



Certificate in Labor Studies

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The Program

The Certificate in Labor Studies is designed for individuals who want to study the social, political and cultural impact that the organization of work has on employees and their communities. The certificate offers students an understanding of work, workers and labor organizations.

The program provides students with skills and knowledge in the areas of labor history, politics, economics and organizing. It helps prepare students for careers in union organizing, public policy, social action research and law.

Admissions Criteria

Candidates for admission to undergraduate level certificate programs must possess a high school diploma or a High School Equivalency (HSE) diploma from New York State (also known as TASC or GED).

Program Requirements

16 credits are required for the certificate.

Students must complete eight credits in the following courses:

LABR 302 - Contemporary Labor Issues (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course examines the social, economic, political, and organizational issues confronting the U.S. labor movement today. As an ever-changing economy and political climate impact workers and the labor movement, unions face challenges that require changes in the visionary, structural, functional, and strategic aspects of their organizations. Students in this course consider how the external environment-globalization, shifts in the economy, employer resistance, political and legal obstacles-has shaped the current state of the union movement in general and affected union density, economic power, and political influence in particular.

LHIS 301 - U.S. Labor History (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course examines working class life and the evolution of the U.S. labor movement within the larger framework of U.S. history, with specific regard to class formation, industrial development, immigration and the major developments of the organized labor movement. Students in this course also explore the relationships of workers to unions, formal and informal economies, race and gender, technology, the American state; and cultural, political and social movements. Emphasis is placed on the issues that gave birth to the labor movement, the development of working class consciousness, and the milestones in the labor movement's progress during the last century. Students must also complete eight credits from among the following courses:

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LABR 304 - Unions and Labor Relations (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course focuses on unions and their role in labor-management relations. Students will examine the purpose, structure and function and governance of unions in the United States. Emphasis will be placed on how unions function in

the collective bargaining process and in contract administration. Topics will include: sources and uses of bargaining power, the negotiation process, the content and language of labor contracts, and the role and function of grievance procedures and labor arbitrations. The study of union and labor relations will be studied in the context of a capitalist economy, and throughout the course, comparisons will be made between the private and public sectors, between craft and industrial model unionism, and between US models of unions and those in other parts of the world.

LABR 399 - Labor and Workplace Studies Field Work (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course augments traditional classroom-based learning with experiential learning in a community setting and direct engagement in labor and workplace issues. In it, individuals intern for a labor union or labor-related organization with the guidance and supervision of a mentor. The internship is taken in conjunction with a weekly class where students report on their internship projects, bring questions and problems, and discuss readings directly relevant to the placement.

LPOL 301 - Work, Culture, and Politics in New York City (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course explores the work, culture and politics of New York City, examining where New Yorkers live and work, how communities develop, and questioning whether or not the cultural and political institutions of New York adequately serve the city's diverse population. Major topics covered include the history of New York, New York's key industries, trends in immigration, economic development, public policy, public and private space, high culture, popular culture, urban social identity, community organizations, and labor's contributions to building the city's institutions.

LPOL 302 - Contending Ideas and Forces in U.S. Politics (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course will examine the often opposing ideas and social forces that have shaped current U.S. political practice, beginning with debates about the nature of democracy and controversies that pre-occupied framers of the constitution—freedom, liberty, equality, and property. The course will cover the origins and development of contending political ideologies from modern liberalism and left-liberal thought to classical and neo-liberal conservatism and ideologies of the new right. Within these theoretical frameworks, students will examine a wide range of social issues, political platforms, and political formations that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries. Particular attention will be given to examining the historical roots as well as the contemporary political expression of movements for race, gender, and economic equality. Students will also consider a number of contemporary issues that challenge conceptions of democracy: the imperial presidency, the foreign policy of pre-emption, the war on terror and civil liberties, and neo-liberalism and globalization. Finally, students will consider the political potential of new and emerging ideas and social forces.

LPOL 303 - Campaigns and Elections (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course will examine political campaigns and the electoral process in the United States and will explore critical issues concerning the character and vitality of American democracy. Students will examine the concept of American Exceptionalism, seeking to explain why America has a two-party rather than multiparty political system and what has prevented the emergence of a viable third party, proportional representation and a parliamentary system. This course will address the structural factors that influence the organization and characteristics of American political parties and will analyze public perceptions of party politics. It will explore current issues, practices, and forces that shape particular elections. In the process, students will examine the nomination system, campaign financing, negative campaigning, and the role of media in framing issues and shaping opinion. Students will also discuss the role of interest groups, focusing on a case study of labor and political action. Finally, the course will examine the transformation from a party-based system of American politics to a system driven by media, marketing, and money.

LPOL 309 - Power and Democracy in the Nation (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

In this course, students will explore the concept of power in a constitutional democracy and analyze the relationship

between democracy and political power in contemporary U.S. society. The course will introduce students to the historical foundations, structures and current practices of U.S. government, building a framework for understanding democracy and political power on the federal level. In studying the evolution of American democracy, students will examine the Constitutional framework, debating such key issues as separation of powers; expansion of the presidency; political influence of the judiciary; government regulation of the economy; and the role of social welfare in a democratic system. Students will also examine constraints on democracy, including uneven access to power and inclusion in the political system in terms of race, gender and economic class.

LSOC 301 - Sociology of Work (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course introduces students to the sociology and political economics of work, workers, and worker organizations. It begins with an exploration of the meaning of work, an examination of the organization and control of the labor process, and a survey of the changes in the composition of the labor force over the last century. It then explores some of the challenges facing workers at the beginning of the 21st century, including the emergence of new forms of employment; increased gender, ethnic, and racial diversity in the labor force; the impact of technology; developments in labor management; and the emergence of a global economy.