

HGO4604 – The futures of work

Course content

In this course, you will learn about the political and economic geographies of labour in the fast-changing world we live in. Diverse processes impact the world of work: globalization and economic restructuring drives flexibilisation of firms and deregulation of labour markets, new technologies transform labour processes and employment relations, while climate change represent a fundamental challenge to workplaces and working lives.

Workers are not helpless onlookers to these changes. The course draws inspiration from the labour geography tradition and its focus on the agency of workers, i.e. their capability to make a difference. Workers' ability to engage with and resist changes that affect them is circumscribed by structural conditions, however, and through readings, presentations and discussions, you will learn more about labour regulation and worker resistance in very different contexts, for instance domestic labour, platform work, climate jobs and identity politics.

A spatial perspective runs through the course. Concepts such as scale, borders, networks and (work)places will be presented at the outset of the course module, and will accompany our collective efforts to make sense of the politics of work in a number of cases and geographical contexts. Moreover, the title "The futures of work" implies that we take the temporalities of these politics seriously, and see historical cases in relation to the political present, as well as possible future scenarios.

Finally, the course places particular focus on three additional analytical concepts – worker agency, labour regime and representation – and encourages students to familiarise themselves with these concepts, and discuss and reflect on their meaning and use. While the course draws on research literature from across the world, it also aims to connect scholarly accounts with students' own work experiences and/or employment outlook.

Learning outcome

Knowledge

You will learn

- to understand the political nature of work, and the spatial nature of workers' politics, both in specific applied circumstances and on a more abstract level.
- to understand how the global labour market is related to technological change and to climate change, both in specific applied circumstances and on a more abstract level.
- to acknowledge the significance of workers' own actions and strategies, individually and collectively, on institutions, markets and governance regimes.

Skills

You will be encouraged

- to apply spatial concepts to your analysis, to better understand and explain unevenness, difference and power relations in the world of work.
- to assess the relevance and applicability of theories and concepts from human geography and other social sciences to explain labour markets and workplaces in the global economy, and their politics.
- to actively engage in written, oral and conversational discussions on the geographies of labour through seminar activity.
- to demonstrate your knowledge and skills by producing an independent academic text (course assignment).
- to relate analytical concepts on work and employment to your own biography and life situation (reflection note).

General competences

This course will enable you

- to apply critical thinking and a geographical sensitivity to a fast-changing world economy, as seen from the standpoint of workers.

Admission

Students who are admitted to study programmes at UiO must each semester register which courses and exams they wish to sign up for [in Studentweb](#).

If you are not already enrolled as a student at UiO, please see our information about [admission requirements and procedures](#).

This course is a part of the Master's program in Human Geography. Students with admission to other relevant master's degree programmes can apply for admission as [guest students](#).

[Master specialisation in didactics for social science in the Teacher Education Programme \(Lektorprogrammet\)](#) – please see the link for information regarding admission.

Prerequisites

Recommended previous knowledge

It is recommended that you have completed the following courses before you take this course:

[SGO2200 – Economic globalisation and regional development](#) and/or [SGO2400 – Politisk geografi](#). However, sitting examinations in these courses is not a prerequisite for taking this course.

Combines well with HGO4605 – Transformations in the global economy: value chains and production network

Overlapping courses

- 10 credits overlap with [SGO4502 - Development Theory Course 2 \(discontinued\)](#)
- 10 credits overlap with [SOSGEO4604 - Work and workers. Global perspectives](#)
- 10 credits overlap with [SGO4604 - Work and workers of the global Work-Place](#)

Teaching

Teaching is based on an introductory lecture, followed by a series of concept seminars and thematic seminars. Students are expected to prepare for specific exercises by reading texts and other sources available online or through Canvas. The teaching is a combination of teacher presentations and student discussions and group exercises. Seminar exercises are to be uploaded onto Canvas in advance of each seminar.

Compulsory instruction and coursework

Preparing and presenting a group exercise for each of the four concept seminars is a compulsory requirement.

Students are also required to prepare a written reflection note on their own work experiences and employment outlook, to be presented to a smaller group of students.

Completed and approved compulsory course work is valid until the course is no longer offered. Students who have failed to complete the compulsory course work cannot take the exam.

Absence from compulsory tuition activities

If you are ill or have another valid reason for being absent from compulsory tuition activities, your absence may be approved or the compulsory activity may be postponed.

- [Report absence from or the need for a postponed deadline on a compulsory tuition activity](#)

Examination

Term paper.

Assessment is based on a term paper that students will work on throughout the semester. The topic for the term paper is decided by each student in consultation with the course instructor(s), and must be within the thematic focus of the course (see Curriculum above). The maximum length of the term paper is 15 pages (plus references and notes), using 12 point letter size and a spacing of lines 1 1/2.

[Examiner guidelines](#)

Submit assignments in Inspira

You submit your assignment in the digital examination system Inspira. [Read about how to submit your assignment.](#)

Use of sources and citation

You should familiarize yourself with the rules that apply to [the use of sources and citations](#). If you violate the rules, you may be suspected of [cheating/attempted cheating](#).

Language of examination

The examination text is given in English. You may submit your response in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish or English.

Grading scale

Grades are awarded on a scale from A to F, where A is the best grade and F is a fail. Read more about [the grading system](#).

Explanations and appeals

- [Explanation of grades and appeals](#)

Resit an examination

If you are sick or have another valid reason for not attending the regular exam, we offer a [postponed exam](#) later in the same semester. See also our information about [resitting an exam](#).

Withdrawal from an examination

It is possible to take the exam up to 3 times. If you [withdraw from the exam](#) after the deadline or during the exam, this will be counted as an examination attempt.

Special examination arrangements

Application form, deadline and requirements for [special examination arrangements](#).

Evaluation

The course is subject to continuous evaluation. At regular intervals we also ask students to participate in a more comprehensive evaluation.