

# SYLLABUS

LBS 4930 - Topics in Labor Studies: Labor and Economic Issues  
GEA 4930 - Topics in Geography: Labor and Economic Issues  
INR 4931 - Topics in International Relations: Labor and Economic Issues

Spring 2003

Florida International University

Tuesdays, 6:25 - 9:05 PM

Labor Center, Rm 301

Instructor: Bruce Nissen, FIU Center for Labor Research and Studies

Office phone: (305) 348-2616

Home phone: (954) 985-3935

Fax #: (305) 348-2241

email: [nissenb@fiu.edu](mailto:nissenb@fiu.edu)

## Required Texts:

William Greider, One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism (Touchstone - Simon & Schuster, 1997, paperback)

Lori Wallach and Michelle Sforza, The WTO: Five Years of Reasons to Resist Corporate Globalization (Seven Stories Press, 1999, paperback)

Bruce Nissen, ed., Unions in a Globalized Environment: Changing Borders, Organizational Boundaries, and Social Roles (M.E. Sharpe, 2002, paperback)

## Course Objectives:

This course aims to provide the student with a clear understanding of the relationship between unions and the globalization of the U.S. economy. A corporate-led version of globalization has been transforming our nation and our economy, and the labor movement has been greatly affected by this change. The passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are just two examples of the changing economy within which unions operate. At the same time, unions and the overall labor movement have begun to respond to this change in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, the overall transformation of the economy has so far been mostly negative for unions. They need to develop effective strategies if they wish to survive and grow in the future.

The course will first explore what type of “globalization” the U.S. economy is undergoing, and the consequences for workers and unions in both developed and underdeveloped countries. It will then cover different types of union responses to the impacts. Finally, it will evaluate different types of responses, and grapple with questions of what types are most effective. In the end, the very nature of the labor movement is up for grabs. By the end of the course, each student should be very knowledgeable about, and able to analyze intelligently, issues of labor and globalization.

### Course Requirements:

You are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class, and to be prepared to discuss them critically. (In general, you can expect to read 65-90 pages per week.) Your class participation is important, especially in a class like this where we will be discussing difficult questions with no easy answers. Class attendance, preparation, and participation will count 10% toward your final grade.

There will also be four (4) short written assignments, of 2 to 4 pages length, each worth 15% of your grade (total of 60% of final grade). Be certain to do the assigned readings, then work on your assignment. When written assignments are made they will be due at the next class session. Assignments handed in late without prior permission from the instructor will be penalized 1/2 of a grade (A- turns into a B+, a B+ turns into a B, B into a B-, B- into a C+, etc.).

One exam will be given; it will be a final exam at the end of the semester. It will be a take-home exam asking you to apply what you have learned to questions facing the labor movement today. It will consist of 2-4 essay questions, probably three questions. This test will account for the final 30% of your final grade.

Grading is "subjective" no matter how objective I try to make it. I intend to evaluate participants in a skilled and honest way. Most important to me will be the quality and depth of your reasoning, not the particular conclusion you reach. **IF YOU DISAGREE WITH ANY OF MY EVALUATIONS, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU CONTACT ME AND DISCUSS THE AREA OF DISAGREEMENT.**

**ANY QUESTIONS ON THE GRADING POLICY, PROCEDURE OR EVALUATION A STUDENT RECEIVES SHOULD BE BROUGHT FORWARD WHEN THEY ARISE, NOT HELD BACK UNTIL THE COURSE IS OVER.**

## READINGS

<u>SESSION/DATE:</u>	<u>TOPICS AND READINGS</u>
1/January 14	Administration of the course; Course Overview; Self-Introductions; an initial look at the issue of globalization
2/January 21	Greider, chapters 1-4. Corporate Globalization; its Revolutionary Nature; Crisis of Overproduction; Attack on Labor. (IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL BE HANDED OUT A ONE QUESTION ASSIGNMENT TO ANSWER BY THE NEXT CLASS).
3/January 28	Greider, chapters 5-7. Government planning in relation to new economy; automation and oversupply; political bargaining for jobs. (WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE FROM LAST WEEK'S CLASS)
4/February 4	Greider, chapters 8-10. China and labor standards; international business alliances; U.S. as market of last resort
5/February 11	Greider, chapters 11-13. Finance capital, debt, and Mexico. (IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL BE HANDED OUT A ONE QUESTION ASSIGNMENT TO ANSWER BY THE NEXT CLASS).
6/February 18	Greider, chapters 14-16. Greider's economic program; Thailand and labor conditions, fascism, Japan, and weak unions. (WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE FROM LAST WEEK'S CLASS)
7/February 25	Greider, chapter 17 and from the middle of p. 467 through 473; entire booklet by Wallach and Sforza. A labor program; WTO issues and demands.
8/March 4	Nissen, chapters 1-3. Unions and globalization; cross-border organizing. (IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL BE HANDED OUT A ONE QUESTION ASSIGNMENT TO ANSWER BY THE NEXT CLASS).
9/March 11	Nissen, chapters 4-6. More cross-border organizing; unions and immigrants. (WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE FROM LAST WEEK'S CLASS)
March 18	SPRING BREAK - ENJOY!
10/March 25	Nissen, chapters 7 and 8, plus handouts. Organizing manufacturing workers; type of unionism the U.S. labor movement is heading for.

- 11/April 1 Nissen, chapters 9 and 10, plus handouts. Labor as a citizenship movement; social movement unionism? (IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL BE HANDED OUT A ONE QUESTION ASSIGNMENT TO ANSWER BY THE NEXT CLASS).
- 12/April 8 Handouts. Alternative directions for the U.S. labor movement. (WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE FROM LAST WEEK'S CLASS)
- 13/April 15 Handouts. Themes covered this semester. (IN THIS CLASS, YOU WILL BE HANDED OUT THE FINAL EXAM).
- 14/April 22 Final exam due. Congratulations on successful completion of the course!