Labor and Global Workers’ Rights (LGWR)

LGWR 510: International Labor Law

3 Credits

Seminar exploring international labor law, including its standards, reviewing bodies, procedures, information sources, remedies, and overall strengths and weaknesses. LGWR 510 International Labor Law (3) Because globalized production systems call for globalized rules for workplace rights, a body of international labor law is rapidly developing. Designed principally for global labor activists, this course equips students to evaluate the role that international labor law – its sources, participants, mechanisms, and remedies - plays in the promotion of labor rights in the global economy. A centerpiece of the course looks at the International Labor Organization, whose complex processes introduce students to the generally “soft” rules of international workplace regulation. Beyond the ILO, the course looks at other bodies - some global, others regional or bilateral - that require or encourage compliance with decent working standards. It also addresses how private parties can create either voluntary “codes of conduct” or negotiated framework agreements spelling out labor rights. Across all of these topics, students take up cases covering the broad range of labor struggles (affecting unions, children, women, immigrants, forced laborers, etc.). Critical to the course is the student's gaining familiarity with the surprising variety of information available on working conditions around the globe. As the course progresses, students are asked to formulate opinions on which international labor law forum holds the greatest potential to help with selected worker rights issues in selected countries. Students will review evidence suggesting that labor activists make their best use of international labor law when they link legal action to outreach, education, research, and “on the ground” organizing to enhance chances for success.

LGWR 520: Global Workers’ Rights

3 Credits

This course analyzes struggles to promote workers’ rights across a variety of economic, political, and geographic contexts. The stakes of such efforts are high at a time when worker movements face a barrage of new and old challenges. Political attacks, privatization, capital mobility, and automation have contributed to a decades-long decline in union membership in many of labor’s traditional strongholds. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the world’s workers—particularly women, immigrants, and informal workers—remain unorganized. In this course we will ask, what is the relationship between transformations in global political and economic processes, local labor control regimes and working conditions, and forms of worker resistance? What is the role of such movements in increasing the power of women, people of color, LGBTQ people, and immigrants? What catalyzes worker organizations to expand their membership in many of labor’s traditional strongholds. Meanwhile, the organization of agricultural workers is often dismissed as too difficult, given the precarity, isolation, citizenship status, and technological displacement of these workers. This course will examine labor relations in post-socialist China. It will cover topics such as the development of China’s economic reform, the employment and working conditions of workers, trade unions and the collective bargaining system, the state’s role in employment relations, the labor law system, and the role of civil society and non-governmental organizations in the country’s labor relations. In addition to China, this course will focus on Vietnam (another post-communist country in Asia), and Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea (three of the four Asian Tigers). It will investigate how these countries are similar to or different from China in terms of socio-economic development and labor relations. Moreover, the course examines labor relations in China and other countries by drawing upon analytical and theoretical concepts on subjects such as the state, the legal system, the economic system, class relations, and civil society.

LGWR 540: Research Methods in labor and Global Workers’ Rights

3 Credits

This course introduces students to social science research methods and writing skills as they relate to workers and labor policy.

LGWR 550: Protest in the Fields: Agricultural Workers and Rural Organizing in a Global Context

3 Credits

The agricultural industry accounts for an enormous share of the global political economy, employing 1 billion people and representing 1 in 3 of all workers. Nonetheless, the organization of agricultural workers is often dismissed as too difficult, given the precarity, isolation, citizenship status, and technological displacement of these workers. This course provides a broad exploration of these global and national shifts in food production, tracing the transformations in the agricultural sector and the labor conditions of agricultural workers in the United States and across Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. It considers how agricultural workers have developed new and innovative organizing strategies to demand economic and political rights. Drawing on diverse examples from the United Farm Workers to the global farmers’ organization La Via
LGWR 596: Individual Studies

1-9 Credits/Maximum of 9

Creative projects, including nonthesis research, that are supervised on an individual basis and which fall outside the scope of formal courses.

LGWR 597: Special Topics

1-9 Credits/Maximum of 18

Formal courses given on a topical or special interest subject which may be offered infrequently.

LGWR 597C: Labor and Employment Relations in China Comparative Perspective

1-9 Credits/Maximum of 18

Since its open up in 1978 to private investment, China's planned economy has been turned into a market-driven economy. Relying heavily on the export-oriented industries, China serves as a "spatial fix" for Western capital, which eagerly search for new sites of investment and business opportunities. As a result, China has become a gigantic manufacturing hub and, the second largest economy in the world. The massive inflow of foreign investment, the pro-business developmental strategies of the Chinese state, plus weak legal enforcement in the country have rendered workers victims of the economic reform. This course will examine labour relations in the post-socialist China.

LGWR 894: Capstone Experience

3 Credits

Supervised, professionally-oriented student activities that constitute the culminating experience for the program.

LGWR 895: Internship

1-6 Credits

Supervised, professionally-oriented, off campus, non-group instruction, including field experiences, practicums, or internships. LGWR 895 Internship (1-6) The Labor and Global Workers' Rights (LGWR) internship aims to provide MPS in LGWR students with hands-on experience in labor and global workers' rights. The internship will build and reinforce the students' skills by enabling them to apply what they have learned in the classroom to a real-world labor and global workers' rights setting. As the MPS in LGWR is a professional degree, an internship in a real-world labor and global workers' rights setting is critical to students' academic and professional success. Students complete their internships with US or international labor unions or a labor-oriented organization such as a worker center, labor NGO, or labor research institute. Through the internship, students will learn about priorities, policies and practices that these organizations have regarding workers' rights and/or international labor issues. Students may also gain insight, for example, into the challenges that American unions have with building working relationships and alliances with unions in other countries while also addressing global dynamics affecting working conditions and workers' rights. Prior to the beginning of the internship, students will work with their internship adviser to develop individualized learning objectives. These learning objectives will shape a student's experience at the internship site and the types of projects the student will complete. The learning objectives will also provide the students with a metric by which they can evaluate their effort and performance.

LGWR 896: Individual Studies

1-9 Credits/Maximum of 9

LGWR 897: Capstone Experience

3 Credits

Supervised, professionally-oriented student activities that constitute the culminating experience for the program.