

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

SOCIOLOGY 461 (WORKER MOVEMENTS & LABOUR UNIONS)

Course Outline, Winter 2014

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

Classes and classroom: Tuesday and Thursday, 5 to 6:15 p.m. We will start to meet in SS 012 but will probably move to a room with a boardroom format to better allow seminar discussions.

Office Hours between Thursday 9 January and Tuesday 15 April: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12 noon to 1 p.m., or by appointment (but CANCELLED during Reading Week, and on Tuesday March 4).

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 office hours. 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 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) On at least one and possibly two occasions during the term, we will have an extended Thursday class so that we can view a movie in its entirety and discuss the content of the film. For example, we will need approximately two hours to view the film *Salt of the Earth* and discuss key issues; therefore that class will run until 7 p.m. You will receive advance notice of at least two weeks of an upcoming extended class.

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.)

ASSIGNED READINGS, READING QUESTIONS and REQUIRED JOURNAL ENTRIES

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

STUDENT EVALUATION

1. Reading Journal

Students will be required to regularly contribute entries to their own Soci 461 reading journal. You have been assigned to a unique "group" on Blackboard (the group name is your initials). You should make required reading journal entries by posting to the "Discussion Board" for this group. The only other member of your group is Professor Langford – he will regularly read and evaluate your entries, and sometimes comment on what you have written. Your journal entries will include your answers to assigned reading questions. Some of these questions will be factual while others will ask you to think about and critically assess a particular issue.

Your reading journal is a cumulative digital document that includes all of your entries throughout the term (plus any comments left by Professor Langford). The discussion board is set up such that you are neither able to delete nor modify any entries after you have submitted them.

For any class where there is assigned reading with reading questions, the deadline for submitting your reading journal entry is by **3:30 p.m. immediately preceding our 5:00 p.m. class.**

Your reading journal will be evaluated throughout the term using two criteria:

(1) Submitted on time. (2) The quality of your entries.

... value = 17%

2. Participation in Seminar Discussions

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!**). Please be forewarned that at any seminar class I might randomly call upon YOU to answer a particular reading question or to contribute to a discussion. You must always be ready to take part in a seminar discussion. On occasion we may break into discussion groups for a few minutes in order to give everyone a chance to talk about an assigned reading question.

... value = 8%

3. Mid-Term Test, Tuesday 04 March, 5:00 to 6:15 p.m., in class

- (1) **Format.** Closed book. A mix of short answer, short essay, multiple-choice and true/false questions.
- (2) **Content.** All readings, lectures, films and discussions between Jan. 9 and March 4.

... value = 25%

4. Essay (due Monday 07 April 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 Blackboard by January 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 3:30 p.m. on Thursday February 20.** 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 3:30 p.m. on Thursday March 6,** again to the digital drop box. I will make a final decision on the approval of your proposed original essay topic no later than March 7.

- (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 3,750 and 4,250 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 4,250 words, and penalized 5 per cent of the assigned grade.
- (4) **Submission:** Please submit an electronic version of your essay in the Digital Drop Box available on Blackboard.
- (5) **Due Date.** Monday 07 April at 11:59 p.m. in the digital drop box.

... value = 40% (plus 1% bonus for writing on an original topic)

6. Final Quiz, Thursday 10 April, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., in class

- (1) **Format.** Closed book. A mix of short answer, multiple-choice and true-false questions.
- (2) **Content.** All readings, lectures, films and discussions between 05 March and 10 April.

... 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, a penalty of 5% of the assigned mark per day will be assessed any late work.

(2) A student who has a legitimate reason for being unable to write the mid-term test must discuss an alternative course of action with the instructor. At his discretion, the instructor will transfer the percentage weight to another component of the course, or set a make-up test. Make-up tests must be written as soon as possible at a scheduled Department of Sociology make-up test session. This term make-up tests must be written on Tuesday evenings starting at 5 p.m.

(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 <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).

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

(5) “Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge” (*Calendar 2013-14*, p. 52). Please review the University of Calgary’s policies for dealing with student misconduct, particularly plagiarism and cheating (see pp. 52-55 of the *Calendar*).

(6) Handing in papers outside of class, return of final papers, and release of final grades.

1. Students are requested to use the Digital Drop Box to submit an essay proposal and the essay. Since students will not be submitting paper copies in this course, the departmental rule on submission does not apply. However for the record that rule is: students should personally deliver paper copies 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. Students who want any of their work returned by mail must supply a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the instructor. Otherwise unclaimed essays 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.

(7) **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 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.

(8) Academic Accommodation

Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with Student Accessibility Services (MSC 452, 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 Student Accessibility Services and to request academic accommodation, if required**

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

(10) **Emergency evacuations.** In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of the lecture classroom (SS 012 or any other classroom in Social Sciences), please proceed to the assembly point in the Professional Faculties Food Court. The back-up assembly point is the Education Block Food Court.

(11) **Student Representation.** The 2013-14 Students’ Union VP Academic is Emily Macphail; email: suvpaca@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>.