WORK: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE
Fall Semester 2014  MW,  3 - 4:15  Room: TBA

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Google group:  https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/working-fall-2014

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND INTRODUCTION

“Your work is the purpose of your life, and you must speed past any killer who assumes the right to stop you, that any value you might find outside your work, any other loyalty or love, can be only travelers you choose to share your journey with”.
— Ayn Rand

“In the name of God, stop a moment, cease your work, look around you.”
— Leo Tolstoy

What all people have in common, around the world, is they work. From CEOs to custodians, fashion models to fishermen, musicians to mechanics, everyone engages the world through labor. This labor may be in the labor force or the informal labor sector, highly or poorly remunerated, compensated or not, unionized or not, part-time or full-time—it’s all work. Some people love their work, some people hate it. But work we do.
As the quotes above suggest, some see work as the only thing, some see it as an interference. But work we do.

Yet, how do we understand the meaning of labor, the changing nature of labor, how people perceive and feel about their work? These are the questions with which this course is concerned, providing students an understanding of the complex issues around labor and a venue to consider their own work today and in the future.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How and why have historical technological and ideological changes redefined—for better or worse—the meaning of work?
- How have industrialization and deindustrialization of the U.S. economy affected the nature of work?
- How do workers themselves feel about, talk about their labor?
- What innovations may fundamentally alter the nature of work in the future?

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Self-Reflection Skills
- Critical Thinking
- Engagement with Texts/Reading
- Presentation Skills
- Research
- Interpersonal Skills and Collaboration

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Bowe, et al  
_E Americans Talk About Their Jobs_
Ehrenreich  
_Nickel and Dimed_

See Schedule of Classes for additional required reading. These will be available on our website:  _http://gdelaurier.pbworks.com_ (click on page ‘Work’)

ATTENDANCE AND OTHER MATTERS

Attendance is NOT optional. We expect you to be at all classes for the whole class. It is essential then that if you have to miss class you contact one of us as soon as possible and let us know why.
We assume that we will treat each other with courtesy and respect, and that our attention in class will be on the class, so turn off your damn smart phones, etc.

We also assume the work you do and turn in will be your work, as individuals and as a group when group work is being submitted. Plagiarism violates a fundamental premise of academic work: honesty. As such, cases of plagiarism will carry heavy penalties, at a minimum an F in the course.

We assume all work will be turned in when it is due. Failure to do so will result in a grade deduction for that assignment at our discretion. If you do need an extension, let us know at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.

Finally, have fun.

If you’ve got questions on any of the above, let us know.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS
Your final grade will be based on the following:

Attendance/Participation (10%)
You should come to class fully prepared to discuss any readings or assignments for that day—including having notes and questions to refer to, and should participate in all class discussions and activities, asking questions and making observations as appropriate.

Reaction Paper (20%)
Students will be asked to write six one-page ‘reaction papers’ to assigned readings. They will be asked to share their papers and discuss with other students during class.

Mid-Term Assignment (30%)
A. (15%) Students will form into ‘industry groups’—such as service, education, manufacturing, construction, healthcare. Each student will interview someone who now works in, is retired from, or is training for that industry. Then, each group will make a multi-media presentation on the past, present, and future of that industry which will include excerpts from interviews.
B. (15%) Each student will write up the results of his or her interview in the style used in the book Gig.
Final Assignment (40%)

A. (20%) Students will formally debate a question such as “Globalization is a net gain for U.S. workers,” or “The world needs a new international workers’ movement.” Students will of course be free to choose other topics. The structure and expectations for these debates will be discussed further in class.

B. (20%) Each student will write a paper defending her or his position.

CLASS SCHEDULE (Tentative. Meaning, this schedule probably will change and develop as our work and discussion evolve. Please have all work done for the day or week it is listed.)

Week One: W Sep 3—Introduction to the course

THE PAST

Week Two: M Sep 8 & W Sep 10—What is work?
READ:  
--Gig, choose any 20 discussions to read
--Material for Week Two at PBworks site
Reaction paper due M Sep 8

Week Three: M Sep 15 & W Sep 17—The ‘science’ of work and its discontents
READ:  
--Gig, read another 20 discussions
--Material for Week Three at PBworks site
Reaction paper due M Sep 15

Week Four: M Sep 22 & W Sep 24—The rise of manufacturing: Detroit
READ:  
--Material for Week Four at PBworks site

Week Five: M Sep 29 & W Oct 1—The decline of manufacturing: Detroit
READ:  
--Gig, Steelworker
--Material for Week Five at PBworks site

Week Six: M Oct 6 & W Oct 8—What is management?
READ:  
--Material for Week Six at PBworks site
Reaction paper due M Oct 6

THE PRESENT

Week Seven: W Oct 15 (no class M Oct 13)—Takin’ what they’re givin’ ‘cause I’m workin’ for a livin’
READ:  
--Nickel and Dimed, Introduction – Chapter Two
Week Eight: M Oct 20 & W Oct 22—Still takin’ what they’re givin’
READ: -- *Nickel and Dimed*, Chapter Three – Afterword
-- Material for Week Eight at PBworks site
Reaction paper due M Oct 20

Week Nine: M Oct 27 & W Oct 29—MID-TERM PRESENTATIONS

Week Ten: M Nov 3 & W Nov 5—Contingent labor: Academia
READ: -- Material for Week Ten at PBworks site

Week Eleven: M Nov 10 & W Nov 12—Globalization, heaven or hell?
READ: -- Material for Week Eleven at PBworks site
Reaction paper due M Nov 10

THE FUTURE

Week Twelve: M Nov 17 & W Nov 19—Management and the new (?) workplace
READ: -- Material for Week Twelve at PBworks site

Week Thirteen: M Nov 24 (no class W Nov 26)—Entrepreneurs, visionaries, and crazies
READ: -- Material for Week Thirteen at PBworks site
Reaction paper due M Nov 24

Week Fourteen: M Dec 1 & W Dec 3—STUDENT DEBATES

Week Fifteen: M Dec 8 & W Dec 10—STUDENT DEBATES, summing up

Nice WORK everyone!