The Changing American Job  
First Year Seminar, Fall 2017

Fall 2017                                                                                                           Prof. Nichola Lowe
Time: T/TH 11-12:15                                                                                           Office: 303 New East
Room: Dey 307                                                                                               nlowe@ unc.edu
Office hours: immediately after class or by appointment                                                                          Tel: 843-2319

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**
What will the U.S. labor market look like four years from now when you graduate from UNC? How will employment opportunities and employers’ skills requirements differ from those facing your parents and family members a generation or two ago, or even those of recent college graduates? What types of job-seeking support and assistance will you likely need to enter and navigate this fast-changing labor market environment?

This seminar contextualizes these questions by looking at the changing nature of the American job and the transformative forces—from global trade and corporate restructuring to automation and the rise of the 'sharing' economy—that have influenced this change in recent decades and have added to economic insecurity in recent years and in the aftermath of the “Great Recession.” We will consider how these forces and others are experienced differently by urban and rural residents, by men and women, and by members of different socio-economic and ethnic groups, including native-born and immigrant workers. We will also consider local and regional strategies for helping today’s workers respond to this changing economic environment, such as efforts to link competitiveness-enhancing retraining and industrial upgrading programs; the creation of new partnerships between employers and labor market intermediaries, such as staffing agencies, labor unions and non-profits; and finally, new forms of labor and community organizing to improve job quality and workplace justice. This seminar will not only help you think about the larger economic and policy implications of U.S. labor market restructuring, but also consider how the forces behind this change, and responses to it, potentially affect your own job prospects and career advancement opportunities.

**COURSE STRUCTURE**
I use three main teaching formats in this seminar: (1) class discussions and in-class activities that focus on required readings and related themes; (2) reflective and research-based student writing and journaling; (3) guest seminars by workforce experts that will help you understand labor market dynamics and learn about innovative strategies to improve job quality.
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Jobs Journals (50 percent)
Think about your ideal post-graduation job. You will complete 3 in-depth journal entries that will allow you to reflect on how specific transformative forces or employment strategies might affect your own career goals, job search strategies and advancement opportunities. For one journal entry, you will receive training from a Davis data librarian on regional and national employment data sources. For another, you will conduct an in-depth informational interview with a UNC alum that has 5 or more years of work experience in your ideal occupation or profession.

Each journal entry must be written in formal prose, structured as an organized and cohesive essay and with each paragraph anchored to a clear thesis or organizing theme. Your grade will reflect quality writing and content. PLEASE SEND AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF YOUR JOURNAL ENTRY BY THE START OF THE CLASS SESSION WHEN IT IS DUE.

NOTE: each journal entry is a different length: please see description of assignment for details. (First journal, 3 pages (15 point scale); second 3 (15 point scale); third 3-4 pages (20 point scale).

Journal grading: I will return the first entry for Jobs Journal 1 with extensive comments and/or some suggested edits that can be used to help improve your writing quality. For this first entry, I will base your grade entirely on the quality of the second, edited draft. The grades for the remaining two journal entries will be based on the first submission. In other words, there is no option to rewrite your second two entries for a higher grade.

I encourage students to work closely with the UNC writing center and ask that you try to use the writing center’s on-line or in person tutoring resources at least once during the semester. Information on the UNC writing center and tutoring services is available at: http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/

Additionally, I will assign you a “feedback partner” from the class for the entire semester who will be a resource for early feedback on your assignments and writings prior to the assignment due date. Be respectful of each others’ busy schedules! You will not be graded on your use of this partnership, though quality feedback from a partner is likely to reflect in your final writing grade. You should view this as a resource and relationship that you can tap not only for this class, but also possibly others throughout your academic years. I will provide some in-class time to meet with your feedback partner. However, you should also schedule time to meet with or interact (by email or phone) with this person outside of normal class hours.

Jobs Journal Presentation and One-page Handout (15 percent)
At the end of the course, you will be expected to give a brief, but structured 5 minute presentation on your ideal occupation and the most interesting thing you learned during the
course of Jobs Journal research and writing. While this is a brief and concise presentation, I still expect it to be of high quality and well structured—note however that you do not need to use PowerPoint. Rather you will be expected to generate a **one page informational handout** that you must give to me at the beginning of the presentation and also post to Sakai (this will likely contain more information than you will cover during the presentation). The goal of the handout is to share your working knowledge of this ideal occupation with your classmates so they can use this information should they decide to change careers at a later point. You will be graded on the clarity and content of your presentation and handout. Note: I will stop you at the 5 minute mark, so make sure you practice your presentation well in advance and stay on message! With that in mind, I would strongly encourage you to do a practice run or two before your “feedback partner.”

**Reflective Essays (20 percent)**
Each student must write 3 brief (2-3 paragraph) reflective essays for 3 class sessions during the semester. I will send out information for the first reflective essay, due in class on October 3. For reflective essays 2 and 3 you can **pick two** of the “Policy Alternatives” classes (**SEE ASTERISK* BY SELECT CLASSES**). These reflective essays are not meant to be a literature review, but rather a brief statement about something that interested you or resonated with you during your reading or as a result of an earlier, yet related class discussion. You must hand in a **hard copy** of each essay at the start of the class period. I reserve the option to call on students to share their reflections and as a means to facilitate class discussion.

**Class Participation (15 percent)**
Each session is more effective as a class dialogue rather than lecture. Please complete all assigned readings before class and be prepared to participate in class discussion! You will have several opportunities to participate in structured class and group activities, including in-class debates. (Participation grade breakdown: class attendance, 5%; participation in class discussion and class activities, 10%.)

**Other Academic Business**

**The Honor Code:** “The Honor Code represents UNC-Chapel Hill students’ commitment to maintain an environment in which students respect one another and are able to attain their educational goals. As a student at Carolina, you are entering a community in which integrity matters--integrity in the work you submit, and integrity in the manner in which you treat your fellow Carolina community members.”

I am committed to treating Honor Code violations seriously and urge all students to become familiar with its terms. If you have questions it is your responsibility to ask the professor about the Code's application

**Contacting the professor:** I encourage you to talk to me before or after class. You can also email me to schedule a meeting in my office. I also encourage you to inform me beforehand, either in person or by email, if you are unable to attend class or fulfill an assignment rather than after the fact. I am more willing to make accommodations legitimate excuses if I am told
beforehand.

**Missing Class:** Students are permitted to miss class for EXCUSABLE absences only. For details about what an excused absence is, see UNC-Chapel Hill’s attendance policy. On the first day of class, each student starts with a 100% or A for class attendance. Students are allowed one UNexcused absence without any questions from the instructor. If a student has two UNexcused absences, their attendance grade will be deducted by one letter grade (from an A to a B, for example). With each additional absence, a student’s attendance grade will be deducted one letter grade per absence. I abide strictly by the university’s attendance policy, so please be familiar with it.

**Laptops and cell phones: This class will be a laptop and cell phone free environment.** Unless you have a disability that requires usage of a laptop, there will be no need for a laptop in this course other than a few select class activities. At the end of the semester, I will ask you to bring your laptops to class to complete on-line course evaluations and there may be other instances when laptops may be needed. You will be notified in advance to bring your laptops to class in these instances. Please turn off cell phones before entering class.

**Disability:** If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you may need to contact the Academic Services office that houses the Academic Success Program for coordination in your academic accommodations. Please contact me to discuss any accommodations that may be required to satisfy your needs.

**Resources:** My purpose as a professor is to help you to excel in this learning environment. Should you need further assistance beyond the help of the professor, please consult the following on-campus resources:

*Academic Success Program* (for students with learning disabilities (LD) and/or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD):
http://learningcenter.unc.edu/ldadhd-services/

*Learning Center:*
http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/

*Counseling and Wellness Services:*
http://campushealth.unc.edu
The Changing American Job  
First Year Seminar, Fall 2017

Class Schedule (Dates/Topics subject to change)

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<td>Receive Jobs Journal question 1</td>
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<td>Work, Defined</td>
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<td>Those Left Behind: Race and Gender</td>
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<td><em>Jobs Journal 1 due by class</em></td>
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<td>Technology and the Future of Work</td>
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<td>Philip McDaniel-Library Data Session <em>(Davis Library)</em></td>
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<td>Amy Blackburn, Career Services <em>(Hanes Hall 239A/B)</em></td>
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<td>Do Workers Share in the Sharing Economy?</td>
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<td>Is Wal-Mart Good For America?</td>
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<td>Immigration: Film: The Guest Worker</td>
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<td>Is Education the Answer (1)?</td>
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<td><em>Reflection Essay 1 due</em></td>
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<td>Is Education the Answer (II)?</td>
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<td><em>Jobs Journal 2 due by class</em></td>
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PART 3. POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Reflection Essays 2 and 3: Pick two topics with * to write on. Essays due before the class in which topic discussed

15 Living Wages* Oct 10
No Class October 12: University Day

16 The Good Employer: Guest Speaker Oct 17
No Class October 19: Fall Break

17 The Carolina Inn Case Oct 24

18 Workforce Intermediaries * Oct 26

19 In class discussion of career interview findings (Optional: dress the part!) Oct 31

20 The Case of Project Quest
Jobs Journal 3 due by class Nov 2

21 Sector Partnerships: The Case of Garments* Nov 7

22 Community Benefits* Nov 9

23 (‘Green Jobs’) Clean Truck case Nov 14

24 Next Generation Apprenticeship*
Rewrite of Jobs Journal 1 due by class Nov 16

25 Labor Organizing: Guest Speaker Nov 21
No Class Nov 23: Thanksgiving Break

26 Jobs Journal Presentations Nov 28

27 Jobs Journal Presentations Nov 30

28 Class wrap-up Dec 5
PART 1. INTRODUCTION

1 Course Overview

2 Work, Defined


3 A Good and Steady Job


4 Those Left Behind: Race and Gender


PICK ONE


5 Employment Today in North Carolina: Guest John Quinterno


6 Work, Transformed


PART 2. BIG ISSUES/DEBATES

7 Technology and the Future of Work

http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/24/how-technology-wrecks-the-middle-class/?r=0

http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/18/inequalitys-roots-beyond-technology/?r=0


10 Do Workers Share in the Sharing Economy?

California Says Uber Drivers is an Employee. 
https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/business/uber-contests-california-labor-
ruling-that-says-drivers-should-be-employees.html

In the Battle between Lyft and Uber, the Focus is on the Driver
http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/01/18/463473462/is-uber-good-to-drivers-it-s-relative


Kennedy, Joe. 2015. Labor Laws are a Mismatch with the Sharing Economy. ITIF. https://itif.org/publications/2015/07/09/labor-laws-are-mismatch-sharing-economy

11 Is Wal-Mart Good for America (and its Workers)?


(watch one segment before class) PBS Frontline: Is Wal-Mart Good for America? http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/walmart/


13/14 Is Education the Answer?

Activity (13): Half class will focus on service work; other half on manual tasks/trade. Come prepared to talk about the skills of a worker you interviewed over the weekend. How did they develop their skill? Was it through the classroom? On-the-job? Through formal or informal training? Was there a social dimension to their learning process? Are these transferable skills? Are these hidden or tacit skills? If so, how do they demonstrate them?

Times Magazine. May 21st.
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/24/magazine/24labor-t.html?pagewanted=all


(14) Osterman, Paul and Andrew Weaver. 2014. Why Claims of Skill Shortages in Manufacturing are Overblown. EPI Issue Brief #376.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB1000142405297020442242404576596630897409182.html

PART 3. POLICY ALTERNATIVES

15 Living Wage Campaigns*


http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/05/business/help-the-working-poor-but-share-the-burden.html?_r=0


16 The Good Employer


g

18 Workforce Intermediaries*


Conway, Maureen. 2014. “A Brief History of Sector Strategies”. In Connecting People to Work: Workforce Intermediaries and Sector Strategies, Maureen Conway and Robert Giloth (ed.)


20 The Case of Project Quest


21 Sectoral Partnerships: The Case of Garments*


Mead, Rebecca. 2013. The Garmento King: Can Andrew Rosen of Theory Keep Manhattan Humming with Sewing Machines. The New Yorker

22 Community Benefits*

REMINDER: LAST CLASS FOR REFLECTION ESSAY 2


‘Green Jobs’ (Clean Trucks case)


Next Generation Apprenticeship*

REMINDER: LAST CLASS FOR REFLECTION ESSAY 3


New Approaches to Labor Organizing


McMillan, MaryBe. 2012. Organize the South or Die. http://aflcionc.org/organize-
the-south-or-die/

