

POLS 405 CAPSTONE SEMINAR: WORK

Professor Philip H. Jos

Spring 2006

Tues/Thurs 12:15-1:30 Maybank 222

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Office Hours: Tues 9:30-11:00; Wed 2:30-3:30; Fri 11-12:00 & by appointment.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

Most people spend most of their waking lives engaged in some form of work. It can be an unpleasant necessity, an essential expression of creativity, a moral or spiritual calling, a path for demonstrating skills and achievement, a route to consumption or greater leisure, and many other things besides. Moreover, the nature of work has changed dramatically over the course of human history, perhaps never so rapidly as in our own time. With the emergence of new technologies, dramatic economic changes, and new social priorities, many are beginning to rethink nature of work and the workplace of the future.

The capstone seminar is intended to provide students with a culminating and integrative experience at the end of the political science major. The seminar provides students with opportunities to conduct independent research and refine their analytical, verbal, and writing skills. The primary purpose of this capstone seminar is to use and build on the backgrounds, skills, and insights you have gained in Political Science up to now to try and make sense of what is happening today to work in America and elsewhere, with a specific focus on how the changes and continuities present may impact your working lives after college. The seminar will explore multiple perspectives on the meaning of work in our lives as individuals, family members, employees, and citizens and examine the changing nature of work in industrial and post-industrial society, and the connections between social class, education, and economic opportunity.

At the center of the seminar is an ongoing independent research paper in which you will examine a field of work that is of interest to you. All of the course assignments are designed to help you develop your independent research. Throughout the semester you will be called upon to analyze (verbally and in writing) required readings and various aspects of the field you have chosen to research. At the end of the semester these various components will be integrated into a final paper and you will also collaborate with your classmates in presenting at least some of your findings to fellow political science majors.

REQUIRED READINGS

Robert B. Reich. 2001. *The Future of Success*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf

Beth Shulman. 2003. *The Betrayal of Work: How Low Wage Jobs Fail 30 Million Americans*. New York: New Press.

David B. Bills. 2004. *The Sociology of Education and Work*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, Sylvia Allegretto. 2005. *The State of Working America: 2004-2005*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

All other readings are available for purchase at *SAS-E-INK* copies on Wentworth Street (across from Andolini's Pizza).

EXPECTATIONS AND GROUND RULES

Attendance. Due to the structure of the course, active and informed participation is essential. Any absence rate greater than fifteen percent (excused and unexcused) is excessive and will lower your grade for participation and adversely affect your ability to maintain high work standards in other areas of class.

Late Work. It is essential to complete each assignment on time. Late work will be penalized 5 points per day.

Academic Honesty. Much of your research will be done independently, using a wide variety of sources. It is important, therefore, to be especially careful to properly cite and document those sources. (A copy of the POLS Reference Guide is attached to this syllabus and is also available on the Department website). If you are found to have plagiarized any of your written work, you will fail this course and be turned over to the Honor Board for further disciplinary action. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, ask before you act.

Special Circumstances. If you are in the SNAPS program, or if you have travel obligations related to an athletic team or other campus organization let me know right away.

Courtesy and Tolerance. Respect for the views of others, and a commitment to reasoned discussion, is essential to any class and is even more important in a senior level seminar. This class will not only deal with controversial and sometimes emotional political issues but also asks you to share some of your personal aspirations, plans and values. This kind of talk carries with it special obligations to be supportive and respectful of your classmates. And, don't forget to turn those cell phones off!

Grading Scale. A standard grading scale (90+=A, 88-89=B+, 80-87=B, 78-79=C+, 70-77=C, 60-69=D, below 60=F) will be used.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

	Percentage of Final Grade
Jan 17 Reflection Paper (2-3 pages)	5
Jan 31 Annotated Bibliography Assignment (10-15 sources).	10
Feb 23 History and Structure (5-7).	10
March 16 Education and Training Paper (3-5 pages)	5
March 28 Contemporary Controversy Paper (7-9 pages)	10
April 6 Oral History Assignment (5-7 pages)	10
April ?? Presentation to Departmental Majors.	10
April 28 Final Research Paper.	15
Reading Summaries/Research Relevance	15
Class Participation.	10

The Reflection Paper. Our initial discussions will center on diverse ways of looking at work and the various meanings it might have for different people. With this backdrop, you will write a 2-3 page paper in which you discuss *your* ideas and plans for work after college, the reasons behind these ideas and plans, and how your expectations and plans regarding work fit in to other goals and life plans that you have at this time.

Annotated Bibliography Assignment. In this assignment you are to survey the bodies of literature relevant to the field of work that you have chosen to investigate and produce an annotated bibliography. An annotated bibliography lists sources in correct bibliographic form and includes a short well written summary for each entry. Each of these summaries should respond to two basic questions: 1) What is the main theme of the book, chapter, or article? 2) How does the book, chapter, or article relate to your larger research project? Somewhere between 10 and 15 bibliographic entries is reasonable, although completion of the other assignments will generate additional sources, all of which can be incorporated into your final paper.

History and Structure Assignment. Section one of this paper (3-4 pages) should provide an account of the origins and recent history of the profession/field you are investigating. Describe how the work in this field has changed over time and make use of assigned readings and class materials that have analyzed industrial and pre-industrial patterns of work. Section two of this paper (2-3 pages) should provide an account of the related kinds of work that are necessary for work in your field to move forward. On what less skilled/low wage workers does work in your field depend? What kinds of pay and working conditions are typical for these workers? Your analysis should draw on class materials and assigned readings that explore low wage work and inequality.

Education and Training Paper. Describe and analyze the educational and training requirements for entry into—and maintaining good standing—in your chosen field. Draw on assigned readings and class materials that explore credentialing, meritocracy, and social class. Assess your own skills and interests in light of this information.

Contemporary Controversies Paper. Now that you have a basic understanding of your chosen field it is time to investigate leading controversies and debates that are significant to the field and are of interest to you. This 7-9 page paper requires that you identify and analyze one ethical debate and one empirical disagreement in your chosen field. In each case you will be required to clearly state the nature of the debate, document and critically evaluate multiple perspectives on the issue, and develop and defend your own view.

Oral History Assignment. This 5-7 page assignment requires you to write two oral histories based on an interview with someone engaged in the kind of work that you are researching. The purpose is to allow you to explore a wide array of issues that have emerged in class sessions, seminar readings, and from your previous writing and research, with people working in the field.

Final Research Paper. Use your previous research and writing, instructor feedback, and additional research and writing where appropriate, to develop a coherent final research paper of between 25 and 35 pages.

Presentation to Departmental Majors. By the end of the semester the class will have developed a considerable amount of expertise when it comes to a variety of possible careers and professions. This assignment will require the class to arrange, advertise, and conduct an informational session for other majors (and perhaps non-majors as well).

Reading Summaries/Research Relevance. Every day that there is a reading assigned, you will be responsible for a short summary of key points made in the assigned reading OR a brief description of the way in which a key concept, idea, or finding discussed in an assigned reading relates to your ongoing research project. You may do one or the other, your answers should be *no longer* than one half page.

Class Participation. Quality participation requires preparation and thought. Complete the reading assignments and be able to critically evaluate them and bring them to bear in class discussions. Listen to other and exchange ideas in a way that is respectful.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

I. PERSPECTIVES ON WHAT WORK MEANS

January 10 Purpose of the Capstone Seminar/Course Expectations

January 12 Working: Many Voices and Experiences

Excerpts from *Gig: Americans Talk About Their Jobs* (J. Bowe et. al. eds. 2001) John Hart (corporate securities lawyer), Jennifer Daily (town manager), Jaime Levy (web content producer), Catherine Knigge (army operations specialist).
Excerpts from Studs Terkel's *Working*: Mike Lefevre (steelworker), Eugene Russel (piano tuner) Larry Ross (ex-pres, consultant), Bud Freeman (jazz musician), Nora Watson (editor), Fred Wringley (ex-salesman, farmer), Harold, Bob, and Tom Patrick (fireman, policeman). (CLASS HANDOUT)
Excerpts from *The Oxford Book of Work*: Kipling, Carlyle, Burke, Locke, Auden, Levi, Lawrence, Hardy.

January 17 Your Plans and Ideas

Reflection Paper/Presentations Due (2-3 pages)

II. WORK, FAMILY, IDENTITY, AND DIGNITY

January 19 Philosophical Perspectives on Work

Plato, *The Republic*, Bk II, pp. 44-48 (Grube and Reeve, Hackett Publishing)
John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, ch. 5 Of Property, pp. 338-346.
Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Section One, ch. 1 and 2 (7 pages).
Karl Marx, *Estranged Labor*, 207-219.
Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, pp. 9-11.
Larry May *The Socially Responsible Self*, pp. 66-69.
Alan Briskin, *The Stirring of the Soul in the Workplace*, pp. 3-7.

January 24 Work, Family, Leisure

Robert Reich, *The Future of Success*, ch. 6 (“The Lure of Hard Work”) and ch. 8 (“The Incredible Shrinking Family.”)
State of Working America, ch. 1 (“Family Income: Higher Inequality Leads to Uneven Progress”).

January 26 When Work Disappears

State of Working America (ch. 3 (“Jobs: Persistent Jobless Recovery”) and ch. 5 (“Poverty Rising...”).
Jay McLeod, *Ain't No Making It*, pp. 1-5; 60-81.
Excerpts from *The Oxford Book of Work*: Rumens, Wright, Ford, Galbraith, Patterson, Berry, Patel.
Judy Stearns, “Being Canned,” p. 33.
Alfred Stillman, “Modern Times,” pp. 1086-87.
Parker Palmer, “The Active Life,” pp. 19-21.

January 31 Devalued Work: “Women’s Work” and Sexual Harrassment

Catherine McKinnon, *Sexual Harrassment of Working Women*, ch. 1, 2 and 3. (pp. 1-56).

Annotated Bibliography Paper Due

February 2 Low Wage Work I

Beth Shulman, *The Betrayal of Work*, Introduction and chapters 1-4.
State of Working America, ch. 2: (“Wages: Battered by Labor Slack”).

February 7 Low Wage Work II

Beth Shulman, *The Betrayal of Work*, chapters 5-8.
State of Working America, ch. 4: (“Wealth: Persistent Inequality”).

III PRE-INDUSTRIAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND POST INDUSTRIAL WORK

February 9 Perspectives on Work and the Evolution of Capitalism

Max Weber, “Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism,” pp. 111-125.
Karl Marx, “Bourgeois and Proletarians,” from *The Communist Manifesto* (10 pages).
Max Weber, “Bureaucracy,” pp. 81-87.
Paul Boller, “Thorsten Veblen and the Leisure Class,” pp. 175-76, 183-98.
Charles Perrow, “Why Bureaucracy,” pp. 1-4.

February 11 Post Industrial Society and the New Work

Robert Reich, *The Future of Success*, ch. 1 (“The Age of the Terrific Deal”) and ch. 2 (“The Spirit of Innovation”) pp. 1-50.

February 14 Post Industrial Society and the New Work

Robert Reich, *The Future of Success*, ch. 3 (“Of Geeks and Shrinks”) chapter 4 (“The Obsolescence of Loyalty”), and chapter 5 (“The End of Employment as We Knew It”) 51-107.
State of Working America, ch. 7: (“International Comparisons: Beyond the U.S. Model”).

February 21 OPEN SESSION (History and Structure Paper in Progress)

February 23 Class Reports: History and Structure

History and Structure Paper/Reports Due (5-7 pages)

IV. EDUCATION, CLASS, AND THE NEW WORK

February 28

David Bills. *The Sociology of Education and Work*, ch. 1-3 (1-60).
Robert Reich, *The Future of Success*, ch. 7 (“The Sale of the Self”), pp. 132-157.

February 30

David Bills. *The Sociology of Education and Work*, ch. 4-5 (61-111).
Robert Reich, *The Future of Success*, ch. 10 (“The Community as Commodity”), pp. 194-216.

March 7 and 9 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

March 14 OPEN SESSION (Education and Training Paper in progress)

March 16 Class Reports on Education and Training Paper

Education and Training Paper Due (5-7 pages)

March 21 OPEN SESSION (Controversy Paper in progress).

March 23 OPEN SESSION (Controversy Paper in progress).

March 28 Class Reports on Controversy Papers

Controversy Paper Due (5-7 pages)

March 30 OPEN SESSION (Oral History Assignment in progress)

April 4 OPEN SESSION (Oral History Assignment in progress)

April 6 Class Reports on Oral Histories

Oral Histories Assignment Due (5-7 pages)

April 11 and 13 NO CLASS (Presentations to Departmental Majors in progress)

April 18: OPEN SESSION: Putting It All Together (Presentations/Final Research Paper)

April 20 OPEN SESSION: Putting It All Together (Presentations/Final Research

April ?? Presentation to Departmental Majors

April 28 Final Research Papers Due