Course Overview

This course combines an examination of how urban labor markets work, and how employment patterns are shifting in the United States, with a consideration of public policy. In the first part of the course we examine the distribution of labor market outcomes (wages and job security), shifts in the organization of work within firms (e.g. teams and contingent work), how jobs are found in urban labor markets and the role of networks, and the situation of specific groups such as women and immigrants. We then turn to public policy and consider a variety of issues regarding job training, the link between economic development and labor market policy, living wage campaigns, unions, and welfare reform. The course will be organized around readings and discussion with only occasional lectures. For this to work all students will need to come to class having done the readings and prepared to discuss them.

Course Requirements

1. Prior to each class each student should send me a one page e-mail indicating what, based on the readings, are the important questions we need to discuss that day.

2. A substantial policy analysis project on a topic relevant to the course. This project could involve such things as critically examining an element of employment and training policy in Massachusetts, describing and making recommendations regarding the current Federal discussion on reorganizing the employment and training system, looking at the problems of a particular labor market group in depth, etc. If several students want to work on a project together that is acceptable on the assumption, of course, that the scope of the project will expand accordingly.

Grading

Class participation: 50%
Paper: 50%
Readings
The readings are available on Stellar at https://stellar.mit.edu/S/course/15/sp13/15.677.

Note: you are asked to read most of Paul Osterman and Beth Shulman, Good Jobs America: Making Work Better For Everyone. You can buy a copy, share a copy, or use the library but the book is not posted on Stellar (I get no royalties).

Disabilities
If you have a documented disability, or any other problem you think may affect your ability to perform in class, please see me early in the semester so that arrangements may be made to accommodate you.

Academic Misconduct
Plagiarism and cheating are both academic crimes. Never (1) turn in an assignment that you did not write yourself, (2) turn in an assignment for this class that you previously turned in for another class, or (3) cheat on an exam. If you do so, it may result in a failing grade for the class, and possibly even suspension from the college. Please see me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism. Anyone caught cheating on an exam will be reported to the provost in line with recognized university procedures.
February 5       Introduction

February 12       Thinking About Policy in Broad Terms


Marius R. Busemeyer and Christine Trampusch, editors The Political Economy of Collective Skill Formation, Chapters 1 and 2

Amy Goldstein, “Rare Agreement—Obama, Romney, Ryan All Endorse Job Training But Are They Right,” http://www.propublica.org/article/rare-agreement-obama-romne...

February 26       The Demand for Labor

Levy, Murnane, and Autor, “Upstairs, Downstairs; Computer Skills on Two Floors of A Large Bank,” Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 2002

Cappelli, “Is the ‘Skills Gap’ Really About Attitudes?” mimeo

Roberto Fernandez, “Skill-Biased Technological Change and Wage Inequality: Evidence From a Plant Retooling,” American Journal of Sociology

Paul Osterman and Beth Shulman, Good Jobs America, Making Work Better For Everyone, Chapter 3

Harry Holzer and Robert Lerman, America’s Forgotten Middle Skill Jobs, Center For American Progress, November, 2007

David Autor, “The Polarization of Job Opportunities In The U.S. Labor Market,” Center For American Progress, April, 2010

Adam Davidson, “Making It In America, The Atlantic, January/February 2012

15.667 Osterman
March 5  Changing Work Structures within Firms


David Weil, The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad for So Many and What Can be Done to Improve It, Chapters 1,7

Osterman and Shulman, Good Jobs America: Making Work Better For Everyone, Chapter 4


March 12  Policy Overview

Margaret Weir, Politics and Jobs, Chapter 3

Richard Freeman, America Works, (New York: Russell Sage, 2007) Chapter 1

Michael Greenstone and Adam Looney, “Building America’s Jobs Skills With Effective Workforce Programs; A Training Strategy To Raise Wages And Increase Work Opportunities,” The Hamilton Project, November 2011


Paul Osterman, “Improving Job Quality: Policies Aimed At The Demand Side Of the Low-Wage Labor Market,” mimeo


March 19  Assessing Programs

15.667 Osterman


April 2 Youth Labor Market


Alan Zuckerman, “The More things Change The More They Stay the Same; The Evolution and Devolution of Youth Employment Programs,” National Youth Employment Coalition

Robert Ivry and Fred Doolittle, “Improving the Economic and Life Outcomes of At-Risk Youth, MDRC, Spring, 2003

Pathways To Prosperity, Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Teens and Young Adults for the 21st Century, Pathways to Prosperity Project Harvard Graduate School of Education, December, 2009

15.667 Osterman
April 9  Community Colleges and Dislocated Workers


Bosworth, “New Strategies For Lifelong Learning of Working Adults,” Center For American Progress, December, 2007

CLASP, “The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative”


Thomas Bailey and Sung-Woo Cho Issue Brief: Developmental Education in Community Colleges Prepared for: The White House Summit on Community Colleges, CCRC September 2010

Elisabeth Barnett and Katherine Hughes Issue Brief: Community College and High School Partnerships Prepared for: The White House Summit on Community College CCRC September 2010


**April 23**  
**Adults**


Osterman and Shulman, Chapter 7

Paul Osterman and Brenda Lautsch, Project QUEST Report to the Ford Foundation

Aspen Institute Sectoral Employment Development Learning Project, reports on GDIC and Jane Adams Resource Corp


**April 30**  
**Other Policies**

David Weil, *The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad for So Many and What Can be Done to Improve It*, Chapters 11,12


Jeffrey Wenger, Improving Low-income Workers’ Access to Unemployment Insurance, 2012

Urban Institute, “Assessing The New Federalism, Eight Years Later,” Introduction and Section One


**May 7**  
**Power**


Sara Horowitz, “New Thinking on Workers’ Groups Role in a Flexible Economy,” handout

Janice Fine, Workers Centers, Economic Policy Institute, 2006, Chapter 11

Paul Osterman, Gathering Power, The Future of Progressive Politics In America (Beacon Press, 2002), Chapters 2, 5

**May 14  Pulling It Together**

Osterman, Securing Prosperity, Chapters 5,6,7

Paul Osterman and Beth Shulman, Good Jobs America Chapter 8