

Women, Work, & Public Policy

Janet Gornick and Ruth Milkman

JGornick@gc.cuny.edu RMilkman@gc.cuny.edu

Fall 2013

SOC 83300 / PSC 72500 / WSCP 81000

3 credits

Tuesdays 4:15 to 6:15pm

This course provides an overview of key issues affecting women in the 21st century workplace in the United States and other affluent industrial countries. We begin with a look at recent controversies about women workers, followed by an overview of the gender dynamics of the contemporary U.S. labor market. In this introductory section of the course, we examine changes and continuities in patterns of gender inequality, such as job segregation by gender and the pay gap between male and female workers. Here we pay close attention to the impact of growing class inequalities, which have led to increased polarization in the labor market between college-educated women and those with more limited education, as well as divisions along lines of race, ethnicity, and nativity. In this part of the course we also explore the effects of gender inequalities in the division of labor in the household, particularly in relation to the care of children; the role of women in paid care work; and finally, the treatment of sexuality in the workplace and its relationship to gender inequality.

In the second half of the course, we shift the focus to issues of public policy and its relationship to labor market institutions. A central concern here is the recent rise of the "precariat" - workers with little or no employment security who are often excluded from basic legal protections that once covered the bulk of the workforce. Women are overrepresented in the ranks of the precariat, especially in part-time and temporary jobs. We also look at "work-family reconciliation" policies - that is, public policies aimed at supporting women (and men) as they balance the competing responsibilities of paid work and family care. A central issue here is the degree to which such policies as paid family leave and flexible scheduling create new forms of gender inequality. We also examine public policy initiatives such as affirmative action, equal pay laws, and other efforts to promote equal opportunity in the workplace. We also examine the recent history of welfare "reform" and the changing relationship of women workers to the organized labor movement. In closing, we consider the impact of the Great Recession on women workers. Although most of the course material focuses on the United States, throughout the semester we will take a comparative approach to the issues, examining the experience of women in other high-income countries as well.

Course Expectations and Requirements: This is a reading course, in which all students will be required to submit written reactions to the assigned course readings. These short papers will be limited to 300 words and due (by email) each Monday at midnight. Other course requirements include oral student presentations on the course readings (each

student will be responsible for one presentation, with scheduling determined by a lottery). All students are expected to attend and actively participate in class discussion throughout the semester. Additional written work due at the end of the semester will be discussed in class and in individual consultations with the instructors (in mid-October).

The books by Sandberg, Blair-Loy, Duffy, Schilt, Vosko, Gornick et al, Dobbin, and DeParle should be obtained directly by students. They are also on reserve in the GC library. Other readings will be made available in electronic form. In some cases web links appear below; readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be supplied to each student in class.

Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings

Class 1 September 3 **Introductions, Course Overview and Logistics**

I. Women, Work, and Inequality

Class 2 September 10 **Contemporary Debates about Women and Work**

Readings:

Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead* (Knopf, 2013).

Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," *The Atlantic* (July-August 2012). Available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-cant-have-it-all/309020/>

Class 3 September 17 No class meeting.
Work on proposals for final project.

Class 4 September 24 **Gender, Class, Race in the Labor Market**

Readings:

* Leslie McCall, "What Does Class Inequality among Women Look Like? Comparison with Men and Families, 1970 to 2000," in Annette Lareau and Dalton Conley, eds., *Social Class: How Does It Work?* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2010).

* Paula England, "The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled," *Gender & Society* 24 (2010): 149-166.

* Shelley J. Correll, Stephen Benard and In Paik, "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?", *American Journal of Sociology* 112 (2007): 1297-1338.

* Becky Pettit and Stephanie Ewert, "Employment Gains and Wage Declines: The Erosion of Black Women's Relative Wages Since 1980," *Demography* 46 (2009): 469-92.

Class 5 October 1 **Motherhood and Working Time**

Readings:

Mary Blair-Loy, *Competing Devotions* (Harvard University Press, 2003).

* Susan Lambert, "Passing the Buck: Labor Flexibility Practices That Transfer Risk onto Hourly Workers," *Human Relations* 61 (2008):1203-27.

Class 6 October 8 **Women and Paid Care Work**

Reading:

Mignon Duffy, *Making Care Count* (Rutgers University Press, 2011).

-- October 15 No class meeting; GC classes follow a Monday schedule. Individual meetings (to be scheduled) regarding students' final projects.

Class 7 October 22 **Gender, Sexuality, & the Social Construction of Work**

Reading:

Kristen Schilt, *Just One of the Guys: Transgender Men and the Persistence of Gender Inequality* (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

II. Public Policy and Institutions

Class 8 October 29 **Precarious Work and Regulation**

Reading:

Leah Vosko, *Managing the Margins: Gender, Citizenship and the International Regulation of Precarious Employment* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

Class 9 November 5 **Work, Family, and Public Policy**

Reading:

Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers, eds. *Gender Equality: Transforming Family Divisions of Labor* (Verso, 2009), chapters TBA.

- Class 10 November 12 **Equal Opportunity Policies on the Ground**
- Reading:
- Frank Dobbin, *Inventing Equal Opportunity* (Princeton University Press, 2009).
- Class 11 November 19 **Gender and “Welfare Reform” in the U.S.**
- Readings:
- Jason DeParle, *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare* (Penguin, 2005).
- * Lynne Haney, “Homeboys, Babies, Men in Suits: The State and the Reproduction of Male Dominance”, *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 759-778.
- Class 12 November 26 **Women and the U.S. Labor Movement**
- Readings:
- * Ruth Milkman, “Two Worlds of Unionism: Women and the New Labor Movement,” in Dorothy Sue Cobble, ed., *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor* (Cornell University Press, 2007).
- * Dorothy Sue Cobble, "When Feminism Had Class," in Michael Zweig, ed., *What's Class Got To Do With It? American Society in the 21st Century* (Cornell University Press, 2004).
- John Hoerr, "Solidaritas at Harvard" *The American Prospect*, Dec.19, 2001), available at: <http://prospect.org/article/solidaritas-harvard>
- * Naomi Gerstel and Dan Clawson, “Unions’ Responses to Family Concerns,” *Social Problems* 48 (2001): 277-298.
- Class 13 December 3 **Women and Economic Crisis**
- Reading:
- * Maria Karamessini and Jill Rubery, eds., *Women and Austerity: The Economic Crisis and the Future for Gender Equality* (Routledge, 2013), chapters 1, 2, 4, 5 and 9.
- Class 14 December 10 **Wrapping Up**