COURSE OVERVIEW

“Do you work?”
“No, trabajo en casa.”

-Janice Fine, “Workers Centers and Immigrant Women.”
The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor

We spend our lives working formally for a wage, on various projects, on our relationships, and on ourselves. Work defines us—or, does it (have to)? And how much does gender “matter” at work, and in what ways does it shape the work that we do, and where and how we do it? This seminar will take a broad approach to gender, placing it into conversation with race and ethnicity, class, nation, and space, as we think through the dynamic relationship between gender and labor from a variety of situated and comparative perspectives, including the current and intensifying neoliberal moment.

When and why are certain kinds of work not considered real work, and where are they then located, or relegated, in governing structures of power? We will pay particular attention to whose labor “counts”, thus focusing especially on workers who are often ignored, invisibilized, informalized, or excluded, thinking through their particular sets of challenges for recognition, along with the contradictions and dynamics of that process. Collectively, we will consider profound resistance efforts and international counter-movements, such as living wage ordinances, the Wages for Housework campaigns, and Precarias a la Deriva. How have particular historical moments shifted the intersections of gender, work, labor, and what can we learn from those struggles? In this seminar, we will think through competing ways that gender and labor are organized and understood together, examining and interrogating the processes by which these discourses—and their consequences—are created, shaped, and reproduced.

You should leave this seminar with a situated understanding of work and labor in its globalized and localized forms, recognizing how gendered processes shape the way that we understand work, and the multifaceted ways that workers resist and organize in varying political contexts, as well as roots of job discrimination, changes in the workplace, and gendered and racialized implications of the growing informal economy.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

ATTENDANCE: 5%

Quite simply, I expect you to be present both physically and mentally. Please be in touch if whatever reason this is not the case. You are allowed ONE unexcused absence from class; otherwise, missing class will lower your attendance grade. Absences will only be excused for unavoidable reasons, such as emergencies. Please email me if this presents a problem for any reason, or if something else is going on that we should discuss.
PARTICIPATION: 15%

Generally, the sooner you speak out in class, the easier it is for you to continue thoughtfully participating to create a generative discussion. That being said, however, I expect everyone to actively listen to your peers and utilize self-awareness and respect regarding when and how you contribute in order to create a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere for all.

WRITTEN REFLECTIONS: 25%

There are ten substantive weeks of reading. You are expected to write 1-2 (single spaced) page reflection pieces, or memos, based on five weeks of reading. Please upload these reflections by Friday at 12 noon in order to give other students ample time to read your thoughts, as they are to be considered material for the following Monday’s seminar. In approaching these memos, be sure to analyze, question, and interrogate the texts rather than summarizing them. What do you see as important? How well does the author prove their argument(s)? What empirical data backs up the claims? What are the limitations, and what was left unexamined? Part of this exercise’s goal is to enable you to thoroughly analyze and assess an article, and then move into intellectual engagement as you situate and problematize the argument. Additionally, you are welcome to use the films as texts in your memos.

WRITING WORKSHOP: 5%

We all struggle with writing—we procrastinate, we don’t revise enough, we don’t have a clear, central thesis, we cannot back up the claim we make, and the list goes on! The good news is that these problems are collective and we can work through them with practice and a supportive environment—we will conduct a writing workshop during class. You will learn how to read and evaluate another student’s work in a constructive way, as well as practice learning how to incorporate feedback from another student in order to polish and improve your own writing. As part of this process, you will write a short reflection on your experience of the writing workshop.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER: 50%

In addition, you must write a seminar paper that approximately 12-15 pages (double-spaced) in which you attempt to explore and answer a significant sociological question about gender, work, and labor, reimagined, that you then interrogate in your paper. What interests you as we move forward in the semester? What did we leave out, or bring light to that you wish to explore further? Papers should be based on primary sources or secondary literature, but should develop a clear, original argument supported by concrete evidence. We will conclude the seminar with a student symposium, giving you the chance will to present your findings and analysis to your fellow colleague, and to respond to their questions and feedback. All papers must include page numbers, use 12-point Times New Roman font, and have 1” margins all around. We will break down the research paper in the following manner, and discuss further details in class. Due May 8th!

-Paper Proposal (5%) Due February 27th
-Literature Review (10%) Due March 20th
-Annotated Outline (10%) Due April 10th
-Final Paper (25%) Due May 8th

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND HONESTY:

I expect you to turn in your own ideas, work, and thoughts, and only your own.
OFFICE HOURS:

My office hours will be held on Mondays from 12-2 PM in Café Milano, located at 2522 Bancroft, just across the street from Barrows Hall. Sign up here: https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/tqmxc. I am happy to arrange another time to meet if you cannot make this one; just e-mail me and we will work something out.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS:

If you have a documented need for special accommodations in class or on assignments, I am happy to work out these arrangements with you—please discuss this with me as soon as possible. Additionally, parents, student athletes, and anyone else whose commitments might affect their ability to attend class or complete assignments on time should also speak with me about possible conflicts ahead of time.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

JANUARY 23  INTRODUCTION: WHO WORKS? DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORIES

Course overview and logistics.

Recommended Texts:


JANUARY 30  THEORETICAL ORIENTATION


FEBRUARY 6  SERVICE WITH A SMILE? CONSTRUCTING GENDER, BODY & WORK


**FEBRUARY 13 DOMESTIC WORK, RACE, AND THE U.S. HOUSEHOLD**


**FEBRUARY 20: NO CLASS—ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE HOLIDAY**

**FEBRUARY 27 DOMESTIC WORK, RACE, AND THE GLOBAL HOUSEHOLD**

*Screening of Anna Muylaert’s 2015 film, “The Second Mother” (“Que Horas Ela Volta?”), on a middle-class Brazilian household, its domestic worker, and her daughter


*Paper Proposal (5%) Due February 27th*

**MARCH 6 [RE]PRODUCTIVE WORK? SEX WORK, STIGMA, & SOLIDARITY**


**MARCH 13 WORK AND LACK OF REGULATION: DEINDUSTRIALIZATION**


**MARCH 20 IM/MIGRATION, GLOBALIZATION, & INEQUALITY**


*Literature Review (10%) Due March 20th*

**MARCH 27-MARCH 31: NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK!**

**APRIL 3 ORGANIZING INFORMALITY AND PRECARITY**

Broxmeyer, Jeffrey, and Erin Michaels. 2014. “Faith, Community, and Labor: Challenges and Opportunities in the New York City Living Wage Campaign.”


April 10  GENDERED RIGHTS, RECOGNITION, & REGULATION


Recommended Texts:


*Annotated Outline (10%) Due April 10th

April 17  WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
                   WITHOUT WORK, POSTWORK, & THE FUTURE OF WORK

McCallum, Jamie. 2015. Short film to be viewed in class.


April 24  STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

FINAL PAPERS DUE ON MONDAY, MAY 8TH!