca, and arts4@ucalgary.ca. You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/role>