

Labor and Leadership

RS-1110

Residential Hybrid Course, 3.0 units

Thursdays, 9:40am-12:30pm

Starr King School for the Ministry- Graduate Theological Union

Fall 2019

Instructor: Meg McGuire

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This residential-hybrid course will explore the interplay between spiritual leadership and labor. Rooted in multi-disciplinary course materials and praxis assignments, each session will be facilitated as a collective inquiry into the relevance of a labor framework to social movements, vocational discernment and organizational management.

Together we'll ask: How does labor show up in our lives? As religious leaders in formation, how might a labor perspective be relevant to discernment about our own callings, paid and unpaid? Can a labor framework help to fortify personal boundaries and ensure sustainability in ministry and in justice work? Within the organizations we serve- whether they be congregations, hospitals, or non-profits- how can we prioritize equitable labor practices in staffing, managing volunteers, and budgeting?

In addition to applying these labor frameworks to our own lives, we'll build foundational knowledge about the richness and variety of labor organizing in the US and around the world. What wisdom can be gleaned from labor struggles? We'll explore the limitations of and opportunities for the prevailing model of organizing by centering groups of workers who have historically been excluded from labor analysis and mobilization. Ultimately, we will engage and imagine inclusive, collaborative and holistic approaches to labor organizing and labor relations in our own work and beyond.

I. Learning Objectives

Over the course of the semester students will:

- Build foundational knowledge about labor movements and labor histories in the United States
- Deepen their understanding of the challenges and possibilities currently facing organized labor and workers in the US, as well as workers and workers' movements abroad
- Engage and envision alternatives, imaginative frameworks and collaborative and holistic approaches to labor organizing and labor relations
- Explore the applications of a labor-centered perspective to their everyday lives
- Articulate their calling to religious leadership with attention to how it is compatible with a labor-centered perspective
- Consider the particulars of labor within congregations and study best practices for fair and healthy employment in justice organizations and churches
- Gain an appreciation of labor and a labor-centered perspective

II. Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course and its assignments students will be able to:

- Communicate about labor struggles with nuanced perspective and heart
- Effectively support labor struggles and organizing in their communities
- Minister to communities comprised of union and non-union workers, management and labor leaders; accompany others through vocational discernment
- Ground their sustainable leadership by applying a labor framework to their own calling
- Incorporate fair compensation and healthy employment practices into their future leadership roles

III. Course Requirements & Grading

This three-credit course will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Students may take the course for a letter grade upon request. In addition to the SKSM criteria for assessing academic effort, ECO goals, and participation, evaluation will be based on the following course requirements:

- Presence and Preparation (40%)
As this is a seminar course, regular class attendance and participation is essential. Before each session, students are asked to read and engage all assigned course materials
- Reflection Paper (25%)
- Final Project (25%)
A labor in the pulpit sermon or creative project using any medium, demonstrating students' engagement with the class material and subject matter
- Small Assignments (Labor History Teaching, Zine Project, Labor Journal) (10%)

IV. Tentative Course Schedule

September 5: Introduction, Our Stories

September 12: Living and Dead Labor

“Uses of the Erotic,” Audre Lorde
“Caring: A Stolen Labor of Time,” Jennifer Ng
“On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs,” David Graeber
“Inside an Amazon Warehouse,” Noam Scheiber
“Workism,” Derek Thompson

September 19: Widening the Frame

Guest Presenter: Gopal Dayeneni, Movement Generation

Just Transition Zine, Movement Generation
“The Case for Reparations” Ta Nehisi Coates
“Decolonizing Work,” Lisa “Tiny” Gray-Garcia
“Writings on Reparations,” The POOR Magazine Solidarity Family

Turn In: Labor Journal Reflection

September 26: Theologies of Work/Why Do We Work? How Do We Work?

“Redeemed and Unredeemed Work,” David Jensen
Selection from Working, Kathleen Ray Darby
“Work and Rest are one Entity,” Howard Thurman
The Economics of Soul: Work, Money, Failure and Creativity,” Thomas Moore

October 3: Organizing and Collective Bargaining

Selections from “All Labor Has Dignity,” Martin Luther King Jr.
Selection from Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell), Jane McAlevey
Selection from Playing Against the House, James Walsch
Selection from They’re Bankrupting Us!, Bill Fletcher Jr.

Present In-Class: Labor History Teaching

October 10: Who’s Left Out? Labor Beyond Labor Unions

“Underground Economic Strategies, Unrecognized Work and Survival Work,” Lisa
“Tiny” Gray-Garcia
Selection from Birth Strike: The Hidden Fight Over Women’s Work, Jenny Brown
“Incarcerated Workers Take the Lead,” Houston Incarcerated Workers Committee
“Out of the Shadows,” Lauren Higlars

“Sex Workers Against Work” zine

October 17: Faith/Labor Coalitions and Conflicts

Guest Presenter: Eli Conley

“Building Labor-Community Partnerships” Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall & Steve Max
Selection from Unified We Are a Force, Joerg Rieger

“Laboring for Justice,” Kim Bobo

Selection from Sweet Dreams in America, Sharon Welch

Selection from “No Shortcuts,” Jane McAlevey

Turn In: Zine/Children’s Book Project

October 24: No class, Reading Week

October 31: The Occupational Hazards of Work of the Heart

“A Modest Proposal for a Fair Trade Emotional Labor Economy,” Leah Lakshmi
Piepzna-Smaraashinsha

“Wages for Self-Care,” Dawn Haney

Selection from Care Work, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Smaraashinsha

Selection from The Resilient Practitioner, Thomas Skovholt & Michelle
Trotter-Mathison

Selection from The Age of Overwhelm or Trauma Stewardship, Lauren van
Dernoot Lipsky

November 7: On Calling and Vocation

Selections from Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life, Gregg Levoy

“The Practice of Living with Purpose,” Barbara Brown Taylor

Selection from Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation, Parker
Palmer

November 14: Labor in Ministry, Chaplaincy and Movement Work

“Labor is Entitled to All It Produces,” Joshua Stephens

Selections from The Revolution Will Not Be Funded, INCITE!

“A Vocation and a Profession,” Richard Gula

Selection from Leaving Church, Barbara Brown Taylor

“Higher Calling, Lower Wages: The Vanishing of the Middle Class Clergy,” David
Wheeler

“The Plight of the Overworked Non-Profit Employee,” Johnathan Timm

Turn In: Vocation and Labor Reflection Paper

November 21: Congregations and Non-Profits as Employers: Compensation, Contracts & Covenants

“Employment and Covenant,” Gil Rendle and Susan Beaumont

“Advocating for Fairness,” Dan Hotchkiss

“Working for Nothing: The Supply of Volunteer Labor,” Richard Freeman

“Where Faith Abides Workers Have Few Rights,” Diana Henriques

“Catholicity & Creativity in the Collective Bargaining Process,” Rev. William Byron

November 28: No class

December 5: Practices for Self and Others

Selections from “How to Not Always Be Working,” marlee grace

“Time To Be, Time To Love,” Rabbi Arthur Waskow

“The Pause that Refreshes,” Alicia DeCoster

Selection from Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in Our Busy Lives,
Wayne Muller

Selection from Leaving Church (131-142) or “The Practice of Saying No,” Barbara
Brown Taylor

“New Ways to Navigate,” Lauren van Dernoot Lipsky

December 12: Ministering to Workers

Present In-Class: Final Project

December 19: Final Project Due