HGO4604 – The futures of work

Course content

The political and economic geographies of work have always been changing. In this course, you will learn about wow we work, where we work, and what we are concerned with at work with from critical geographical perspective. Based on an understanding of the contemporary moment, we will learn to study possible futures in an age where climate change represents a fundamental challenge to workplaces and working lives.

Workers are not helpless onlookers to social, political and ecological change. The course draws inspiration from the labour geography tradition and its focus on the agency of workers, meaning their capability to make a difference. The thematic focus of the course is workers’ ability to engage with and resist changes that affect them. Through readings, presentations and discussions, you will learn more about the possibilities and practices of labour in different contexts, including just transition processes, intersectional work identities, digital and material infrastructures, migrant labour, sustainability in the workplace and circular economies.

Learning in this course is done through concepts and cases. Each module connects an analytical concept – agency, alienation, fragmentation, precarity, representation, justice, solidarity, circularity – to a case involving a particular place and time. Students are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these concepts through the course and discuss and reflect on their meaning and use in other contexts. 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 social, political and ecological change affects workers, both in specific applied circumstances and on a more abstract level.
* to acknowledge the significance of workers’ own actions and strategies, individually and collectively, within particular institutional contexts and subject to structural constraints.

**Skills**

You will be encouraged

* to apply a critical geographical perspective to better understand and explain unevenness, difference and power relations in the world of work.
* to assess the relevance and applicability of concepts from human geography and other social sciences to explain workers and workplaces in the global economy facing ecological crisis
* to actively engage in written, oral and conversational discussions on the futures of work through seminar activity.
* to demonstrate your knowledge and skills by producing an independent academic text (term paper).
* 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 to the challenges facing the world of work, as seen from the standpoint of workers.

Admission to the course

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](http://www.uio.no/english/studies/registrations/course-registration/).

If you are not already enrolled as a student at UiO, please see our information about [admission requirements and procedures](http://www.uio.no/english/studies/admission/).

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](http://www.sv.uio.no/english/studies/admin/guest-student/index.html" \t "vrtx-preview-window).

[Master specialisation in didactics for social science in the Teacher Education Programme (Lektorprogrammet)](https://www.sv.uio.no/studier/opptak/lektorprogrammet/Index) – please see the link for information regarding admission.

Recommended previous knowledge

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

[SGO2200 – Economic globalisation and regional development](https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/iss/SGO2200/index.html) and/or [SGO2400 – Politisk geografi](https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/iss/SGO2400/index.html). 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 [SGO4604 – Work and workers of the global Work-Place (continued)](https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/iss/SGO4604/index.html).
* 10 credits overlap with [SOSGEO4604 – Work and workers. Global perspectives (continued)](https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/iss/SOSGEO4604/index.html).

Teaching

Teaching is based on an introductory lecture, followed by a series of 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 one group exercise is a compulsory requirement.

Each student must present a disposition for their term paper for comments and approval.

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](http://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/compulsory-activities/sv-absence-from-compulsory-tuition-activities.html" \t "vrtx-preview-window)

## 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). The term paper must engage with one or more of the concepts discussed in the course and be framed broadly within its thematic focus. The maximum length of the term paper is 4000 words (plus references and notes).

[Examiner guidelines](https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/iss/HGO4401/previous-exams/index.html)

It is possible to take the exam up to 3 times. If you [withdraw from the exam](http://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/withdrawal/) after the deadline or during the exam, this will be counted as an examination attempt.

## Examination support material

All exam support materials are allowed during this exam. ~~Generating all or part of the exam answer using AI tools such as Chat GPT or similar is not allowed.~~

## Language of examination

You may write your examination paper 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](http://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/grading-system/).

## Resit an examination

If you are sick or have another valid reason for not attending the regular exam, we offer a [postponed exam](http://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/illness-postponed/) later in the same semester.

See also our information about [resitting an exam](http://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/new-exam/).

More about examinations at UiO

* [Use of sources and citations](https://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/sources-citations/)
* [Special exam arrangements due to individual needs](https://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/special-arrangements/)
* [Withdrawal from an exam](https://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/withdrawal/)
* [Illness at exams / postponed exams](https://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/illness-postponed/index.html)
* [Explanation of grades and appeals](https://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/explanation-appeal/)
* [Resitting an exam](https://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/new-exam/)
* [Cheating/attempted cheating](https://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/cheating/)

You will find further guides and resources at [the web page on examinations at UiO](https://www.uio.no/english/studies/examinations/).