PLAN 774 Planning for Jobs: Labor Market Transformations and Employment Policy in the 21st Century

Spring 2021
T/TH 12:30-1:45
Synchronous on Zoom
Office hours (following TH class or by appt.)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Economic inequality is the result of structural changes within the U.S. labor market—in turn creating deep sources of worker vulnerability that have further intensified with the COVID-19 pandemic. This graduate seminar explores the changing nature of American jobs and the transformative forces—from corporate restructuring and weakened labor laws to labor union decline and the rise of ‘gig’ economy—that have influenced this change in recent decades and have added to growing economic insecurity. We will consider how these and equally powerful forces, including climate change, are experienced by workers across different sectors and socio-economic and racial/ethnic groups.

We will also consider a range of local and regional strategies for helping workers and workplaces withstand changing economic and environmental pressures, and also challenge insidious and systematic forms of racism, such as: shoring up labor laws and worker protections; coordinating place-based economic and workforce development initiatives; advancing new forms of labor organizing that promote economic, environmental and racial justice; using novel employer engagement tools that promote strong, safe, inclusive and opportunity-rich workplaces. This seminar will not only help you think through the policy and planning responses to U.S. labor market restructuring, but also consider how the forces behind this restructuring potentially affect your own career journey.

There are no prerequisites for this course, which is open to graduate students from all disciplines.

ZOOM (SYNCHRONOUS)
https://unc.zoom.us/j/91756070527?pwd=dWxBbC90VU9LYU1FUWF9ROFFoVWhrZz09
Meeting ID: 917 5607 0527
Passcode: 296010

One tap mobile
+19294362866,,91756070527# US (New York) 13017158592,,91756070527# US (Washington D.C)
ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Choose your own adventure (group presentation or class facilitation)!

ASSIGNMENT 1: OPTION A

Transformative Trends and Debates ................................................................. (30 percent)
A small group of students (2-3) will pair up to facilitate discussion of one key debate or transformative trend that could shape labor market dynamics for years/decades to come (see list on google sheet for topics and dates). Each group will assign 2-4 readings related to this debate (and post assigned readings to Sakai at least 1 week in advance of your session—I can suggest some readings). Required readings should not total more than 45 pages.

The group should plan to facilitate a 45 minute class session allowing time at the beginning or end for general announcements, updates, “pop in” guest visit. You should build in 10-15 minutes for a small group activity (using the break-out room function). One idea is to ask small groups to reflect on how this debate or topic relates to planning, broadly defined, perhaps asking the group to develop 3-4 talking points that planning practitioners might use to help clients and stakeholders understand the nuances of this particular debate and how it relates to their own circumstances or professional practice. Be creative with the format.

Possibilities for your remaining 30 or so minutes include: a structured in-class debate, bingo or Jeopardy style class quiz, use of an introductory video, radio or podcast segment to motivate a learning activity (10 minutes of video use at most), or a structured class discussion (you can combine these modalities, but given time constraints I would not use more than two different formats). Visual aids are strongly encouraged (PowerPoint if necessary).

Due date: Various class sessions scheduled for February (see google sheet for topics and dates)

ASSIGNMENT 1: OPTION B

Workforce Development Solution: Handout and Presentation ............................................ (30 percent)
2-3 students will be paired together to present on an intervention designed to improve working conditions or worker rights. An “intervention” is a course of action that attempts to resolve a labor market-related problem or challenge. This can be an action taken by an existing labor market intermediary, workforce development organization, community development organization, new federal or state law or policy, labor union campaign (I have provided a list of examples on the google sheet, but these are not exhaustive).

Each student must present some of the material to get credit. If three students are presenting on one action or intervention, one might frame the labor market problem, another might provide an overview of the program/policy and solution it offers and a third might reflect on what works well and why and provide some transferable lessons on what might be needed to implement the policy.

Presentations should be approximately 12 minutes in length, followed by 10 minutes for Q&A. Your team must also prepare a two page detailed “handout” or graphic visualization for the presentation to allow students to follow along—ideally something that we can print out or save on our computers (1/3rd of your grade is based on the handout). Sample copies of handouts are posted to Sakai.

Due date: Various class sessions in March and April (see Google sheet for dates and suggested solutions)
ASSIGNMENT 2: ALL STUDENTS COMPLETE

Essential Worker Profiles ........................................................................................................ (20 percent)

Each student will develop 4 short reflections related to a job that has been deemed “essential” as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic [3 narrative statements that are 250-400 words each in length + 1 data packet with 4-5 charts or tables with a 1-2 sentence description of each chart or table—you can use existing charts and tables created by others or if you prefer, generate your own]. You will be sharing this information throughout the semester in a small group setting (in class break-out rooms) with the same group of 4-5 students. Each group will be sharing information on a mix of essential workers to encourage cross-learning about different types of jobs. You will use a group Google document or another shared format to log each reflection, so that by the end of the semester you have a complete set of Essential Worker profiles to share with the rest of the class.

Due dates: Various class sessions starting February 9th (see google sheet for due dates)

Assignment 3: Choose your own adventure (final paper)!

ASSIGNMENT 3: OPTION A

Career Development Journal (and Alumni Panel Planning)................................. (40 percent)

This is an opportunity to conduct independent research on your future career in planning, economic development or another post-graduation profession. Write 4 journal entries. The first entry should be based on an informational interview conducted this semester with two planning professionals in jobs you might like to have yourself in a few years. One of these can be a follow up interview with someone you have previously spoken with. (3 double spaced pages). A second entry will involve a comparison of 5 organizations you might want to work at post-graduation using at least four criteria you define (that matter most to you. For example-starting wage, advancement opportunities, work-based learning, work that challenges you, career-life balance, location etc. Write brief summaries of each organization and create a one page matrix/table for comparison that can be shared with your classmates. For a third entry you will write two sample letters for a post-graduation job. One must be unsolicited and the other responding to an actual job posting. In addition to the letters, you should provide some background on why you chose to target this job or organization and what skill sets or experiences you think you have that make this a good fit. For your final, fourth journal entry, pick one alumni panel and write a 1-2-page reflection on the most important take-aways or lessons you gleaned for your career planning.

All journal entries must be in MSWord, double-spaced, and Times New Roman size 12 font.

Due Date: March 2nd (Entries 1 and 2) Tues April 29th (Entries 3 and 4)

ASSIGNMENT 3: OPTION B

Policy Brief ......................................................................................................................... (40 percent)

Write a 6-8 page persuasive policy brief related to your chosen Essential Worker. The idea here is to propose an action or policy intervention at the sub-national level designed to improve worker protection or “ratchet up” some other job quality standard (some outcomes includes: increased wages; more predictable scheduling; paid sick leave; work-based learning or vocational training; conversion of independent contractors to paid employment; improved worker representation etc) for workers holding that job now or in the future.

Your opening page should describe in 300 words or less what you are proposing, also making it clear who you are proposing it to (which agency [which jurisdictional level]; organization; or coalition). The rest of
your brief should focus on why you are proposing this action be taken (what is motivating this recommendation and why now; what specific challenge are you hoping to address with this recommendation; what leads you to believe there will be support for this kind of intervention or policy change [if you know that something similar is working well in another community or state, you are welcome to reference that]). You are also encouraged to include some of the tables or charts you have gathered for this essential worker, but please include those in an additional appendix rather than in your written narrative.

Your policy brief should be written in MSWord: 6-8 pages, double-spaced, and Times New Roman size 12 font.

Class Participation.................................................................................................................... (10 percent)
There is a lot of interactive learning in this class and most class sessions will have some kind of small group activity or discussion. Please complete all assigned readings before class and be prepared to contribute!

Grading
Please see Google sheet for the grade contract and attendance policy

**SCHEDULE AND FORMAT**

Format: Classes will be a “live” remote format, using the Zoom platform. This is a synchronous teaching format and means your attendance is required at the scheduled class time. This class will utilize a mix of learning styles, including peer-to-peer learning. Most sessions will include a structured overview to provide background or motivate small group discussion. Most sessions will include presentation slides and a video or audio clip relevant to the theme or topic of the day. Most sessions will also involve a small group activity (5 students or less), designed to encourage active debate and dialog among students. Guests—including planners, policy-makers and advocates—will join us throughout the semester.

Class Schedule (weekly readings, assignment schedule and grading policy): This semester I am using a google sheet to share information on the class schedule. Here is the link (it is in view mode and cannot be edited by students): https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1P7Ji-5CVJIj9x6ZEUb1FesYp1uANuKlPfWak6SZ0xM/edit?usp=sharing

I will use this sheet to identify topics covered for each class session; indicate what you need to prepare in advance of each class session; note which guests are visiting our class; list assignments by their due date; outline the grading policy for individual assignments and expectations for group work. This format is easier for me to update regularly, so please check weekly as some items might change to accommodate emerging issues or guest schedules.

Readings and Other Assigned Resources
Some classes will not cover all of the material in the readings and audio/video clips I assign, but it is still important that you keep up with the required materials. For class sessions that involve a guest, readings and other materials will offer background on the topic they are speaking to and will be useful as you formulate questions to ask them.
RESOURCES AND RULES

Academic Assistance
My purpose is to help you to excel in this learning environment. Should you need further assistance beyond my help, please consult the following on-campus resources:
The Writing Center: https://writingcenter.unc.edu/
Center for Student Success and Academic Counseling: http://cssac.unc.edu/
Learning Center: https://learningcenter.unc.edu/
Counseling and Psychological Services: https://caps.unc.edu/

Honor code
The UNC honor Code states: “Conduct all academic work within the letter and spirit of the Honor Code, which prohibits the giving or receiving of unauthorized aid in all academic processes.” We are committed to treating Honor Code violations seriously and urge all students to become familiar with its terms set out at https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/honor-code/ If you have questions it is your responsibility to ask the professor about the Code’s application.

Attendance/Absences
There is a lot of uncertainty this semester and I recognize that this could affect attendance. Please try to attend all classes! If you must miss class, try to notify me in advance of class or shortly afterwards so I can mark you down with an excused absence.

For a list of approved or excused absences, see below: https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/

“For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview or club activity), instructors determine their own approach to missed classes and make-up assessments and assignments.”

Cell phones and Email Use
Please turn off your cellphones before joining class and avoid checking email.

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.

Community Standards in Mask Use.
This fall semester, while we are still in the midst of a global pandemic, all enrolled students in an in-person class are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times. This requirement is to protect our educational community as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, your instructors can ask you to leave immediately, and will submit a report to the Office of Student Conduct. At that point you will be disenrolled from the course for the protection of our educational community.

Our class is remote. But in the eventuality that you will be on campus, or plan to meet in-person for group work, please note that these community standards apply and must be adhered to.

An exemption to the mask wearing community standard will not typically be considered to be a reasonable accommodation. Individuals with a disability or health condition that prevents them from safely wearing a face mask must seek alternative accommodations through the Accessibility Resources and Service. For
Title IX Resources
Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Please contact the Director of Title IX Compliance (Adrienne Allison – Adrienne.allison@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.