LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS (LHR)

LHR 100: Exploring Work and Employment

3 Credits

Work and employment are central parts of the human experience. With that in mind, this course has two main objectives. First, to help better prepare students for the role that work and employment will play in their lives. And second, to introduce students to the fields of human resource management and employment relations. The course will begin by looking at the ways in which work and employment impact people's lives financially, socially, and psychologically. It then examines a number of issues that impact the kind of experience that people have at work and that people entering the workforce need to be aware of, including the basic legal rights employees have related to employment, workplace privacy, employment discrimination, family-friendly policies at work, safety and health in the workplace, drug and alcohol testing, and the growing trend of working from home. The course then introduces students to human resource management as a field. It also discusses the various ways that students will interact with human resources professionals when they begin applying for jobs, including the search and hiring process and, once they obtain employment, on issues such as compensation, benefits, and job evaluation. As the employees in some workplaces are represented by labor unions, students will be introduced to the role that unions have historically played in American workplaces. The process for organizing a union will be addressed, as will the collective bargaining process through which employers and unions jointly determine wages and salaries, benefits such as healthcare and pensions, and processes for ensuring fair treatment and due process in the workplace. New alternatives to unions that give workers a voice in their workplace will also be discussed. The final section of the course will focus on globalization and immigration and their impact on work and employment around the world. Both the benefits of globalization (lower costs on consumer goods) and its costs (job losses in developed countries and the exploitation of workers in poorer countries through substandard pay, sweatshops, and child labor) will be discussed, as will the benefits and costs of immigration.

Bachelor of Arts: Social and Behavioral Sciences
General Education: Social and Behavioral Scien (GS)
GenEd Learning Objective: Crit and Analytical Think
GenEd Learning Objective: Global Learning
GenEd Learning Objective: Soc Resp and Ethic Reason

LHR 136Y: Race, Gender, and Employment

3 Credits

This course will ask how race and gender affect work in the contemporary United States. We will consider how race and gender shape people's work opportunities, their wages at work, and whether they participate in paid or unpaid labor (or both). We will begin with an overview of work and the changes in the workforce over time; we will move to investigate how workplace structures reproduce gender and race inequalities; will ask how race and gender inequalities are informally maintained through education systems and social networks; will consider differing dimensions of inequality across poverty, immigration, and sexuality; and will consider how studying unpaid labor helps us better understand the formal paid economy. The course emphasizes writing in the form of short assignments and longer papers as a means to develop comprehension of these ideas. This course is a writing intensive course designed to develop formal writing appropriate for a business context. We will use an active and engaged writing process using the course topics of diversity and employment inequality to strengthen writing skills.

Cross-listed with: AFAM 136Y, WMNST 136Y
Bachelor of Arts: Social and Behavioral Sciences
United States Cultures (US)
General Education: Social and Behavioral Scien (GS)
GenEd Learning Objective: Effective Communication
GenEd Learning Objective: Crit and Analytical Think
GenEd Learning Objective: Soc Resp and Ethic Reason
Writing Across the Curriculum

LHR 410: Employment Strategies for People with Disabilities

3 Credits

Develop knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to understand and practice effective employment strategies in working with people with disabilities. This course is designed for students to develop knowledge, skills, and necessary resources to understand and practice effective employment strategies in working with people with disabilities, including individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds. Students will develop skills on networking with employers (e.g., social media, professional organizations, interviewing employers, etc.) for building professional contacts and networks. Various forms of labor market information will be analyzed to identify both challenges and opportunities for people with disabilities in different sectors of the labor market (primary and secondary). Throughout the course, students will learn about disability issues in the workplace (e.g., laws, policy, stigma, accommodations, etc.). A strong emphasis will be on understanding how laws and policies impact employment for people with disabilities, and students will identify legal and illegal practices. Best employer practices will be identified regarding mitigating disability impact on both employees (current and future) and employers. This course will incorporate Assistive Technology (AT) applications so students will be able to identify appropriate AT devices to assist people with disabilities in obtaining and retaining employment along with applicable strategies for working with employers in developing employment opportunities in today's changing world of work. Students will understand how disability is a critical component of workforce diversity and strengthens people with disabilities bring to the workplace. Students will identify how people with disabilities should prepare for the employment process including training opportunities (formal and informal), resume development, interview preparation, and initiatives to promote increased employment outcomes. Different disability populations (e.g., youth, Veterans, aging workers, etc.) will be discussed including common barriers for employment as well as how to create opportunities in different employer settings.

Prerequisite: 5th Semester standing or 3 credits of LHR or LHR 100
Cross-listed with: RHS 410

LHR 428: Total Rewards

3 Credits

This course requires students to learn the link between company's strategy and compensation, and understand core policies necessary to develop effective compensation systems. The core policies include internal alignment, external competitiveness, and employee contribution. First, theoretical frameworks of human resource management and
corporate strategies will be discussed to define the relationship between company’s strategy and compensation philosophy. Students will study how to establish internally consistent and fair pay levels for various jobs using techniques such as job analysis, job evaluation, and competency analysis. The course then will discuss how to collect and analyze salary data and covers ‘pay for performance’ where students learn the concept of performance management and various incentive practices at the individual, team, and organizational levels. The course will be finalized with the discussion of employee benefits. In this section, students will discuss various benefit options that companies can provide, and various legal issues.

Prerequisite: LHR 100 or 5th Semester standing or 3 other credits of LHR

LHR 450: Developing a Career in Human Resources or Employment Relations

3 Credits

The overall goals for this course are to enhance student awareness of aspects of themselves that are related to career success and satisfaction, guide student exploration of the world of work, and equip students with strategies for finding an optimal career match in the world of work. More specifically, this course will help students to increase awareness of their strengths, values, interests, and personality thereby helping students to make informed decisions to select and prepare for the next step in their career. Students will research the world of work through information interviews. They will learn how to develop and deploy a personal brand, including resume, cover letters and elevator pitches. Students will apply the career planning resources available through Penn State Career Services, the Liberal Arts Career Enrichment Network, and the Labor and Human Relations Department to their job and internship searches. Students will learn about career management skills from notable and distinguished alumni. Students will improve interviewing skills and prepare for a wide range of interview challenges. Students will integrate prior self-assessment results to summarize the professional assets that each student offers to employers. They will define their unique differentiators and identify the primary motivator that drives them. They will chart five year career goals and draft a development plan for realizing those goals. These steps will help students to begin the life-long process of managing their career in a systematic and proactive manner. Students will be introduced to the various career service options available to them at Penn State including: Penn State Career Services, Liberal Arts Career Enrichment Network, Nittany Lion Careers, and the resources available to them in the School of Labor and Employment Relations. They will also participate in the Strengths Finder Assessment, which is a tool to identify skills in which they exhibit high levels of strength. The following Career Readiness Competencies will be addressed by this course: Critical thinking and problem solving. Students will also strengthen their oral and written methods of communication. The role of digital technology in a career search will be discussed. Career Development Processes will be covered in this course. Resume and cover letter writing will be addressed. Students will learn to develop a network through avenues such as LinkedIn, networking events, information interviews, and connecting with alumni. Students will develop interview skills. Students will receive guidance on developing effective job search strategies, including job offer negotiation, skills and qualities employers are seeking, and career decision making.

Corequisites: 3 credits of LHR course

LHR 452: Human Resources and Employment Relations in Tech

3 Credits

Students will study the theory, practice, and controversies related to human resources and employment relations in the tech sector. This course will explore how organizations manage the people who produce technology and compare human resource management (HRM) practices in the tech sector to those from industries not based on knowledge resources. We further investigate the role organizational culture and leadership play and introduce students to the relevant public policy debates concerning the organization of work and HRM practices in tech. The course culminates in visits to a variety of U.S. tech companies and meetings with tech employee representatives to build and extend the insights learned in the classroom.

Prerequisites: 9 credits in LER

LHR 460: Ethics in the Workplace

3 Credits

The course will explore ethics from both a normative and behavioral perspective. A key operating assumption of this course is that every employee of an organization has a responsibility to demonstrate ethical leadership. The course will emphasize the importance and applicability of shared mutual accountability. Four interrelated and mutually reinforcing subject areas will be explored in the course at the individual, organizational and transnational levels business ethics, ethics in unionized firms, corporate social responsibility, and sustainability. Students will develop their abilities to articulate their own moral values and to recognize and resolve ethical dilemmas within an organizational setting. Students will analyze situations using ethical theories and learn to advocate for particular management and labor relations approaches, practices and policies based on ethical considerations. While no one view of ethics is identified as "best," students learn to recognize, evaluate, compare and apply different approaches. Students also will develop their abilities to identify, read, and explain academic literature related to the topic of ethical leadership from a management and employment relations perspective.

Prerequisite: LHR 100 or 5th Semester standing or 3 other credits of LHR

LHR 466: Labor Union Structure, Administration and Governance

3 Credits

American unions have long played an important role in the American economy. However, in the last forty years, the number of workers represented by unions has declined steadily. Within this same time frame unions have been looking at ways to restructure in order to increase their strength if not to just survive. This includes organizing workers beyond their traditional membership, merging with other unions, and reorganizing union hierarchy. It also includes looking at ways to reconnect and mobilize existing members; motivating them to become more committed to and actively involved in their unions. This course will look at the similarities and differences of union structure, internal and external rules of governance and examine best practices for effective union administration. The traditional labor movement’s connection with new types of workers’ organizations and non-unionized labor movements will also be explored. As they organize, structure, and govern themselves, labor unions must address and accommodate to the diversity among actual and potential members of differing economic, social, occupational, and cultural groups. As students work through the topics outlined above,
they will examine whether and how the US labor movement succeeds, or sometimes fails, at creating representational structure that attracts and mobilizes workers of professional-, middle- and lower classes, skilled and unskilled occupations, immigrant and native born, and different genders and races. This course asks: how does one create the kind of union structure and governance that best achieves social justice and progress? At the conclusion of the course students will be able to: - Describe and analyze the primary ways in which unions have structured their activities at the local, national and international levels; - Describe the manner in which union members interact within the governance processes common in the labor movement; - Analyze the relationship between union administration and governance with respect to the legal framework within which unions must operate; - Develop plans to attract employees to join a union and develop tools to effectively socialize new members as effective contributors in pursuing legitimate union objectives. - Articulate the variety of ways in which leadership emerges within the labor movement and how leadership affects the labor movement’s ability to successfully interact with the political, social and economic factors influence union success. Students will be able to link these concepts to related courses in the LER major and minor classes addressing collective bargaining and employment relations. They will also find connections to the College of the Liberal Arts and the Smeal College of Business. Courses in related disciplines: Management; Political Science; Psychology; History; Economics.

Prerequisite: LER 100
Bachelor of Arts: Humanities
United States Cultures (US)

LHR 468: American Labor Unions

3 Credits

This course will explore the current state of American labor unions and the historical, cultural, legal, political, and economic contexts within which they operate. In addition, we will examine alternative organizational forms through which U.S. workers organize including cooperatives, worker centers, living wage campaigns, and digital platforms. Among the subjects that students will analyze are the US public’s perception of unions, the recent increase in political resistance to US public employee unions, the relationship between rising inequality and declining U.S. labor union membership, shifting union attitudes toward immigrant workers, the impact of globalization on U.S. unions, and how U.S. unions compare to those in other parts of the world. We will also analyze how divisions of class, gender, race, sexuality, and nationality shape the U.S. labor movement today. Finally, we will discuss pressing contemporary issues such as the rise of the gig economy, 2019-2020 strike wave, the Janus v. AFSCME decision, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on U.S. workers. Guest speakers, who are union practitioners, will provide students with the opportunity to question elected union officers and staff and will provide real world context to the course readings. This course will give students a fundamental understanding of how U.S. unions are structured and operate, and how those unions both impact and are impacted by the U.S. and global economies.

Prerequisites: 4th semester standing

LHR 472: Work-Life Practices and Policies

3 Credits

Explore the causes and consequences of conflicts between work, family, and other life commitments, and how these may be resolved. LER 472 Work-Life Practices and Policies (3)(BA) This course meets the Bachelor of Arts degree requirements. The interdisciplinary field of work-family and work-life developed as a result of middle-class women’s entry into the labor force, a movement that generated conflict between family and paid work commitments. Overall, the course addresses the reasons the field developed, relevant theoretical perspectives regarding the issues, and related problems as well as proposed solutions at both the public and private sector levels. The overarching objectives of the course are to expand students’ understanding of conflicts between work and family commitments, and how these might be resolved through private and public sector initiatives. Specifically, the course concerns how individuals, families, and organizations interact to help hinder the achievement of balance between work and life commitments, and relevant effects on those involved. The changing demographics of the family, laws and trends around working time, father and mother time with children, the expanded need for elder care, work-life programs such as flextime, concierge services, paid parental leave, part-time careers, paid time-off banks, and the role of unions, corporations and government legislation are covered. The course attempts to link the likely future needs of students to broader trends in society and how balance could be achieved at the level of individuals, families, other stakeholders in the community, and for society as well. Fields of research relevant to the course include labor studies, women’s studies, Industrial/Organizational psychology, the sociology of work and of family, and child development. Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, through two in-class examinations, and through a final written or oral project providing a chronology and analysis of an adult’s work-family history.

Prerequisites: 3 credits in LER/LHR
Cross-listed with: SOC 472, WMNST 472
Bachelor of Arts: Social and Behavioral Sciences

LHR 475H: Labor in the Global Economy

3 Credits/Maximum of 3

This course focuses on how the nature of work is changing in the global economy, and the implications for economic opportunity and inequality in both . LER 475H Labor in the Global Economy (3) This seminar focuses on how the nature of work is changing in the “new economy” and the implications for economic opportunity and inequality. Sections of the course examine: theoretical approaches to understanding contemporary process of labor restructuring, including globalization, rise of multinational corporations, and growth in global supply chains; case studies of restructuring processes; and innovative labor organizing initiatives at a local, regional and global scale. This course aims to develop a framework for understanding the nature of contemporary processes of economic restructuring and its impact on the world of work. Case studies will provide a deeper understanding of how broad macro-level changes in the nature of contemporary capitalism are mediated by a variety of technological, political, and socio-economic factors in particular industries and geographic contexts. The case studies section of the course will also examine business ethics and corporate social responsibility initiatives. Finally, an in-depth look at workers’ responses to these changes at different scales (local, regional, global) will help deepen our understanding of the contested nature of workplace restructuring while exploring promising strategies for improving working conditions. This is a reading-intensive course dealing with the theoretical literature on rapid economic restructuring and how this is shaping work and employment.

Prerequisite: 6.0 credits of LHR and 6th Semester standing Honors
LHR 480: Current Issues in Human Resources

3 Credits

Identity and race, gender and heritage, centrality and marginality, self and other, as expressed in literary works from around the world. Students will study current trends that are shaping human resources management. These trends include information technology, internationalization, new organizational forms, changing demographics, and competitive landscape. Examples of topics include use of social media in human resource management, virtual work, managing an aging workforce and working across international boundaries. The course is case based and as such explores experiences of actual companies. Students will study and discuss the strategies, successes and failures of companies and how these issues and challenges relate to the human resources function. Timely readings that expose students to theoretical structures underlying these changes will be part of this course. In addition, because this is a current issues class, students will be expected to actively follow trending news in the business world through news media and critically examine how it is shaping the human resource management practices. This course will serve as a complement to MGMT 100, 341, 441 and LER 100, 201, 401 and 434.

Prerequisite: LHR 305