

SOSGEO4604 Work and workers. Global perspectives

Course description

Course content

Both globalization and effects of the “New Economy”, emphasizing flexibility and deregulation of labour markets, have spurred a renewed interest in work and labour studies the past couple of decades. In this course we combine perspectives from the Sociology of Work and the newly formed discipline of Labour Geography. The starting point is a thorough discussion of the nature of contemporary capitalist societies, including different theoretical perspectives. Contextual differences regarding the regulation dimensions of countries are emphasized; different rules and regulations of working life contribute to the shaping of variegated capitalisms. Labour regimes, and thus working conditions, change character according to scale of production and space, the sociocultural characteristics of place.

Empirical examples are drawn from a variety of contexts, and several contemporary discourses are dealt with: The critique of the place of labour in neo-classical theoretical models; Effects of globalization and neo-liberal policies on work regimes; The transition of employment relations and the nature of precarious work; Changes in technology of production shaping new work environments and intensification of work; Gender and work; how “new capitalisms” change the working life and form new challenges for reproductive work and gender relations; The agency of labour, how workers through various forms of resistance shape working life.

Learning outcome

Knowledge aims

- You will learn how concepts developed by the Sociology of Work and Labour Geography provide analytic tools that may fruitfully be applied in empirical research.
- You will be shown how the analytical framework of *labour regimes* may bridge the gap between the workers experiences “at the shop floor” and regulatory levels and the levels of production and management strategies.
- You may better understand the nature of contemporary capitalist societies, and how the driving forces of capitalism may have different outcomes in different contexts.
- You will learn how rules and regulations, as exemplified in the work contract, shape the working life.

- You will understand better the spread of precariousness and intensification of work under contemporary capitalism.
- You will understand better the interface between gender relations, labour markets and welfare regimes.
- You will be introduced to various forms of workers' resistance to contemporary capitalisms.

Skills

- You will be encouraged to understand theory in the field of work and labour studies, as presented in the course literature.
- You will be encouraged to link intermediate and grand theories when discussing empirical examples of work and working conditions.

Learning aims:

- To improve the students' understanding of the complexities of socio-economic change, and improve their ability to convey this complexity in writing as well as in discussions.
- To enable the student to argue pro et con different positions in many debates, and to encourage openness to valid arguments in any paradigm.
- To enable the students to express themselves independently and with a high level of precision.
- The student should become a critical thinker, with a clear understanding of central concepts of the discourses.
- Throughout the course, the student should acquire a taste for *dilemmas of labour regulation*, both at workplace and at national levels. This is a true sign of mature thinking.