Work & Working in Policy, Planning, and Society
an Advanced Seminar
UEP 285 – Fall 2009
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INITIAL DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY-

Instructor: Laurie Goldman, Ph.D
Meeting Time: Tuesdays, 6:30-9:00 pm., 97 Talbot Ave. Classroom

Office Hours: By arrangement.
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Course Description: Why is it that people either have too little work to make a living or too much work to have a life? And why is it so rare for that work to be part of a gratifying life for individual workers, their families, and their communities? In this course, we’ll investigate these questions and examine interventions to address them by drawing from two fields that are typically considered separately. The workforce development field tends to focus on low-wage workers and how government sponsored policies and programs can improve their chances of accessing employment. In contrast, those concerned about the challenges of work-life balance tend to focus on salaried, professional workers and interventions generally consist of practices adopted in private sector firms for their employees.

The current economic crisis is an opportune setting for this inquiry. On the one hand, it exacerbates the social, urban, and environmental impact of ongoing trends in employment and wages, the organization of labor and corporations, and frictions between work life and home and civic life. It also highlights the limitations of contemporary strategies for contending with these challenges. On the other hand, the crisis presents an opportunity to entertain new questions – the intended product of this course.

Structure and Format of the Course: We will begin with a broad overview of the inter-related trends in the U.S. labor market, workforce development policy, and work-life balance challenges. We will then delve deeper into several interpretations of core problems and noteworthy strategies of intervention.

The class will operate as a seminar. Students are required to participate actively in class discussion of the readings, mini-lectures, and student presentations. Each student will pursue an independent research paper on a topic of her or his choosing. These topics will also shape the content of the seminar. Students will present initial gleanings and raise questions for group discussion. In some cases, the class readings will be adapted to support collective reflection on these topics of interest.

Reading Assignments: Unless otherwise indicated, all of the readings will be available on the course Blackboard site. Additional readings will be placed on reserve in Tisch library or will be accessible through library electronic journals or internet sources. Occasionally, students will be advised to purchase a book.
**Writing Assignments and Participation Requirements:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly reflections on the readings (no more than 500 words)</td>
<td>Each Tuesday by 4:30pm</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper (20-27 pages)</td>
<td>December 18</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<td>Detailed guidelines for interim assignments to facilitate completion and constructive feedback will be distributed</td>
<td>to be announced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation – active listening, presenting, discussing, engaging fellow students in discussion</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**Competencies Cultivated:**

*Substantive Policy and Planning Knowledge*
- Basic grounding in problems of plaguing today’s workforce, key work force development policies, and challenges of work-life balance.
- Familiarity with the current context of economic recovery efforts with respect to employment and related policy and planning issues, especially in Massachusetts
- Understanding different roles and interactions across levels of government and policy domains and among government, private sector, and civil society
- Specialized knowledge on a topic of interest

*Skills Developed*
- Critical policy analysis
- Framing new questions
- Critique of arguments, evidence, and conceptual frameworks
- Identifying and synthesizing relevant literature
- Some practice in empirical research methods
- Effective writing, speaking, and active listening
CLASS SCHEDULE AND TOPICS
- INITIAL VERSION -
(Subject to change to align with student interests)

PART 1  OVERVIEW OF WORK AND WORKING IN THE “NEW ECONOMY”

Week 1 (Sept 8)
  Introduction to the Course and the Problems of Work and Working – Too Little and Too Much Work

Week 2 (Sept 15)
  Understanding the Transformation of Work in the US

Week 3 (Sept 22)
  Work and Life Out of Balance

PART 2  EXPLANATIONS, INTERVENTIONS, AND QUESTIONS FOR PROBING

Week 4 (Sept 29)
  Workforce Development and Income Support Policies: Changing People’s Motivation to Work

  Question: How essential is work to sustaining a good life?

Week 5 (Oct 6)
  Skills Mismatch, Spatial Mismatch, and Debates about Job Seeking and Training

  Questions: How can the burdens of juggling work, training, and family obligations be lightened? Who can and should help?

Oct 13 -  NO CLASS (MONDAY SCHEDULE)

Week 6 (Oct 20)
  Creating Career Ladders with Employers and Community Based Organizations (Sector Development Programs)

  Questions: How can better jobs support better lives? How can employers and community actors collaborate to generate and implement long term solutions?
Week 7 (Oct 27)
Labor Market Intermediaries and Temporary Work

Firm-Based Approaches to Work-Life Balance (Flexible schedules, job sharing, etc)
Questions: How can part-time work meet real life needs (job security, benefits, and mobility prospects) and how can jobs be adapted to real life schedules?

Week 8 (Nov 3)
Advocating for New Laws and Regulatory Reform: Minimum Wage Reform, Living Wage Campaigns, and the Prospects for Robust Family Medical Leave

Questions: What explains the policy, public, and political rationale for and resistance to these reforms? What openings for persuasion might the current crisis provide?

Week 9 (Nov 10)
The New Union Movement and New Forms of Labor and Community Alliances

Questions: Are traditional unions capable of adapting to the “new economy”? How are labor organizations forging new relationships that bridge work-life divides?

Week 10 (Nov 17)
New Jobs for a New Economy? A Spotlight on “Green Jobs”

Questions: To what extent are jobs designed to respond to the demand for more energy efficient construction and operation of facilities and residences generate good jobs in terms of wages, benefits, and life enrichment? Who is likely to benefit?

Week 11 (Nov 24)
Worker and Community Ownership and New Forms of Residential Communities

Questions: Can employee and/or community ownership of businesses generate better jobs for individuals, families, and communities? Can new forms of residential communities improve work-life friction?

PART 3: MAKING WORK MEANINGFUL

Week 12 (Dec 1)
Making Work Meaningful and Workplaces as the Locus for Social Activism
Questions: What practices can workplaces and workers adopt to make work more stimulating and meaningful? How can workers engage with one another (and their employers) to advance causes of mutual concern?

Week 13 (Dec 8)
Synthesis: What did we learn? What questions have we refined? How will we continue to pursue them?