

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

SOCIOLOGY 461 (WORKER MOVEMENTS & LABOUR UNIONS)

Course Outline, Winter 2018

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 1006

Office Hours between January 8 and April 13: Friday afternoons, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., OR by appointment. NOTE: Office hours are cancelled during reading week (Friday February 23) and on the Good Friday holiday (Friday March 30).

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 the introduction to *Drawn to Change* covered on the mid-term test?), or to arrange an appointment outside of my Friday afternoon office hours. 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? What sorts of anti-union practices have employers engaged in during the neoliberal era? How successful have employers been in eroding the influence of labour unions? In recent decades, why have large employers (such as the University of Calgary) sometimes chosen to "contract out" the jobs of some employees? What impact does "contracting out" have on workers whose jobs are "contracted out"? How have labour unions responded to the phenomenon of "contracting out"? Why and how have many governments in North America been eroding the legal rights and protections of labour unions? Has Alberta's NDP government, elected in 2015, gone in the opposite direction and improved the legal rights and protections of Alberta's 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, we will read some historical sources so that contemporary developments can be understood in light of economic and 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 three 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 reasonably 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 for the field trip is Saturday 7 April (7 a.m. to 9 p.m.). You should also reserve Saturday 14 April on your schedule since this is our back-up date for the field trip if there is bad weather on 7 April. Please note that this field trip is the “capstone” activity in this course -- by the time we go on the field trip, you should have completed all other course requirements aside from participating in the field trip and producing a short reflection/commentary on what you learned during the field trip.

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 late-1900s
- * 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 stratifications within the working class (e.g., stratification involving skill levels, sector of employment, racialization, gender or age) affect the work of labour unions
- * analyze the significance for workers of the “contracting out” of jobs in the Canadian university sector, and assess how effectively labour unions have responded to the “contracting out” phenomenon
- * project the future of labour unions in Canada over the next three decades (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 very accessible graphic histories and are available through the Book Store:

(1) Graphic History Collective with Paul Buhle. 2016. *Drawn to Change: Graphic Histories of Working-Class Struggle*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

(2) Kristofferson, Rob and Simon Orpana. 2016. *Showdown: Making Modern Unions*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

I am the co-editor of the third book, and the publisher allows my students to purchase the book “at cost” (\$10). You won’t need to purchase this book until March. We will undertake this transaction in the classroom and send all of the money from classroom sales directly to the publisher.

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

In addition, you will 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.) You will also be assigned to listen to a couple of podcasts prior to our field trip to the Crowsnest Pass.

ASSIGNED READINGS, and READING QUESTIONS

The schedule of assigned readings and reading questions will be posted in the “Assigned Readings” section on D2L, and updated throughout the term. Completing assigned readings and reading questions prior to the due date is an important part of your responsibilities in this class.

STUDENT EVALUATION

1. Preparation for and Participation in Seminars

Preparation will be judged by the quality of your reading question answers as submitted to the D2L Dropbox according to the instructions specified on the “Assigned Readings” schedule. For most weeks during the term I will assign multiple reading questions, but you will have to submit only one or two of your answers to Dropbox.

Participation will be judged by your contributions to 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). 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. Please remember that you have to attend class in order to do well on the participation component.

... value = 10% preparation + 10% participation = 20%

2. Mid-Term Test, Thursday 16 February in class

- (1) Format. Closed book. A mix of short answer, short essay, multiple-choice and true/false questions.
- (2) Content. All course material between January 9 and February 16

... value = 20%

3. Group Research Projects and Presentations on “Contracting Out” in the Canadian University Sector as a Problem for Workers, and the Responses of Labour Unions

- (1) Groups and specific research questions will be assigned around the middle of February.
- (2) Due Date: For a 1,000 word research report: Monday 12 March in the D2L Dropbox.
- (3) Classroom Presentations will occur during our classes on 13 and 15 March. They will involve a 10-minute presentation by group members followed by a brief Q and A session.

...value = 10% (All group members will receive the same grade unless someone slacks it too much, in which case I reserve the right to assign unequal marks to the members of a group)

4. Essay (due Monday 2 April at 11:59 p.m. in the D2L Dropbox)

- (1) Topic: You have two options. Either
 - (1) write on one of the topics assigned by Professor Langford (to be posted on D2L by early February); 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 300 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). **Essay proposals must be submitted to the D2L Dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on Monday 26 February.** If you submit a proposal and it is not approved, you have the option of writing on one of the topics assigned by Professor Langford OR submitting a new essay proposal. Resubmissions must be submitted by **Monday 5 March at 11:59 p.m.** If a resubmission is not approved a student must write on one of the topics assigned by Professor Langford.

(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 2,700 and 3,000 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 3,000 words, and penalized 5 per cent of the assigned grade.

(4) **Submission and Return:** Please submit an electronic version of your essay in the Dropbox available on D2L. Your graded essay with comments will be returned through Dropbox.

(5) **Due Date.** Monday 2 April at 11:59 p.m. in the digital drop box.

... value = 35% (plus a 1% bonus for writing on an original topic)

5. Participation in and Reflection on the Field Trip to the Crowsnest Pass

1. **Date:** Saturday 7 April (backup date is Saturday 14 April)

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 1,000-word “reflection on what I learned” piece after the field trip, and participate in seminar discussion(s) based on those reflections.

4. **Cost.** We will car pool to the Crowsnest Pass. Each student will be required to contribute towards their driver’s expenses. In addition you will be required to cover the cost of your own food and drink during the day. Finally, the underground tour of the Bellevue Mine costs \$20 per person.

... value = 15%

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 CONVENTIONS

(1) **Late Penalty**. Except in the cases of documented illness, or extenuating circumstances brought to the instructor's attention before any due date in this course, the following late penalties apply:

(a) students will receive a grade of zero when they are late in submitting answers to assigned reading questions;

(b) for all other assigned work in the course, a penalty of 20% of the assigned mark per day (prorated for part days) will be assessed on any late work.

(2) A student who has a legitimate reason for being unable to write the scheduled 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.

(3) All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Please note that travel arrangements, holiday plans, misreading the syllabus, and scheduling conflicts with other classes or employment are not normally valid reasons for requesting a deferral. A deferral will not be granted unless, in the instructor's opinion, a just cause for the deferral has been shown and documented by the student.

(4) 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 is available at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/student-forms>. Once an extension date for deferred term work has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be

taken to the Arts Students' Centre (SS 102) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

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

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

(7) "Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge" (see section K.4 of the Academic Regulations in the 2017-18 *Calendar*, found on the U. of C. website). Please review the University of Calgary's policies for dealing with student misconduct, particularly plagiarism and cheating, found in section K.5 of the Academic Regulations in the *Calendar*.

(8) Handing in assignments outside of class, return of tests and assignments, and release of final grades.

1. When students are unable to submit assignments as scheduled in class, they should make arrangements to hand in the assignments directly to the teaching assistant. Papers will not be accepted in the main Sociology Department office.

2. Assignments and mid-terms 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 or mid-terms will be available for pick-up only at a scheduled class/lab or from the instructor's office during scheduled office hours or by appointment.

3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are available only online.

(9) **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 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.

(10) **Emergency evacuations.** In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of our classroom in Science A, please proceed to the emergency assembly point at Social Sciences -- Food Court. In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of the Arts Faculty Computer Lab, please proceed to the emergency assembly point at Professional Faculties -- Food Court. You can check the emergency assembly point locations for all of your classes at:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

(11) Academic Accommodation

Students who require academic accommodation because of a disability or health condition need to register with Student Accessibility Services (MSC 452, telephone 220-8237) in accordance with the Student Accommodation Policy found at:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy>

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.

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than disability or health condition should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

(12) **Student Representation.** The 2017-18 Students' Union VP Academic is Tina Miller (suvpaca@ucalgary.ca). For more information, and to contact other elected officials with the Student's Union, please visit this link: <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/> You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/contact>

(13) **Safewalk.** The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-53333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.