

**Improving Worker Health: Social Movements, Policy Debates, and Public Health  
Community Health Sciences M470, Urban Planning M470, Environmental Health Sciences  
M471, Labor & Workplace Studies M170**

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**Instructor:**

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**Units:** 4 units  
**Course Location:** Public Health Building, Room 51-279  
**Course Schedule:** Thursdays, 12:00noon-2:50p.m.  
**Class web site:** <https://classes.sscnet.ucla.edu/course/view.php?name=11S-LBRWSM170-1>

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Studies indicate that we are spending more time at work. Despite these trends, health researchers, policymakers and practitioners too often ignore the impact of the work environment on health status. This course introduces the field of occupational health and safety in the larger public health and social arena, examining historical trends, social movements to advance worker health and safety, and current controversies. This year's class topics are particularly significant – we will commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the New York Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire that led to the deaths of 146 young, immigrant garment workers, and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of landmark occupational health legislation – and analyze the impact of both on working conditions today in relation to the current sociopolitical context.

Course readings and discussions will provide a theoretical and practical foundation to understand the intersection between the work environment and health, to analyze the cause of health disparities, and to debate the philosophies underlying current occupational health policies and interventions.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Students will:

- Examine the role of the work environment as a determinant of health and wellbeing

- Analyze occupational health disparities by gender, race/ethnicity, and class
- Investigate historical trends and sociopolitical factors that shape occupational health research and policy decisions
- Explore the theoretical underpinnings of occupational health and worksite health promotion programs
- Develop education, research and/or policy strategies to improve the health of a particular segment of the workforce or to address a current occupational health issue

## PREREQUISITES

This course is geared to students interested in: the sociopolitical and historic origins underlying the effect of work on health; worker, community and environmental justice organizing; community-based interventions to improve workers' health; and current policy debates in occupational health and safety including the intersection of science and policy and injured workers' access to health care.

Course topics focus on issues of interest to graduate students in Community Health Sciences (M470), Environmental Health Sciences (M471) and Urban Planning (M470).

The course is also open by consent of the instructor to undergraduate students. It will be of particular interest to those with a minor in Labor and Workplace Studies (188).

## COURSE STRUCTURE & REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Reading

- Course Readings to be posted on website
- Case studies from website: SKAPP, Scientific Knowledge and Public Policy Case Studies: [http://www.defendingscience.org/case\\_studies/index-case-studies.cfm](http://www.defendingscience.org/case_studies/index-case-studies.cfm)
- Relevant updated OSH statistical summaries & news clippings that highlight current controversies and debates. See: 1) archive of many news articles about worker health and safety: <http://spewingforth.blogspot.com/>, 2) AFL-CIO annual statistical report, "Death on the Job," Available each year for April 28 Workers' Memorial Day activities: <http://www.aflcio.org/issues/safety/>
- Reference Textbooks (Available in Biomed Library)
  - Occupational Health, Recognizing and Preventing Work-Related Disease and Injury, Barry S. Levy, David H. Wegman, Sherry L. Baron, and Rosemary K. Sokas, Editors. 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2006.
  - Dying for Work: Workers' Safety and Health in Twentieth-Century America, David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, Editors, Indiana University Press, 1987.

- Lofgren, Don J., Dangerous Premises: An Insider's View of OSHA Enforcement, ILR Press, Cornell University, NY, 1989.
- Historical books: e.g. Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, Textile mill workers

## **2. Class schedule, participation & weekly assignments**

The course schedule will be flexible as needed based on the availability of guest speakers. A revised syllabus will be distributed the first day of class. Students are expected to complete required readings prior to class and be prepared to discuss them based on questions distributed in advance.

## **3. Field work**

During the quarter, students will dedicate approximately 10 hours to field work to become familiar with a local campaign to improve conditions in the workplace and/or the surrounding community. Field work should ideally be conducted in teams. Potential campaigns and details of assignment will be discussed in class.

As part of the field work, students will participate in at least one community/union-based meeting or event such as Workers' Memorial Day. Students will also visit a worksite and/or interview workers about their perspective on job hazards, controls, and relevant policy issues. Students will submit a log of field work activities, and a short summary of reflections and key themes that emerged.

## **4. Reaction and Response/Analysis Papers**

Students will submit four short (2-3 pages) reaction and response/analysis papers throughout the quarter, linking material from the class to contemporary issues and fieldwork experiences. Papers will pull from course readings and current news articles and address debates in the field of occupational health and safety.

## **5. Final paper**

Students will apply information from the course and from their fieldwork to an analysis of a critical occupational health issue, focusing on a current policy debate, a specific occupation, or an industry. Papers should incorporate information from course readings, library research and an analysis of field work experiences. Undergraduate papers should be 8-10 pages double-spaced and should cite at least 4 references from the class syllabus. Graduate student papers should be 12-15 pages double-spaced, cite at least 6 references from the syllabus and include recommendations for a public health intervention to improve worker health (education program, public awareness campaign, community-based participatory research, policy change, or other). Students will present a summary of the final paper and fieldwork at the end of the course.

Papers will be graded based on five criteria: 1. Analytical argument (paper should not be just descriptive), 2. Organization (clear structure, intro, conclusion, argument easy to follow), 3. Content (demonstration of knowledge, quality and creativity of research), 4. Citations and sources (adequate citations, number and diversity of sources, consistent formatting of citations and works cited), 5. Writing quality (basic writing skills, basic formatting such as page numbers, paper has been proofed before submitting)

## **COURSE GRADE**

Course grades are based on successful completion of the following requirements.

### Graduate students:

1. Class attendance, preparation and participation (20%)
2. Field work, log and reflections(20%)
3. Four response, reflection/analysis papers, 2-3 pages each (20%)
4. Final paper, 12–15 pages, and presentation (40%)

### Undergraduate students:

1. Class attendance, preparation, participation (20%)
2. Field work, log, reflections (20%)
3. Four response, reflection/analysis papers, 2-3 pages each (20%)
4. Final paper, 8-10 pages, and presentation (40%)

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## **Syllabus**

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**Note:** Readings designated for a specific week should be read prior to that class session. Optional readings may be useful for people interested in exploring a particular topic in more detail for their final paper.

### **Week 1 (Mar 31): *Lessons from the Past – History of Occupational Safety & Health***

1. Introduction & overview of course
2. History of occupational safety & health (Video clip: Song of the Canary; Triangle Shirtwaist Fire)
3. Linking history to current debates

Assignment: Week 2 Readings, Decide on fieldwork focus; Family work history

### **Week 2 (Apr 7): *Workplace & Social Determinants of Health***

1. Historical trends: Health disparities (race, class, gender, immigrant status); The role of social movements

2. Intro to OSHA & NIOSH
3. Hazards, their recognition and regulation – Safety, Chemicals, Biological; Physical, Ergonomics, Stress & Work Organization
  - o Video clip: Poultry workers at risk

Assignment: Week 3 Readings, Submit short plan for fieldwork (1/2 – 1 page)

**Readings for Week 2** (we will divide up the readings):

- Skim Levy and Wegman, Chpt. 1, Occupational and Environmental Health: An Overview, pp. 3-20 (note especially Figures 1-7 and 1-8 on pp 11-12)
- Levy and Wegman, Chpt. 2, “The social context of occupational and environmental health.” pp. 21-38
- Skim Abrams, Herbert K., “A short history of occupational health,” *Journal of Public Health Policy*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2001.
- Review historical timeline posted on course website. Select 3 historic incidents/events that you think are particularly important – from Abrams/timeline.

**Week 3 (Apr 14): Occupational Health & Safety Today - Scope of the Problem, Workplace & Societal Determinants**

1. The changing face of industry – contingent work, unionization
2. Scope of the problem: Limitations of OSH data; Underreporting

Assignment: Readings for Week 4, Begin fieldwork

**Readings for Week 3:**

- Levy & Wegman, Chapt. 31, “Disparities in occupational and environmental exposures and health.” pp. 641-650
- Azaroff, Lenore S., Charles Levenstein and David H. Wegman, “Occupational injury and illness surveillance: Conceptual filters explain underreporting,” *American J of Public Health*, Vol. 92, No. 9, Sept. 2002.
- Robinson, James C., “What do unions do?” *Toil and Toxics: Workplace Struggles and Political Strategies for Occupational Health*, UC Press, Berkeley, 1991, pp. 40-59.

**Optional:**

- Rosenman, K.D., A. Kalush, M.J. Reilly, J.C. Gardiner, M. Reeves, and Z. Luo, “How much work-related injury and illness is missed by the current national

surveillance system?” *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp 357-367, April 2006.

- Valenzuela, Abel, et. al. “On the corner: Day labor in the United States,” UCLA Center for the Study of Urban Poverty, January 2006.
- Blasi, Gary and Jacqueline Leavitt, “Driving poor: Taxi drivers and the regulation of the taxi industry in Los Angeles” UCLA School of Law and Urban Planning Dept, 2006.

**Week 4 (Apr 21): Science, Politics & Policy in the Occupational Safety & Health Arena**

1. The Two Faces of Cal/OSHA
2. Science, Politics & Regulation - current standards, current controversies, role of the labor movement
3. Weigh the evidence or wait for more evidence?

Assignment: Readings for Week 5; Preparation for Triangle Shirtwaist Fire/Workers’ Memorial Day Event on campus; Initiate fieldwork

***Readings for Week 4:***

- Levy and Wegman, Chpt. 3, “Government Regulation.” pp. 39-73
- Leopold, Les, “The man who hated work and loved labor: The life and times of Tony Mazzocchi”, Skim pp. 239-278. Read pp. 279-311
- Brown, Marianne, “Labor’s critical role in workplace health and safety in California and beyond – as labor shifts priorities, where will health and safety sit?”, *New Solutions, A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp 249-265, 2006.

***Optional:***

- Lofgren, Don J., “Dangerous Premises: An insiders’ view of OSHA enforcement,” ILR Press, Cornell University, 1989, Chpt. 8.
- Michaels, David, and Celeste Monforton, “Manufacturing uncertainty: Contested science and the protection of the public’s health and environment,” *American J of Public Health*, Vol. 95, No. S1, 2005.

**Week 5 (Apr 28): Workers' Memorial Day/Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Commemoration**

**Event**

1. Guest speaker
2. Worker campaign panelists

Location to be determined: the first half of the class will be an event that is open to the broader campus community as a forum to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire and the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of OSHA.

**Assignment:** Readings for Week 6, Response/Reaction Paper: What role for Government, Labor, the Public in Worker Health & Safety?

***Readings for Week 5:***

- Howard, John (NIOSH presentation), "Commentary: Seven Challenges for the Future of Occupational Safety and Health", *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene*, 7:4, D11-D18, 2010.
- Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Essays

**Graduate students select one:**

- Monforton, Celeste, "Weight of the evidence or wait for the evidence? Protecting underground miners from diesel particulate matter," *American J of Public Health*, Vol. 96, No. 2 Feb 2006.
- Silverstein, Michael, "Ergonomics and regulatory politics: The Washington State case," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, Vol. 50, pp 391-401, 2007.

**Week 6 (May 5): Public Health Strategies: Community-based Research, Education, Organizing to Improve Worker Health**

1. Overview – Principles of popular education and community-based action research
2. Applying theory to reality: Guest speakers from labor, community and youth organizations

**Assignment:** Readings for Week 7

***Readings for Week 6:***

- Wallerstein, Nina and Merri Weinger, "Health and safety education for worker empowerment," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, Vol. 22: 629-635, 1992.

- Delp, Linda, Marianne Brown and Alejandra Domenzain, “Fostering youth leadership to address workplace and community environmental health issues: A university-school-community partnership,” *Health Promotion Practice*, Vol. 6, No. 3, July 2005.

**Week 7 (May 12): Public Health Strategies (continued)**

1. Race, class, gender and power dynamics in occupational health and safety programs
2. Intervention strategies to prevent work-related injuries & disease

Assignment: Readings for Week 8; Review outline for final paper

***Readings for Week 7:***

- Brown, Marianne, “Immigrant workers: Do they fear workplace injuries more than they fear their employers?” in *Gender, Race, Class & Health*, Eds. Schulz, Amy J and Leith Mullings, Jossey-Bass, SF, 2006.
- Keith, Margaret., B. Cann, J. Brophy, D. Hellyer, M. Day, S. Egan, K. Mayville, A. Watterson, “Identifying and prioritizing gaming workers’ health and safety concerns using mapping for data collection.” *American J of Industrial Medicine*, Vol. 39, pp 42-51, 2001.
- Tau Lee, Pam and R. Baker, “Las Vegas hotel workers find a voice: The power of a popular education approach to health and safety,” in *Teaching for Change: Popular Education and the Labor Movement*, Eds. L Delp, M Outman-Kramer, S Schurman, K Wong, UCLA Center for Labor Research & Educaiton, 2002.

**Graduate students select one of the following:**

- Quandt, Sara A., T.A. Arcury, C.K. Austin, L.F. Cabrera, “Preventing occupational exposure to pesticides: Using participatory research with Latino farmworkers to develop an intervention.” *Journal of Immigrant Health*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp 85-96, 2001.
- Lipscomb, H.J., C.A. Epling, L.A. Pompeii, and J.M. Dement, “Musculoskeletal symptoms among poultry processing workers and a community comparison group: Black women in low-wage jobs in the rural South.” *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, Vol. 50, pp 327-338, 2007.
- Polanyi, Michael F., et. al, “Paddling upstream: A contextual analysis of implementation of a workplace ergonomic policy at a large newspaper,” *Applied Ergonomics*, Vol. 36, 2005, pp. 231-239.

***Optional:***



- Messing, Karen, S. Fortin, G. Rail, and M. Randoin, “Standing still: Why North American workers are not insisting on seats despite known health benefits,” *International Journal of Health Services*, Vol. 35, No. 4 pp 745-763, 2005
- Delp, Linda, et.al., “Role of work permits in teen workers’ experiences,” *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, Vol. 41, No. 6, June 2002.

**Week 8 (May 19): Current Debates - Whose fault, whose responsibility? Promoting health, preventing illness, Workers’ Compensation**

1. Behavioral-based health & safety programs
2. The health promotion, health & safety divide – Why does it exist? Is it justified?
  - Smoking & lung disease
  - Job stress, lifestyle & health outcomes
3. Workers’ Compensation Debates

Assignment: Readings for Week 9; Draft outline/rough draft due for final paper

***Readings for Week 8:***

- Punnet, Laura et al, “A Conceptual Framework for Integrating Workplace Health Promotion and Occupational Ergonomics Programs,” *Public Health Reports*, Vol 124, 2009 Supplement
- DeJoy, David M. and David Southern, “An integrative perspective on work-site health promotion,” *Journal of Occupational Medicine*, vol. 35, No. 12, Dec. 1993.
- Bernhardt A. et al. “Broken Laws, Unprotected Workers: Violations of employment and labor laws in America’s cities.” (sections on workers’ compensation)  
<http://www.nelp.org/page/-/brokenlaws/BrokenLawsReport2009.pdf?nocdn=1>

***Optional:***

- Schulte, Paul, et al., “Work, Obesity, and occupational Safety and Health,” *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 97, No. 3, March 2007.
- Levy & Wegman, Chpt. 4, “Legal remedies.” pp. 74-104
- Poulson, Kjeld B., et. al., “Using action research to improve health and the work environment for 3500 municipal bus drivers,” *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 15, No. 1, March 2007, pp. 75-106.
- Shor, Glenn, “Low wage injured workers and access to clinical care: A policy analysis,” UC Berkeley Center for Occupational & Environmental Health, 2006

- Gochfeld, Michael, “Occupational medicine practice in the United States since the Industrial Revolution,” *J of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, Vol. 47, No. 2, Feb 2005, pp 115-131
- Herbert, R, et.al. “The union health center: A working model of clinical care linked to preventive occupational health services,” *American J of Industrial Medicine*, Vol. 31, pp 263-273, 1997.

**Week 9 (May 26): Current Debates – Jobs, Worker Health, Environmental Justice in the US and Beyond**

1. Environmental racism and the environmental justice movement
2. Bridging the Workplace-Community-Environment Divide: Case studies of conflict and alliances
3. Where does worker health and safety fit in the current trend towards green jobs? In global health issues?  
Environmental justice video clip

Assignment: Prepare 5 minute presentation of fieldwork/final paper

***Readings for Week 9:***

- Levy & Wegman, Chapt. 31, “Disparities in occupational and environmental exposures and health.” pp. 651-660
- Executive summary (rest is optional) Robert Bullard, Mohai, P., Saha, R, & Wright, B, “Toxic wastes and race at twenty: 1987 – 2007: Grassroots struggles to dismantle environmental racism in the United States,” United Church of Christ, 2007

**Graduate students select one:**

- Frumkin, Howard, “Across the Water and Down the Ladder: Occupational Health in the Global Economy,” *Occupational Medicine: State of the Art Reviews*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Jul-Sept. 1999.
- Senier, L. et.al., “School custodians and green cleaners: New approaches to labor environment coalitions.” *Organization and Environment*, Vol. 20, No. 3, September 2007, pgs. 304-324.

**Week 10 (June 2): Presentations/Final Projects**

5 minute presentations – feedback from class

**Final paper due Thursday, June 9**

## TOPICS – FINAL PAPER

### Option 1:

Select an occupation/industry and examine the occupational health issues confronting workers in that occupation/industry.

- Describe workforce trends – Is this a growing occupation/industry? Is it geographically concentrated? Has globalization had an effect?
- Describe the structure of the industry & the workplace – Formal/informal sector? Unionized? Implications for worker health?
- What are the hazards and the health impact of exposure to those hazards? What research literature exists? What is known/not known?
- Describe the workforce – gender, race/ethnicity, immigrant & legal status, class. Do health disparities exist by race, gender, class within this industry? Between this industry and others?
- Describe the sociopolitical and economic context of worker exposure in the occupation/industry? What are social determinants of workers' health outcomes?
- Are there government standards for the hazards in this occupation/industry?
- Recommendations for: research, education program, policy to improve working conditions/worker health

### Option 2:

Select a particular issue; e.g. immigrant workers; access to health care for injured workers; adequacy of a worker health/safety regulation; effectiveness of Cal/OSHA enforcement; labor-environmental tensions and alliances; behavioral-based safety program; worker health and safety and disasters; public awareness, etc.

- Describe the social, political and historical influences on the issue you selected.
- What hazards and health problems are of concern? Do government standards exist to control the hazards of concern?
- Are particular groups of the workforce most affected? Is there evidence of health disparities by gender, race/ethnicity, gender, class?
- What is the role of labor, employers, government? How does each group approach the issue?
- Describe the particular impact in Southern California, using an example/case study based on your field work.
- Recommendations for: research, education program, policy change