

**Oberlin College**  
**Department of Politics**

**Politics 314: Seminar: Labor in the Global Economy**

Spring 2004

Professors Marc Blecher and Steve Crowley

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1:30-3:00 and by appointment

Class meets Wednesday,  
7-9 PM, King 325



How have workers fared under the latest developments of capitalism in Asia, Eastern Europe and Russia, and Latin America? How have they been affected by globalization? What changes have occurred on the shopfloor, in incomes, in labor markets, and in communities? What difference has politics made in cushioning or exacerbating these effects? How have workers responded, economically and politically? These are the questions that motivate inquiry in Politics 314.

The seminar will involve reading and discussing a number of different perspectives and debates about labor under late twentieth and early twenty-first century capitalism, the impact of globalization on labor around the world, and the conflict these processes have generated. Through these readings and discussions we will jointly explore and debate ideas, hypotheses and theoretical models that should prove fruitful in writing your research paper. Since this is a seminar, we expect you to complete the weekly reading and come to class prepared to discuss the issues raised.

The first nine sessions will involve critical discussion of the readings. By the end of Tuesday before each class, you are to post comments and at least two discussion questions about the week's reading on our seminar's Blackboard discussion board. These will form the basis for our discussions and are essential for the success of that enterprise. Then on each Wednesday before class, take a few moments to log in to the discussion board to read what everyone has written. You can find Blackboard at: <http://bb.oberlin.edu/> FAQ for students can be found at: [http://www.oberlin.edu/OCTET/Bb/FAQ\\_Students.htm](http://www.oberlin.edu/OCTET/Bb/FAQ_Students.htm)

The extended research paper (approximately 20-25 pages) will comprise a major part of the course. To make completing the paper more manageable, we will break the research and writing into a number of components, according the following schedule:

- a meeting with one of us to define a topic sometime before class meeting of March 10.
- a 1-2 page proposal for your research topic, which should include a statement of your research question(s); justification of the topic in terms of its interest and importance; any anticipated problems and proposed solutions, due March 17.
- an annotated bibliography, which identifies and evaluates a variety of research materials, due March 24.
- a 1-2 page introduction to your paper, including your thesis statement, due April 2.
- a detailed outline of your paper, due April 14.
- a meeting with the instructor to discuss your progress something during the week of April 19.
- a draft of your paper, due April 28.
- a presentation of your "works in progress" to the class; the last three sessions will be devoted to these presentations and discussion of your papers in progress.
- the final paper, along with your draft(s) and the other above materials, will be due May 14 (the last day permitted by College regulations).

We will evaluate your work according to the following weighting:

Class participation, including your regular postings to the Blackboard discussion board and the presentation to the class	50%
Research paper	50%

**Please take careful note of these proportions.** They reflect our conviction that the daily process of participating in the course by reading, thinking and contributing to everyone else's learning in discussion is as important to your learning as the paper you will write. In the past students who assumed that the paper was their only responsibility for the course were unpleasantly surprised at the end of the semester. ☹

Please purchase the following books, which are available from the Oberlin College bookstore:

Hagen Koo, *Korean Workers: The Culture and Politics of Class Formation*  
Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*  
Dani Rodrik, *Has Globalization Gone Too Far?*

## **Schedule of Classes, Topics, Readings and Assignments**

### February 12: Introduction

### February 19: Labor and Globalization

Chris Tilly and Charles Tilly, *Work Under Capitalism*, chapters 1-2

Charles Tilly, "Global Flows of Labor and Capital," *International Labor and Working Class History*, Spring 1995

Jeffrey Harrod, *Power, Production, and the Unprotected Worker*, pp. 183-233

*Workers in an Integrating World*, World Development Report 1995 (World Bank) overview, chapters 1-2

Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*, chapter. 2-3

### February 26: The Debate over Sweatshops

Michael Piore, "The Economics of the Sweatshop" in Andrew Ross, ed., *No Sweat: Fashion, Free Trade and the Rights of Garment Workers*

Nicholas Kristoff and Sheryl WuDunn, "Two Cheers for Sweatshops," *New York Times Magazine*, Sept. 24, 2000

Jeffrey Harrod, *Power, Production, and the Unprotected Worker*, part 2 and chapter 4

Jeremy Seabrook, *In the Cities of the South*, chapters 1-3, 6

March 3: Labor in Mexico

Dan La Botz, *Mask of Democracy*, chapters 1-2; 4, 7 and Conclusion

John Audley et.al., *NAFTA's Promise and Reality: Lessons from Mexico for the Hemisphere* (on e-res)

United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, "Mexican Labor Year in Review", [http://www.ueinternational.org/Mexico\\_info/mlna\\_articles.php?id=67#222](http://www.ueinternational.org/Mexico_info/mlna_articles.php?id=67#222)

Worker Rights Consortium, "Investigation Re Complaint Against Kukdong (Mexico) Preliminary Findings And Recommendations, January 24, 2001" (on E-res)

Worker Rights Consortium, "Investigation Re: Complaint Against Kukdong (Mexico): Report And Recommendations, June 20, 2001", pp. 1-14 (on E-res)

*Centro de Apoyo al Trabajador*, "La Lucha Sigue: Stories from the People of the Kukdong Factory" (on E-res)

Robin Alexander and Peter Gilmore, "A Strategic Alliance Across Borders," in Ray Tillman and Michael Cummings, eds., *The Transformation of US Unions*

March 10: Labor in Korea

**Meet with one of us before this class to define your topic.**

Hagen Koo, *Korean Workers*

March 17: Labor in India and China

**Research proposal due**

Patrick Heller, *The Labor of Development*, introduction and chapters 5, 7, and conclusion  
Xiaobo Lu, "Transition, Globalization, and Changing Industrial Relations in China," in Candland and Sil, *The Politics of Labor in a Global Age*

Ching Kwan Lee, "From the Specter of Mao to the Spirit of the Law: Labor Insurgency in China," *Theory and Society*, 31, April 2002

Marc Blecher, "Hegemony and Workers' Politics in China," *China Quarterly*, June 2002

March 24: Labor in Russia and Eastern Europe

**Annotated bibliography due**

Gregorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik, "Contentious Politics in New Democracies: East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, 1989-1993," *World Politics* 50, 4 (1998); available online: [http://journals.ohiolink.edu:6873/journals/world\\_politics/v050/50.4ekiert.html](http://journals.ohiolink.edu:6873/journals/world_politics/v050/50.4ekiert.html)

Guglielmo Meardi, "Trade Union Consciousness, East and West: A Comparison of Fiat Factories in Poland and Italy," *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 2 no. 3 1996

Stephen Crowley, "Explaining Labor Weakness in Post-Communist Europe," *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, (forthcoming).

Sarah Ashwin 'Redefining the Collective: Russian Mineworkers in Transition' in Michael Burawoy and Katherin Verdery, eds, *Ethnographies of Transition*

Stephen Crowley, "Comprehending the Weakness of Russia's Unions," *Demokratizatsiya*, Spring 2002

April 7: What Does This Mean for “Us”?

**Introduction due**

**Meet with one of us this week or next (N.b. Mr. Blecher is out of town next week.)**

Dani Rodrik, *Has Globalization Gone Too Far?*, chapters 1-4

Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*, chapters 7-8

Rob Lambert and Anita Chan, “Global Dance: Factory Regimes, Asian Labour Standards and Corporate Restructuring, in Waddington, ed., *Globalization and Patterns of Labour Resistance*

Kate Bronfenbrenner, “Raw Power: Plant-Closing Threats and the Threat to Union Organizing,” *Multinational Monitor*, Dec. 2000

April 14: No class – work on research

**Outline due (to Mr. Crowley’s office or via e-mail; and via e-mail only to Mr. Blecher)**

April 21: What Is To Be Done?

Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*, chapters 9-11, conclusion

Liza Featherstone, *Students Against Sweatshops*, introduction, chapters 1-4, 7 (on reserve)

Theodore Moran, *Beyond Sweatshops*, chapters 4, 6 (on reserve)

*Workers in an Integrating World*, World Development Report, chapters 7-8, 11-12 (on reserve)

April 28 and May 5 & 12: presentations of draft research papers

**April 28: Draft due**

May 14, 4:30 PM: Final research papers due