The work of women for wages under a competitive organization of industry presents a problem of compelling interest.... The length of the working day, the prohibition of night work, the provision of certain decencies in working conditions, the relation of marriage to work, the relation of the work of mothers to the life of children, the payment of like wages for like work, these become questions of vital concern to the community, the subject of widespread interest and of popular agitation.

- Sophonisba P. Breckinridge (Forward. Women in Industry, 1909)¹

This course examines sources of inequality in the labor market and workplaces. We will review empirical evidence and theory on labor markets and job conditions that provide insights into the nature of today’s hourly jobs and the changing opportunity structures for low-skilled workers. A key emphasis of the course is understanding employer practices at the frontlines of today’s firms. We will use this knowledge to consider new avenues for improving workforce development efforts intended to ready workers for jobs in today’s economy, the quality of hourly jobs themselves, and employment-related public policies. This year, the restaurant industry will serve as an on-going case study for the class. Students will have the opportunity to conduct interviews with area employers in partnership with the Restaurant Opportunity Center (ROC) of Chicago.

All required readings not available on-line are included in a course pack that can be purchased in the Production Room.

Students are encouraged to draw on the following websites in completing assignments.

Sloan Work and Family Research Network: http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/
U.S. Department of Labor: http://www.dol.gov/

Assignments

Participation/leadership in class discussions.  (25% of final grade) This course will be run as a seminar. Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings and with questions/issues to raise for discussion.

Each student is expected to participate in a student-led panel once during the quarter. The panel will lead the class in discussion on a specific topic (see syllabus for topics and dates). The focus of each panel will be on how the theories/frameworks/issues covered in class apply to jobs in the restaurant industry. Panel members are expected to bring in new information (relevant to that day’s focus) about the restaurant industry to share with the rest of the class. As part of your participation in the class, you are encouraged to bring in items from the news about jobs and the economy.

Case-study of a low-level job.  (35% of final grade) Students will research an hourly job that requires no more than a high school degree. This year, students are encouraged, though not required, to focus on a job in the restaurant industry. The goal will be to develop an in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the job for providing workers with an adequate living, opportunities for wage growth and skill development, and the ability to effectively combine work and caregiving responsibilities. The paper should include library/on-line research on the industry(ies) in which the job is found and possible variations among employers in the design of the job. The paper should incorporate information from the interview(s) conducted as part of the ROC partnership, if possible. Students will be asked to identify specific suggestions for improving the job itself and to assess their feasibility. Findings and suggestions are to be summarized in a 5-7 page paper. Paper Due: February 10th

Final paper:  (40% of final grade)

For the final paper, you will have your choice of the following two assignments:

1) Deepen the analysis of the job you chose for your case-study by interviewing workers in the job. Present a more detailed strategy for improving the job and discuss the implications for workforce development efforts.

2) Analyze a policy that regulates, or is conditioned on, employment, e.g., the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, EITC, FMLA, Unemployment Insurance, TANF. Systematically assess the fit between the policy and the realities of the job you analyzed for your case-study. Suggest ways to improve this fit by improving the job and/or the policy. Paper Due: March 10th.
WEEK 1

January 6th
Introduction to the course and ROC
The place of “work” in social work

**Lambert, Susan J.**
*Workplace Policies as Social Policy*

Guest from the Restaurant Opportunity Center (ROC) of Chicago
Background information on ROC
Conducting employer interviews

WEEK 2

January 13th
Employment as an enduring social work issue


Employer strategies and perspectives


**Pfeffer, Jeffrey.**
*Six dangerous myths about pay*

**Pfeffer, Jeffrey.**
Producing sustainable competitive advantage through the effective management of people. *Academy of Management Executive* 19(4):95-106, 2005 ISSN 10795545


Assignment for Week 2

Explore the websites cites on the first page:

- Sloan Work and Family Research Network: http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/
- U.S. Department of Labor: http://www.dol.gov/

- What kinds of information can you get from each?
- Which site(s) is best for finding tracking changes in the composition of the labor force? Of jobs in the economy? Which site(s) provides information on policy initiatives and employment laws?
- Find (at least) one other website that provides information on the economy, jobs, employment, labor, or other relevant issues to share with the class.

WEEK 3

January 20th

The macroeconomy, wages, and inequality


Nonstandard employment

**Kalleberg, Arne L., Barbara F. Reskin and Ken Hudson.**

*Bad Jobs in America: Standard and Nonstandard Employment Relations and Job Quality in the United States* *Am.Sociol.Rev.* 65(2):256-278, 2000 ISSN 0003-1224


**STUDENT PANEL**

Trends in the Restaurant Industry
- Changing census of jobs
- Job status
WEEK 4

January 27th

Job design and internal labor markets

**Althauser, Robert P.**


http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/encyclopedia_entry.php?id=4254&area=academic

**Bielby, William T.**

*Organizations, Stratification, and The American Occupational Structure* *Contemporary Sociology* 21(5):647-650, 1992 ISSN 0094-3061


Employer practices in the restaurant industry

Haley-Lock, Anna. Will post on Chalk site later in quarter.

STUDENT PANEL

- Wages
- Minimum wage laws governing tipped jobs
- Wage growth
- Poverty

[In restaurant industry]
WEEK 5

February 3rd

Scheduling in hourly jobs


**Reynolds, Jeremy. You Can't Always Get the Hours You Want: Mismatches between Actual and Preferred Work Hours in the U.S. Social Forces 81(4):1171-1199, 2003 ISSN 0037-7732

   http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=http://www.journals.uchicago.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/resolve?SSR800403PDF

STUDENT PANEL

Scheduling issues in restaurant jobs
CASE-STUDY PAPER DUE

Guest speaker: Elaine Waxman, What “opportunity” looks like in low-level retail jobs.

Mobility


Emerging sources of opportunity?


WEEK 7

February 17th
Improving Jobs and workforce development programs

Guest Speaker (tentative): Diane Stoneman (SSA alum), Director of Consulting and Training, Winning Workplaces


**Hunter, Larry W.
What Determines Job Quality in Nursing Homes?* 
ISSN 0019-7939


WEEK 8

February 24th
Employment-related public policies: Improving the fit with hourly jobs.


Overview of requirements of workforce effort to be eligible for specific public policies and new policy initiatives
- Paid sick leave
- Flexibility
- Unemployment insurance

Student Panel
Considering the fit between specific public policies and jobs in the restaurant industry
WEEK 9
March 3rd
Feedback to ROC

WEEK 10
March 10th FINAL PAPER DUE

Class discussion of final papers and themes from SSA Centennial symposium.