

# Labour Movements and Social Transformation

Fall 2019

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## Course Description & Format

Labour movements are both the products and the agents of major social change. Workers' organizations emerged as a response to the rise of capitalism and have always been subject the pressures of an ever-changing economy. However, labour movements are also an active response to social change, in which workers define themselves, their interests, their forms of action, and the kind of world they want to live in. This course explores the dynamic nature of the labour movement as it both responds to and creates economic and social transformation.

In particular, this course focuses on the various attempts to revitalize the labour movement through the development of new strategies and organizational forms. In particular, the course will explore the nature and critiques of the post-war model of unionism and labour relations; debates around the need for and meaning of labour movement renewal; the rise of reform movements inside existing unions aimed at fostering deeper membership participation; the development of alternative strategies for organizing new union locals, particularly in the private service sector; the use of workplace organizing strategies that remain outside the legal framework (through forms of non-majority unionism); and the spread of non-union workers' organizations such as worker centres. Students will assess the promise and pitfalls of these renewal strategies, placing them in the context of the economic and political changes that, since

the 1970s, have eroded the traditional bases of labour movement power. The focus is on the Canadian and US contexts. However, because the working class in both Canada and the US is diverse and global in its connections, we will pay attention to the way that various styles of organizing are carried with workers from diverse locations and influence debates around labour movement renewal.

We will meet once a week for three hours, with a fifteen-minute break in the middle. The class will be organized as a seminar. The purpose of a seminar is to allow students to collectively engage in critical discussion of challenging reading material. Each seminar should provide students with a clearer grasp of the key arguments in the weekly readings, an understanding of what some of the main issues are on the topic, and how this relates back to key course themes and other material covered so far. The professor's role is to facilitate discussion, clarify issues and controversies, provide background, and ask probing questions, but not to lecture. The class will therefore involve a great deal of student interaction with each other and the professor. All this means that, for the class to be successful, you must be ready to bring yourself to the classroom having read and thought about the week's readings, and ready to participate and share with all of us.

## **Course Learning Objectives**

This course addresses several University Graduate Degree Level Expectations. In this class, you will have a chance to develop:

- a systematic understanding of the current problems confronting the labour movement informed by the leading research on the topic as well as your ability to critically evaluate that scholarship;
- your ability to apply insights from the existing literature on labour movement renewal to a concrete problem or organization;
- your ability to articulate and refine your own ideas, in both speaking and in writing, particularly in response to feedback;
- your awareness of your own and others' positions on the key issues, and to position yourself within a community of scholarship; and
- your ability to learn from other students equally and respectfully and to manage a larger and more complex research project.

## **Required Materials and Texts**

All required readings will be supplied by the instructor on Avenue to Learn.

## **Course Evaluation Breakdown & Due Dates**

- Participation: 25%, throughout the term
- Discussion Questions: 10%, throughout the term
- Five Critical Reading Commentaries: 25%, throughout the term
- Research Proposal and Bibliography: 10%, October 23, 2019
- Final Research Paper: 30%, December 11, 2019

### **Participation 25%**

Students are expected to come to class regularly, well prepared, with both questions and comments about what they have read, and ready to participate actively in discussion of the issues and readings. Students will be evaluated according to both the frequency and quality of their interventions and on the extent to which they contribute to in-class group work. At a minimum, each student should strive to make at least one contribution to the in-class discussion each week. However, see the last page of this syllabus for detailed expectations and how to excel in your participation.

### **Discussion Questions 10%**

To facilitate seminar discussion and analysis of the readings, beginning the week of the second class, each student will develop at least **two group discussion questions** and post them on Avenue to Learn **at least 48 hours prior to the beginning of the seminar** (so, each Monday by noon). Questions should highlight the key themes and concepts in the week's readings, seek to make links between the various readings for that week and to other course materials. Students are also invited to add other relevant resources (academic articles, songs, videos, posters, blog entries, magazine or newspaper articles, film clips, fiction and photographs) and post them with their discussion questions on ATL. These supplementary materials should seek to illustrate or shed further light on the readings' themes, but not substitute for the week's readings.

### **Five Critical Commentaries 5x5% = 25%**

Students will submit five critical commentaries on weeks of their choice. They will be due in class **the week those readings are being discussed**, and should be no longer than 750 words in length, typed and double-spaced. ONE of these commentaries must be submitted before the Fall Reading Break, that is, by the class on October 9. The commentaries should evaluate and comment critically on a theme, concept or debate which emerges from the readings. The commentaries should deal with **at least three of the week's readings**. Your critical commentary should not merely summarize; rather, it should engage with the readings in a critical way: how do they compare? What are their relative strengths and weaknesses? What did you learn? What unanswered questions are raised? Refer to the preparation guide at the end of the course outline for other questions you could take up in your commentaries.

### **Research Paper: Two Components = 40%**

All students will produce a research paper that addresses the basic question: **What innovative strategies are needed to renew workers' collective economic and political power in the early 21st century?** In exploring this question, students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the challenges workers and their established organizations face today and to explore the activities, prospects and limitations of a particular strategy now being pursued for renewing workers' power. The research paper will be broken up into two major components, due over the semester to permit feedback and help you make progress on the project through the term.

### *Component 1 | Research Proposal and Bibliography 10%*

A good research paper depends upon defining a clear and manageable topic and finding good sources – relevant, up-to-date and reliable. The proposal and bibliography assignment will help you focus your thinking and get you started on preliminary research, so that you will have sufficient time to develop your research paper. The assignment is due on October 23, 2019, should be typed, with 1-inch margins and a title page. You may single space this assignment. Present your proposal in the following order, under the headings indicated.

**A) The Research Topic:** In about 500 words, write an abstract that briefly explains your tentative answer to the question above (in other words, a tentative thesis), indicating which particular strategy for labour movement renewal you will explore and the concrete cases using that strategy you will explore, and justifying your choice in terms of its importance to understanding the prospects for labour movement renewal. Also provide a general outline of the proposed organization of the research paper.

**B) Proposed Bibliography:** In alphabetical order by the author's last name and presenting the full and correct reference information for the source in APA or Chicago format, list at least 20 sources that you intend to use in your research paper. The majority of these sources should be academic/peer-reviewed books, book chapters, and / or journal articles. You will likely use media coverage and grey literature in your final paper as well, but this assignment should focus on the scholarly literature.

### *Component 2 | Final Research Paper 30%*

A final version of your paper will be due on **December 11, 2019**. The paper will be 5000 words in length, typed and double-spaced. The research paper must also integrate a minimum of five (5) course readings as well as at least twenty (20) sources derived from your own research.

## **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

### **Class 1: September 11**

#### **Introduction to the Course: Labour Movements and Social Transformation**

- Lerner, Stephen and Saqib Bhatti. 2016. Organizing in a Brave New World. *New Labor Forum* 25(3): 22-30.

For Next Week:

- **Letter of Introduction:** Write a letter of introduction to your professor. Tell me a bit about yourself, your programme and why you chose it, your interests, and especially your goals in this class: Why did you take this course? What are your experiences at work and with the labour movement? What is at least one thing you want to learn in this class? What would you say are your strengths as a student, and what areas would you like to improve? Are there any circumstances that might affect your performance in this class that you'd like us to be aware of? Please upload this letter to Avenue to Learn by **September 16, 2019**.

## **Class 2: September 18**

### **Post-War Union Structures and their Critics**

- Camfield, David. 2011. The Roots of Today's Problems. In *Canadian Labour in Crisis: Reinventing the Workers' Movement*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Clawson, Dan. 2003. The New Deal System: Employer Offensive, Labor Response. In *The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press / Cornell U P.
- Kumar, Pradeep and Chris Schenk. 2006. "Union Renewal and Organizational Change: A Review of the Literature" in Kumar and Schenk eds. *Paths to Union Renewal: Canadian Experiences*. Garamond.

### **Background reading**

- Marx and Engels. 1997. "Labour Movements" and "Capital and Labour" in Clarke and Clements (eds), *Trade Unions Under Capitalism*. London: Fontana.

## **Class 3: September 25**

### **Equity, Diversity and Representation in the Labour Movement**

- Das Gupta, Tania. (2007). Racism/Anti-Racism, Precarious Employment, and Unions, in Leah Vosko (ed.), *Precarious Employment: Understanding Labour Market Insecurity*. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Hunt, Gerald and Jonathan Eaton. 2007. We Are Family: Labour Responds to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Workers. In D. Rayside and G. Hunt (eds.), *Equity, Diversity, and Canadian Labour*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Mills, Suzanne and Tyler McCreary. 2012. Social Unionism, Partnership and Conflict: Union Engagement with Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. In Stephanie Ross and Larry Savage (eds.), *Rethinking the Politics of Labour in Canada*. Halifax: Fernwood.
- Ng, Winnie. 2010. Racing Solidarity, Remaking Labour: Labour Renewal From A Decolonizing And Anti-Racism Perspective, Chp 2 and 6. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, OISE/University of Toronto.
- Briskin, Linda. (1999). Feminism, Feminization and Democratization in Canadian Unions. In K. Blackford, et.al. (Eds.), *Feminist Success Stories*. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P. [E-book available through McMaster Library website]

## **Class 4: October 2**

### **Alternative Conceptions of the Labour Movement: Social (Movement) Unionism and Community Unionism**

- Fletcher, Bill, Jr. and Fernando Gapasin. 2008. The Need for Social Justice Unionism. In *Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path Toward Social Justice*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ross, Stephanie. 2008. "Social Unionism and Membership Participation: What Role for Union Democracy?" *Studies in Political Economy* 81.
- Tufts, Steven. 1998. Community Unionism in Canada and Labour's (Re)Organization of Space. *Antipode* 30, 227–250.

- Tattersall, Amanda. 2013. The Elements of Coalition Unionism. In *Power in Coalition: Strategies for Strong Unions and Social Change*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

## **Class 5: October 9**

### **The Organizing Model in Theory and Practice**

- Fletcher, Bill. & Richard Hurd. 1998. Beyond the organizing model: The transformation process in local unions. In K. Bronfenbrenner (Ed.), *Organizing to win: New research on union strategies*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press
- Lerner, Steven. 1991. Let's Get Moving: Labor's survival depends on organizing industry-wide for justice and power. *Labor Research Review* 18: 1-15.
- MacAlevy, Jane. 2016. The Power to Win is in the Community, not the Boardroom. In *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*. New York: Oxford University Press.

### **Case Study: Justice for Janitors**

- Rudy, Preston. 2004. "Justice for Janitors' not 'Compensation for Custodians': The Political Context and Organizing" in *Rebuilding Labour: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement*.
- Savage, Lydia. 2006. "Justice for Janitors: Scales of Organizing and Representing Workers." *Antipode* 38.8, 646-666.
- Waldinger, Richard. et al. 1998. Helots No More: A Case Study of the Justice for Janitors Campaign in Los Angeles. In Kate Bronfenbrenner (Ed.), *Organizing to win: New research on union strategies*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Fall Reading Break: No Class October 16

## **Class 6: October 23**

### **Social Unionism and Renewal: Teachers' Unions**

- Camfield, David. 2009. Sympathy for the teacher: Labour law and transgressive workers' collective action in British Columbia, 2005. *Capital & Class* 33: 81-107.
- Alter, Tom. 2013. "It Felt Like Community": Social Movement Unionism and the Chicago Teachers Union Strike of 2012. *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 10.3: 11-25
- Weiner, Lois. 2012. Chapters 1-3 in *The Future of Our Schools: Teacher Unions and Social Justice*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
- McAlevy, Jane. 2016. Chicago Teachers: Building a Resilient Union. In *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jaffe, Sarah. 2019. The Radical Organizing That Paved the Way for LA's Teachers' Strike. *The Nation*. January 19. Available at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/los-angeles-teachers-strike-utla-organizing-solidarity/>
- Blanc, Eric. 2019. Chapter 2: The Power of Strikes in *Red State Revolt*. New York: Verso.

Note: Research Proposal Due Today

## **Class 7: October 30**

### **Varieties of Non-Majority Unionism**

- Nissen, Bruce. 2001. Building a “Minority Union”: The CWA Experience at NCR. *Labor Studies Journal* 25.4: 34-55.
- Bossen, Colin. 2012. The Chicago Couriers Union, 2003-2010: A Case Study in Solidarity Unionism. *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society* 15: 197-215.
- Lynd, Staughton and Daniel Gross. 2011. *Solidarity Unionism at Starbucks*. PM Press.
- Gupta, Arun. 2014. The Wal-Mart Working Class. In L. Panitch, G. Albo and V. Chibber (eds), *Socialist Register 2014: Registering Class*. London: Merlin.
- Rathke, Wade. 2009. A Wal-Mart Workers’ Association? An Organizing Plan. *ChiefOrganizer.org*, <http://chieforganizer.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/wal-mart-chapter.pdf>

## **Class 8: November 6**

### **Workers’ Centres**

- Avendano, Ana and Charlie Fanning. 2014. The CLEAN Carwash Initiative: Building Worker Power and Fighting Austerity through Community and Workplace Organizing. *Labor Studies Journal* 39.2: 101-117.
- Cranford, Cynthia and Deena Ladd (2003, Fall). Community Unionism: Organizing for Fair Employment in Canada. *Just Labour* 3, 46-59.
- Fine, Janice. 2005. Community Unions and the Revival of the American Labor Movement. *Politics and Society* 33 (1), 153-199.
- Tait, Vanessa. 2016. ‘Organizing Where We Live and Work’: The Independent Workers’ Center Movement. In *Poor Workers’ Unions: Rebuilding Labor from Below*. Boston: South End Press. [E-book available through McMaster Library website]

## **Class 9: November 13**

### **Im/Migrant Rights Organizing**

- Choudry, Aziz and Mark Thomas. 2013. Labour struggles for workplace justice: Migrant and immigrant worker organizing in Canada. *Journal of Industrial Relations* 55.2: 212-226.
- Djiembowska, Maria. 2010. NDLO and the History of Day Labor Organizing in Los Angeles. In Ruth Milkman et al. (eds.), *Working for Justice: The LA Model of Organizing and Advocacy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Poo, Ai-jen. 2011. A Twenty-First Century Organizing Model: Lessons from the New York Domestic Workers Bill of Rights Campaign. *New Labor Forum* 20.1: 51-55.
- Tungohan, Ethel. 2016. Intersectionality and social justice: assessing activists’ use of intersectionality through grassroots migrants’ organizations in Canada. *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 4.3: 347-362.

## **Class 10: November 20 (No Class)**

## **Class 11: November 27**

### **Minimum Wage and Living Wage Struggles**

- Abramsky, Sasha. 2013, December 20. The Life of a Fast Food Striker. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/the-life-of-a-fast-food-striker>
- Evans, Bryan and Carlo Fanelli. 2016. A survey of the living wage movement in Canada: prospects and challenges. *Interface* 8.1 (May): 77-96.
- Gupta, Arun. 2013, November 11. Fight For 15 Confidential. *In These Times*. [http://inthesetimes.com/article/15826/fight\\_for\\_15\\_confidential](http://inthesetimes.com/article/15826/fight_for_15_confidential)
- Luce, Stephanie. 2011. What next for the US living wage movement? *Canadian Review of Social Policy* 65-66.

## **Class 12: December 4**

### **Organizing the Gig Economy**

- Freeman, Richard and Joel Rogers. 2002, Spring. Open Source Unionism: Beyond Exclusive Collective Bargaining. *WorkingUSA* 5.4: 8-40.
- King, Martha. 2014. Protecting and Representing Workers in the New Gig Economy: The Case of the Freelancers Union." In Ruth Milkman and Ed Ott (eds.), *New Labor in New York: Precarious Workers and the Future of the Labor Movement*. Ithaca NY: ILR Press.
- Nack, David and Jimmy Tarlau. 2005. The Communications Workers of America Experience With "Open-Source Unionism". *WorkingUSA* 8.6: 721-732.
- Additional material to be added

## **Course Policies**

**Submitting Assignments** | All assignments must be submitted electronically via Avenue to Learn. You must use either Word or Open Office to submit your assignment, and it must appear exactly as you would submit it in paper format. Electronic submission will facilitate both academic integrity and the tracking of late submissions (see below).

**Late Policy** | All students will have a total of **FIVE grace days** to use to submit work related to the research paper after scheduled due dates, as they see fit, before a late penalty will apply. So, for example, you could hand in five assignments each one day late, or you could hand in one assignment five days late, without a late penalty applying. However, after you have used your total number of grace days, the penalty for late submission of an assignment is **10% per day**, with the weekend counting as two days. For example, an assignment marked out of 20 submitted one day late will receive a deduction of 2 out of 20. All work must be submitted by the last day of class. Electronic submission of assignments is mandatory in order to allow me to keep track of your use of these grace days. Assignments

submitted more than 5 days late will not be accepted, unless you have negotiated an extension (see below). Critical reading responses will not be accepted after the due date.

**Extensions** | Extensions may be arranged in advance of the deadline, but, in the interests of fairness, usually only in cases of medical problems or severe personal difficulties. Please see the professor as soon as you are aware of these difficulties to discuss and negotiate alternative arrangements. Please note that workload or poor time management is not an acceptable reason for extension. If you have ongoing difficulties with managing your time, please see me about resources you can access.

**Grade Appeals** | Students are entitled to ask questions about grades, to understand the reasons behind an evaluation in order to do better next time, and to request a regrade if the situation warrants. However, students must observe the following guidelines:

1. Students must normally **wait one week** after they receive a grade before we will discuss it.
2. Students must show that they have **read and understood the feedback** given on the assignment.
3. Students must **ask specific questions** about the substance of the feedback or **provide specific reasons** for why they believe their work has been improperly evaluated. These questions / reasons should be submitted in writing and should address the specific nature of the assignment and the feedback given.
4. Regrades will **not** be granted for the following reasons:
  - *"I didn't understand the assignment"*: It is your responsibility to ensure you fully understand what is expected of you before you submit an assignment.
  - *"I do well in other courses"*: All courses have different criteria and expectations, and rely on different skills, abilities and background preparation; students' performance will vary as a result.
  - *"I need a higher grade for grad school / law school / insert reason here"*: Assignments are evaluated on their merits alone, and not on the impact they may have on your future plans. If you need high grades, you must find out how to fulfill the criteria so as to obtain such a result.
  - *"I worked really hard"*: It is expected that you will have worked hard on any assignment; this, however, doesn't guarantee that you will have fulfilled the criteria. Sometimes, effort can be misdirected.
5. Regrades can result in an **increase or a decrease** in the assigned grade.

## **Academic Dishonesty:**

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.html>

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.
4. In this course, we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically for this purpose.

### **Department/University Policies:**

Labour Studies staff does not date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of student papers. All papers should be submitted/returned in-class or during Professor office hours. Instructors who utilize Avenue to Learn will provide instructions on that preference.

### **Code of Conduct:** <http://studentaffairs.mcmaster.ca>

“McMaster University is a community dedicated to furthering learning, intellectual inquiry, the dissemination of knowledge and personal and professional development. Membership in this community implies acceptance of the principle of mutual respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study work and live within it.”

### **Computer Use:**

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

### **Course Modifications:**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and Avenue to Learn (if used by instructor) regularly during the term to note any changes.

### **Email Communication Policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences:**

All e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor/TA receives a communication from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion. **Please always include student name, ID, course #.**

### **Evaluations (Online):**

The department will send a link near the end of the course to complete grad evaluations.

### **Student Accessibility Services:**

<http://sas.mcmaster.ca/>

Location: MUSC – B107

Contact: 905-525-9140 x 28652

*NOTE: Disclosure of disability-related information is personal and confidential.*

Student Accessibility Services offers various supports for students with disabilities. We work with full time and part time students. SAS provides or assists students with their academic and disability-related needs, including: Learning Strategies, Assistive Technologies, Test & Exam Administration, Note-Taking Programs, and Classroom Accommodations. \*Please inform the instructor if there are disability needs that are not being met.

### **McMaster University Policy on Academic Accommodation**

Please find the McMaster University policy on academic accommodation of Students with Disabilities & McMaster University Anti-Discrimination Policy at the following link:

- <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

### **Student Success Centre:**

Email Address: <http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/>

Location: GH-110

Contact: 905-525-9140 x 24254

Some services include: student orientation, academic skills, volunteerism, educational planning, employment and career transition. Writing Support: <http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca/students/academic-skills/writing-support-services.html>

### **Student Wellness Centre:**

Email Address: <http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/>

Location: MUSC-B10

Contact: 905-525-9140 x 27700

Provides services in: Personal and Psychological Counselling, Mental Health Support,  
Medical and Health Services

## Participation: Evaluation Criteria

Grade	Discussion	Reading
A+ Exceptional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-original thinking</li> <li>-very strong knowledge base</li> <li>-strong capacity for analysis / synthesis / critical evaluation, including well-thought out reasons for positions</li> <li>-ability to make linkages both within and outside the course material</li> <li>-asks interesting and relevant questions -</li> <li>always participating, but does not dominate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-has done all readings</li> <li>-demonstrates superior grasp of readings / concepts</li> <li>-regular and very capable use readings in discussion</li> </ul>
A Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-strong knowledge base</li> <li>-frequent participation, asks questions -</li> <li>shows some capacity for analysis / synthesis / critical evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-has done most readings</li> <li>-demonstrates strong grasp of readings / concepts -</li> <li>frequent use of readings in discussion</li> </ul>
B and B+ Good to Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-good knowledge base, with some misunderstandings</li> <li>-analysis / critical evaluation somewhat underdeveloped, with arguments less well supported</li> <li>-participation is variable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-has done most readings</li> <li>-does not always read readings closely</li> <li>-familiar with concepts and issues, but at vague level which still requires some precision</li> <li>-occasional use of readings in discussion</li> </ul>
C to C+ Fairly Competent to Competent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-fair knowledge base, but with many more gaps and misunderstandings</li> <li>-basic level of understanding, but without much analysis or critical evaluation -</li> <li>reasoning behind arguments absent / poorly thought out / knee-jerk</li> <li>-participation / questions infrequent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-has done less than half of readings</li> <li>-tends to rely on outside knowledge / unsupported opinions rather than knowledge gained from readings</li> <li>-rare use of readings in discussion</li> </ul>
D to D+ Barely Passing to Passing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-poor knowledge base; superficial grasp of concepts or issues</li> <li>-very little critical thinking or analysis -</li> <li>rarely participates or asks questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-does readings infrequently</li> <li>-shows little familiarity with concepts -almost never refers to readings in discussion</li> </ul>
E to F Failing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-never participates</li> <li>-does not even show superficial understanding of ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-never does readings</li> </ul>

### **Ways you can participate:**

- initiate a topic or question
- provide information when needed by professor or other students
- offer a positive or negative reaction to something under discussion or ask for positive or negative reactions
- state when you disagree with what the professor or other students have said, and why
- restate what someone else said to ensure you understand
- give examples when needed, or ask others to give examples
- synthesize or summarize part of the discussion
- encourage or help others in the group

### **To participate effectively, you must:**

- have done the reading
- be willing to share what you think you understand, so that others can learn and so you can check that your understandings are accurate
- be willing to say that you don't know or understand something, and ask for further explanation

## **How to Read for Seminar Participation and Preparation of Critical Commentaries**

### **General Guidelines:**

- It is crucial that everyone read for the seminar to work as a collaborative learning environment.
- **Active reading** is important. While highlighting and underlining may seem like an efficient way to get through a reading, one often ends up with too much highlighted and not very much retained. Therefore, it is wise to make notes on key issues and concepts, whether in the margins or on a separate piece of paper.
- Some of the readings may be very challenging, and it is not expected that you will understand them right away. **You may need to read readings twice.** As well, the classroom is the space in which we work together to clarify our understandings and then build our assessments of the readings. It is important to be willing to talk about things that we are unclear about or find particularly difficult.

### **Consider and take notes on the following questions when reading and preparing for discussion:**

1. Do you understand the basic terms and concepts used by the authors?
  - list the concepts with which you had difficulty
  - try to write an explanation or definition for these concepts
  - try to think of examples to clarify concepts
2. What are the authors trying to demonstrate or argue? What is their thesis?
  - try to write out in two sentences at most what you think the main point of the reading was
3. What theoretical framework or approach are they using / advocating or refuting?
4. How sound are their arguments?
  - Do they make logical argument?

- Do they use sound / adequate evidence?
  - What kind of methodology are they using?
5. How do their ideas or arguments relate to concrete examples that you are familiar with?
6. What is new or surprising in their arguments? How do they challenge or confirm your existing thinking?
- What are the interesting questions being addressed?
  - What do you think was most important about what the author said?
7. How does the reading relate to other material in the course?
- How does their treatment of the major concepts or issues compare with other authors?
  - Does the reading substantiate or contradict a point in an earlier reading or class discussion?
8. Do you agree or disagree with their arguments and why?
- what parts do you agree with?
  - what parts do you disbelieve or find useless?
  - what are your justifications for these conclusions?

**In the actual seminar discussion:**

- Pose questions that will help clarify the themes that run across readings, and that encourage us to situate the readings relative to each other.
- Be ready to ask follow-up questions
- Refer to notes which remind you of the things you want to say, and speak using your own words in a spontaneous manner. Do not prepare a text that you will read—this is neither effective presentation nor facilitation, and the audience will be bored.