

Sociology 84700
Spring 2011
Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 pm
GC Room 6114

Instructors:
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***Toward a New Labor Movement?
Community-Based Organizations, Unions, and Worker Centers in New York City***

This seminar will focus on recent efforts to organize low-wage and immigrant workers in New York City, including traditional union campaigns but especially emphasizing the efforts of worker centers and other community-based organizations. It is designed for students interested in undertaking a case study of a specific organization or campaign, with the goal of contributing to a projected edited volume on the topic. In the seminar itself, we will read and discuss a range of previous research relevant to this effort, both general works that highlight the contributions of community-based labor organizing and studies that specifically focus on worker organizing, past and present, in the New York area. We will also discuss case study methodology and explore a variety of local fieldwork possibilities for research on this topic. Toward the end of the semester, students will share progress reports on their projects as well.

Course requirements: For the class sessions for which readings are listed below, all students will be required to submit written reactions to the assigned course texts. These short papers will be limited to 250 words and circulated electronically to all class participants 24 hours before each class meeting. Other requirements include active participation in class discussion, regular progress reports to the group, and a more formal oral presentation on the case study during one of the last three class meetings. The final paper will be a first draft (20-30 double-spaced pages) of the case study. Before beginning field research, students who have not already done so must complete the IRB-required CITI training and submit their certificate of completion to the Graduate Center IRB no later than **Feb. 8**. An abstract of the proposed case study is due on **Feb. 15** (in class), and in addition to field research, each student is expected to immerse him/herself in the scholarly literature relevant to her/his case study.

The books by Freeman, Gordon, and Ness should be obtained directly by students; copies of *Working for Justice* will be provided by the instructor. Other readings can be found on line or will be made available in electronic form (arrangements to be discussed in class).

Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings

February 1 Introductions/Organizational Details
*** CITI completion Certificate Due

February 8 Discussion of Milkman, Bloom and Narro, eds., *Working for Justice*. Read the book introduction and two case study chapters of your choice. This week's reaction paper should include an assessment/critique of one of the case studies.

February 15 Case Study Methodologies

Required Readings:

William Foote Whyte, "Appendix A: On the Evolution of *Street Corner Society*" (electronic copy to be distributed)

Michael Burawoy, "The Extended Case Method" *Sociological Theory*, vol. 16, no. 1 (March 1998), pp. 4-33. Available on line at:
<http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/Methodology/ECM.ST.pdf>

Steven H. Lopez, "Contesting the Global City: Pittsburgh's Public Sector Unions Confront a Neoliberal Agenda," in Burawoy et al, *Global Ethnography* (2000). Available on line at:
<http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/Books/GE/Lopez.pdf>

**** Abstract of Case Study Due

February 22 Perspectives on Participatory Action Research

Required Readings: (electronic copies to be distributed)

Alain Touraine, *The Voice and The Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements* (1981), pp. 29-30, 139-49, 191-222. (electronic copy to be distributed)

Shen Yuan, "Strong and Weak Intervention," *Current Sociology*, vol.56, no. 3 (May 2008), pp. 399-404. (electronic copy to be distributed)

John Gaventa and Andrea Cornwall, "Power and Knowledge," in *The Handbook of Action Research*, eds. Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (2006) (electronic copy to be distributed)

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), pp. 85-118. (electronic copy to be distributed)

March 1 Progress Reports on Case Studies (readings TBD)

March 8 Labor in New York City

Required Reading:

Joshua Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (2000)

Ruth Milkman and Laura Braslow, "The State of the Unions: A Profile of 2009-2010 Union Membership" (2009) available for download at:
<http://www.urbanresearch.org/news/new-cuny-study-on-nyc-and-states-high-unionization-and-unique-patterns-of-union-membership>

March 15 Labor Movement Crisis and Prospects for Renewal

Required Reading:

Dan Clawson, *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements* (2003)

Ed Ott, "Where Does Labor Go from Here? A Call for One Working Class" (2010, electronic copy to be distributed)

Stephen Lerner, "An Injury to All: Going Beyond Collective Bargaining As We Have Known It," *New Labor Forum*, vol. 19, no. 2 (Spring 2010) (electronic copy to be distributed)

March 22 The Worker Center Model

Required Reading:

Jennifer Gordon, *Suburban Sweatshops: The Fight for Immigrant Rights* (2005)

Also recommended: Janice Fine, *Worker Centers* (2006)

March 29 Progress Reports on Case Studies (readings TBD)

April 5 New York City Immigrant Worker Organizing

Required Reading:

Immanuel Ness, *Immigrants, Unions and the New U.S. Labor Market* (2005) (readings continue on next page)

Hector Cordero-Guzman, "Community-based Organizations and Migration in New York City," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 31, no. 5 (Sept. 2005), pp. 889-909. (electronic copy to be distributed)

Ai-Jen Poo, "A Twenty-First Century Organizing Model: Lessons from the New York Domestic Workers Bill of Rights Campaign," *New Labor Forum*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Winter 2011) (electronic copy to be distributed)

April 12 Critical Perspectives on the Worker Center Model

Steve Jenkins, "Organizing, Advocacy and Member Power: A Critical Reflection," *Working USA*, vol. 6, no.2 (2002), pp. 56-89. (electronic copy to be distributed)

Janice Fine, "A Marriage Made in Heaven? Mismatches and Misunderstandings between Worker Centres and Unions," *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 45, no. 2 (June 2007), pp. 335-360. (electronic copy to be distributed)

Bob Roman, "But Is It Organizing?" December 15, 2010, available at: <http://talkingunion.wordpress.com/2010/12/15/but-is-it-organizing/>

Jacob Lesniewski, "Yes, It Is Organizing: Workers Centers and the Labor Movement," *In These Times*, Jan 3, 2011, available at: http://www.inthesetimes.com/working/entry/6806/yes_it_is_organizing/

Chris Lowe, "Re: Yes, It Is Organizing: Workers Centers and the Labor Movement" (electronic copy to be distributed)

(April 19 and 26 – no class - spring break)

May 3 Student Presentations

May 10 Student Presentations

May 17 Student Presentations