

## **Geography of Gender, Race and Labor**

*Dr. Becky Burnett, PhD*

*Office hours: Wednesday 3:30-5:20*

*Class times: M/W 1:30-3:20*

*Course website: Catalyst Commonview*

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Smith 430

Savery 166

### **Course Description**

The purpose of this course is for students to think critically about the intersections between race, ethnicity, gender and labor in the United States. This course asks students to explore the ways in which identity, political economy, and space come together to create different patterns and relationships in terms of labor. While there will be a strong focus on analyses of labor from a geographical perspective, attention will also be given to scholars outside of geography and outside of mainstream academia. Students will begin the course with a theoretical overview of the debates, conceptualizations, and constructions of labor, race, gender, and class. Next, the course will focus specifically on case studies, approaches and policies that have influenced the empirical landscape of labor in the U.S. in the past century. Finally, we will turn toward alternatives to current interpretations of labor and work both in terms of theory and material practices.

### **Learning Objectives**

We will learn together through readings, class discussion, group facilitations, guest presentations, films and fieldwork. As a 400-level course, this class is designed to improve and challenge students' academic skills in the areas of independent research, collaborative research, critical reading, thinking and writing, and political and geographical debate.

Students will gain a better understanding of the social organization of labor from both a theoretical and empirical perspective. Students will learn the ways in which work is both gendered and raced and will explore the spatial aspects to divisions of labor. The course will challenge you to interrogate dominant representations and conceptualizations of labor and to think critically about who has access and control over these definitions and boundaries.

Your Role: to grapple with the ideas in class and readings and your peers' writing and conversation. You should puzzle through and **reflect on the reading**, not skim it; consistently demonstrate engaged, critical intelligence in your writing; and come to class with the required texts and materials. Perhaps most importantly, you will need to think through your own and your peers' contributions critically and engage in significant revision of your own thinking and writing.

## **Texts**

Each week you will be required to read several articles and/or book chapters. These need to be read by class time Monday. The texts will be compiled in a course reader available at Professional Copy and Print.

## **Course Breakdown**

Group Facilitation	15%
Midterm Essay	25%
Final Paper	25%
Fieldwork	15%
Class Participation	20%

While at present I have not scheduled any quizzes, if participation dwindles I may implement pop quizzes.

## **Brief Description of Assignments**

More specific instructions will be given as we begin each assignment.

### *Group Facilitations*

Each student will be tasked with leading class discussion in a group on required readings for one 40-minute class period during the quarter. The group tasked with leading will submit a set of questions to me the day before they are to lead discussion. I will post a schedule and further instructions in the first week of class.

### *Midterm Take Home Essay*

For your midterm, I will give you 2-3 take home essay questions. Using material from class, you will need to answer two of these questions in a total of 4-6 pages.

### *Final Paper*

The final paper will ask you to examine the intersection of race, gender and labor through researching a particular case study that highlights a major theme from class. Specifically, in 5-7 pages you will need to investigate a concrete example of the how a theme from class (gendered divisions of labor, the recession and economic restructuring, care labor) is playing out in a specific way. As part of your final paper grade you will be required to bring to class 2 copies of a full and complete draft for peer review.

### *Fieldwork*

The goal of the fieldwork is for you to engage in investigating an empirical question outside of the classroom. Students can chose from two popular methodological approaches: participant observation or a story collection (qualitative interview).

### *Class Participation*

Effective class participation is an important skill that needs practice to develop. Because participation is key to your learning I take it very seriously. In this particular context participation means not just talking in class but also listening to your peers and creating a space where everyone is invited to participate. It also means coming to class prepared, every time.

### **Grades**

To succeed in this class you will need a good understanding of class materials, evidence of independent research and analysis, and writing befitting that of a student of a 400-level course. You will need to make arguments that make sense and are based in academic research and analysis. I will expect you to be open to arguments made both by your peers and by me. When you make arguments in your papers, you will be expected to address the concerns of other writers who may not share your analysis of the issue. Some of the topics we address are emotional and controversial, that's OK, that is what makes them interesting. Arguments in papers, however, will need to be substantiated by research, and not simply opinions.

### **Course Rules and Regulations**

#### **Class/Email Etiquette**

Please arrive to class on time. If you do arrive late, do your best not to disturb the class. As a matter of respect to your classmates, do not email, text, listen to your ipod, or otherwise distract your classmates. To ensure that I see and respond to your emails, please have a descriptive subject line. Messages with inappropriate subjects, addresses, or introductions will not be read. I check my email frequently throughout the week but do not check my email often over the weekend.

#### **Readings, Events and Announcements**

We will be low-tech in class and relatively high-tech outside it. This distinction means that you will need pen, notebook paper, and hard copies or notes of texts during class; however, outside of class, you will operate in a mostly paperless environment. I will post all course documents on our **CommonView workspace**, where you can access the Catalyst Tools you will need to stay up to date on class assignments. I will post announcements, assignments, and electronic copies of all handouts on this site. **CHECK IT FREQUENTLY.** You may also be required to post drafts and conduct peer reviews via catalyst and we may potentially utilize the Go-Post discussion board.

#### **Plagiarism**

Don't do it! If you ever have questions about documentation, please come see me—I'm happy to help answer questions and share strategies for avoiding plagiarism. In your writing for this class, you will reference academic texts, and you should be sure to provide proper and consistent citation when you reference others' work. I do expect your words and the ideas they express to be your own except when you clearly signal and name another source.

### Submissions and Extensions

Please submit all papers in 12-pt. Times New Roman (or comparable) font, double-spaced, unless assignment directions indicate a different format. Margins should not exceed an inch. All papers are due at the beginning of class. I will penalize late papers by .3 per day. Please talk to me if you feel you qualify for an extension.

### Accommodations

Please let me know if you need accommodation of any sort. I am happy to work with the UW Disability Service Office (DSO) to provide what you require, and I am very willing to take suggestions specific to this class to meet your needs. More information on support at UW may be found on the DSO web site at <http://www.washington.edu/admin/dso/>

### Deliverables

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due date and other information</u>
Group Facilitations	Throughout the quarter
Midterm Take Home Essay	Weds May 1 <sup>st</sup> , via catalyst Collect It
Fieldwork	Mon May 13 <sup>th</sup> in class
Full Draft of Research Paper	Weds May 29 <sup>th</sup> 2 copies in class
Final Paper	Mon June 10 <sup>th</sup> hard copy/mailbox

Geography 439: Gender, Race and Labor  
Course Schedule

### Section One: Theories and Approaches

Weeks 1-4

#### Week 1: April 1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>: Why study Gender, Race and Labor?

In week one, we will begin to unpack what we mean by work, race, and gender. We will also query why we study labor in terms of gender, race and ethnicity. We will utilize media articles and our own experiences to discuss “divisions of labor” and how this impacts who works where and why.

Home/work: For Wednesday, find an article from a mainstream media site that discusses work, employment or labor and bring it in to class to discuss. Also, in class Wednesday we will sign up for group facilitations. You can find the course readings on our website as well as in the reader.

#### Readings:

1. Melissa Allison. (2012) “Seattle’s low wage workforce is barely getting by”  
[http://seattletimes.com/html/pacificnw/2018718155\\_pacificpbottomrung29.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/pacificnw/2018718155_pacificpbottomrung29.html)
2. Jennifer Langston. (2012) “The myth of post-racialism”.  
<http://daily.sightline.org/2012/08/21/the-myth-of-post-racialism/>
3. Jocelyn Noveck. (2010). “Report finds it wasn’t just a ‘mancession’”
4. Jilian Mincer. (2012). “U.S. recession’s other victim: public universities”

**Week 2: April 8<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>: Unpacking Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Labor Part 1**

This week we will continue our investigation of the construction of labor, gender and race. We will discuss “discourse” and how this influences the material realities of different groups. For the rest of the quarter, you will be expected to have read all the required articles by Monday.

Home/work: The reading load this week is heavy. Be sure to take notes and write down any questions you may have.

**Readings:**

1. Kim England and Victoria Lawson. (2005). “Feminist analyses of work: Rethinking the boundaries, gendering and spatiality of work.” pages 77-92
2. George Lipsitz (2011). “Section One: Social Imaginaries and Social Relations” in *How Racism Takes Place*.
3. David Wilson and Harald Bauder. (2001). “Discourse and the making of marginalized people” pages 25-26
4. Melissa V. Harris-Perry. (2012). “Myth” in *Sister citizen: Shame, stereotypes and black women in America*. Pages 51-97.

**Week 3: April 15<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup>: Intersections of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Labor Part 2**

In week 3, we will (re)turn to critical race and feminist debates around work as well as deepen our understanding of divisions of labor. We will continue to discuss what the word “privilege” means in terms of race, class, and gender.

**Readings:**

1. Linda McDowell (2004). “Masculinity, identity and labor market change” pages 45-56.
2. Laura Pulido (2010) “Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California” pages 12-40
4. Leti Volp (2000). “Blaming culture for bad behavior” pages 89-116.

**Week 4: April 22<sup>nd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup>: From Theory to Practice**

We will use this week to transition from the theoretical concepts we have investigated and move toward “on the ground research” about work. We will discuss how theory is utilized in empirical studies and the limits and benefits of using academic theory when studying “real world issues” such as labor. Finally, we will deconstruct separations between theory and practice using the readings as reference.

Guest speaker: Magie Ramirez, The changing landscape of Seattle’s Central District.

**Readings:**

1. Kim England. (2010). “Home, work and the shifting geographies of care”. Pages 131-150.
2. Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1985). “Racial ethnic women’s labor: The intersection of race, gender and class oppression”. Pages 86-108.
3. Mignon Duffy. (2007). “Doing the Dirty Work: Gender, Race, and Reproductive Labor in Historical Perspective” pages 313-336

**Week 5: April 29<sup>th</sup>/May 1st: A Closer Look at Labor Policies in the US**

In the next few weeks, we will delve into the specific policies that have historically and currently influenced labor in the U.S. We will situate these policies in their historical and discursive moments and track how the theories themselves and their targeted recipients have or have not changed over time.

Home/work: Midterm take home essay. No readings for this week.

**Week 6: May 6<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>: Labor Segmentation in Practice**

This week we will look at empirical studies of work in place. We will discuss specific policies that influence who works where. You will be given a fieldwork assignment to complete over the next week.

Home/work: Fieldwork assignment

**Readings:**

1. Kim England (2008). "Welfare provision, welfare mothers, welfare reform" pgs 141-153.
2. Austin Nichols and Margaret Sims (2012). "Racial and ethnic differences in receipt of unemployment insurance benefits during the great recession" pages 1-5.
3. David Moberg. (2002). Martha Jernegon's new shoes: the contribution of local living-wage ordinances" pages 108-121.

**Week 7: May 13<sup>th</sup>/May 15<sup>th</sup>: Studies in Place**

This week we will continue to use the theoretical tools we learned in weeks 1-4 to assess studies of gender, race and labor.

Guest Speaker: Jeanne Cameron Unite Here, Local 8

Home/work: Your fieldwork assignment is due this week. In addition, I will check in with you about your research paper topics. This is a good time to revisit articles, movies and speakers we have had thus far to see what you are most interested in writing about. Once you have narrowed down a few ideas, spend a little time researching them. Is there enough information on this topic? Too much? Decide if you need to narrow or broaden your topic before you begin writing your draft.

**Readings:**

1. Lisa Lowe (1996). "Work, immigration, gender: Asian "American" women". Pgs 154-173.
2. Diana Pearce (2007). "Overlooked and undercounted: Wages, work and poverty in Washington state". Pages 1-35.

**Section 3: Alternatives****Weeks 8-11****Week 8: May 20/22nd: Rethinking class politics**

This week we will focus on "The Role of the Middle Classes in the Construction and Alleviation of Poverty".

Home/work: This week may be a good time to consider your own class positionality. Think about: What is the middle class anyway? What are “good jobs” and how can we increase access to them? Who is responsible for maintaining the middle class? What is the role between theory and policy in addressing poverty?

**Readings:**

1. Victoria Lawson with the Middle Class Poverty Politics Research Group. (2012). “Decentering poverty studies: Middle class alliances and the social construction of poverty”. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 33, pages 1-19.
2. Smiley, Tavis and Dr. Cornel West (2012). “Poverty of imagination”. *The Rich and the Rest of Us: a Poverty Manifesto*. Pages 137-168.
3. Barbara Ehrenreich (2012). “Why are working people invisible in the mainstream media?”
4. “Poverty isn’t just about the poor”. Page 1

**Week 9: May 27<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup>: Memorial Day and Peer Review**

This week we will have an in-class peer review on Wednesday. There are no readings this week to help you develop your drafts.

Home/work: For Wednesday, bring in TWO hardcopies of a full and complete draft of your final research paper. The draft must be at least 5 pages and contain an introduction as well as full body paragraphs and correct citations.

**Week 10: June 3<sup>rd</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>: Flipping the Script or, More Alternatives**

Throughout the quarter we have seen a number of readings that focus on manifestos or lists of improving major issues such as moving welfare recipients into work, helping build a strong middle class or improving the economic outlook of the US. This week we focus on solutions and alternatives to the labor problems we have discussed this quarter. We will discuss solutions in terms of changes to policies, discourses and research.

Home/work: Keep working on revising your final paper.

**Readings:**

1. Tavis Smiley and Cornell West (2012). “Poverty Manifesto”. Pages 169-203.
2. Jody Heymann. (2002). “Can working families ever win?” Pages 1-19