

Certificate in Labor Relations

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The Program

The Certificate in Labor Relations provides members, officers, staff and activists of NYC- area unions, worker centers and other community-based organizations with practical knowledge, skills, and resources needed to be effective leaders in the field of labor and industrial relations.

The program is designed to provide students with skills in the area of collective bargaining, organizing, labor law, arbitration, contract negotiation, organizational administration and leadership development. The certificate helps prepare students for careers in the areas of union organizing, labor relations, strategic research, employment law, and mediation.

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, as follows:

Union Leadership and Administration

One course from the following:

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 320 - Collective Bargaining (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course is designed to give students an understanding of the practices and activities related to the negotiation of union contracts. It identifies key concepts, techniques, and bargaining issues, especially those that have emerged in recent years. Students will develop an understanding of the similarities and differences between public- and private-sector bargaining and how this has affected tactics and strategies employed by the parties involved. They will analyze fundamental and sometimes varying structures, scope, and legal dimensions of the bargaining process. They will also gain a historical perspective on public and private employment and on the evolution of state and federal bargaining theory and practice found in both the private and public sectors.

LABR 328 - Leadership and Administration: Power, Politics, and Organizational Change (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

Today, the power of unions is challenged by globalization and rapidly emerging technologies as well as by changes in the



law and in the structure of industries and work. These developments have spawned urgent demands for stronger, more visionary leadership in all institutions, including those of labor. As a result, there has been a surge in research about leadership and the role of leaders in maintaining effective organizations. Drawing on a considerable body of social science and historical research, this course applies leadership and organizational theories to a union context in order to examine and analyze the leadership models, practices, and approaches we find in contemporary unions. Students will examine the labor movement in the context of current economic, political and legal conditions. Topics in the course include organizational structure and group dynamics, motivating membership, ethical decision-making, strategic planning, and resolving conflict.

LABR 337 - Contract Administration (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course explores the history of contract-based unionism, examining strategies and practices of contract administration as well as alternative approaches to traditional methodologies. In the course of this examination, students will analyze the role of union leaders, stewards, and members in dealing with the union contract. The course will also examine the theory behind contractual dispute resolution mechanisms, focusing on the role played by union stewards and first line-supervisors in these processes. In addition to readings, students will engage in mock sessions, designed to familiarize them with the range of issues and practices central to grievance and arbitration procedures. Students will also examine the distinction between contract violations and grievances that can be adjudicated outside the contractual dispute-resolution process.

[Labor and Employment Law](#)

One course from the following:

LABR 324 - Labor and Employment Law (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course will introduce students to the fundamentals of law governing labor relations and employee rights in the workplace. The course begins with an examination of the major areas of law as they apply to workers and unions. Topics covered will include the National Labor Relations Act, employee representation, the grievance process, labor's right to organize, the ground rules for collective bargaining, legal aspects of strikes, Weingarten rights, obligation to bargain, and the duty of fair representation. The second part of the course will focus on employment rights at the workplace including statutes regarding discrimination, family medical leave, and workplace privacy. Students will debate and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of labor law in terms of protections for workers and workers' rights and will discuss potential reform of current law.

LABR 325 - Arbitration (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of contract grievances and arbitration procedures. The course will consider discipline and discharge, seniority rights, subcontracting and work preservation disputes, wage and benefit issues, and the role of past practice in establishing binding conditions of employment and in interpreting contract language. Emphasis will be placed on the principles arbitrators have developed and applied to resolve disputes involving provisions commonly found in contracts. Through in-class discussions, mock exercises and readings of actual legal decisions on employment relationships, students will develop an appreciation for the process and scope of labor arbitration.

LABR 334 - Public Sector Labor Law (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course will provide students with a fundamental understanding of the constitutional, statutory, and collective bargaining rights of public employees. The course begins with a study and analysis of the historical development of the

legal status of public employees in the U.S. and in New York, specifically. In particular, the course will examine the development and role of the Public Employee's Fair Employment Act (the Taylor Law) and the New York City Collective Bargaining Law as they relate to public employees' rights to self organization, union representation, collective bargaining, mandatory subjects of bargaining and unfair labor practices.

Electives

Students must complete eight credits (2 courses) from the following (or any course not already taken from those above):

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.

LABR 330 - Issues in Labor Organizing (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course examines the development of theory and practice in labor organizing as it has emerged over the course of a century. It addresses organizing in both the public and private sector, through certification elections, recognition actions and alternative methods of organizing. Students discuss the determinants of successful organizing campaigns, including targeting, tactics, and styles of organizing. The subject of organizing is studied in a historical, social, and political context, allowing students to analyze the evolution of an organizing mission and the emergence of various strategic initiatives over time. Students review differing theories of organizing and analyze worker attitudes as well as employer strategies and tactics. In addition, students examine the body of law (National Labor Relations Act) that regulates labor organizing in the US and consider methods of organizing outside the parameters of existing labor law. Students also examine union infrastructures administrative practices that affect how campaigns are financed and staffed.

LABR 331 - Health and Safety in the Workplace (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course provides a detailed look at historical and current workplace safety and health issues in the United States. Through course readings and discussions, students examine a range of topics, including occupational health hazards; the development and implementation of applicable Federal (OSHA) and State (PESH) regulations; the setting of standards for safety and health and enforcement; industrial hygiene; workplace medical screenings and surveillance; and the provision of occupational health services. The class will also examine subjects related to OSHA, such as workers' compensation and disability; health benefits (ERISA labor-management funds); and other worker-rights programs. Case studies will be used to highlight problems and solutions.

LABR 339 - Understanding Labor and the Economy (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course provides students with a solid understanding of the structure and direction of the U.S. economy, within a context of globalization. Students learn basic economic principles and concepts through an examination and analysis of labor markets. They analyze and compare competing perspectives and differing explanations of the political economy of work and examine how unemployment rates, global trade, wage inequality, and the growth of the service sector affect worker's bargaining power.

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



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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.

LHIS 311 - The History of Public Sector Workers in the United States (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

Public sector works account for 40% of the unionized workforce in the U.S., outpacing the private sector by almost two-to-one. This course will examine the history and development of labor in the public sector. Beginning in early part of the 20th century, the course will trace the evolution of public sector worker organization, examining the distinctive nature of public sector employment and class formation in the public sphere. Students will consider the role, effect, and growth of public sector labor law and the effects that public sector bargaining has had on the development of both wage and non-wage issues.

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.

URB 451 - Urban and Community Studies Special Topics (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: None

This course will offer students the opportunity to study special topics within the scope of Urban and Community Studies that are not covered, or are only partially covered, in courses offered. Topics may vary from semester to semester and could include study of particular urban populations or communities, urban worker centers, coalitional campaigns including labor, community, and political groups, or particular urban institutions.