
2016 WVSSPA Summer School Course Descriptions

A partnership with WVU Institute for Labor Studies and Research

The Structure and Function of the U.S. Labor Movement

Course Overview

This course will introduce first-year students to the diverse and dynamic nature of the labor movement today, historically, and in West Virginia. The principal subjects covered in this course will range from the historical context of the modern labor movement, the structure of the labor movement today, the historical roots and contemporary challenges associated with the transformation of work, and the representational, economic, and political challenges facing the labor movement in West Virginia today. After completing this course, students will have a better understanding of the structure and function of the labor movement, an historical framework from which to contextualize the contemporary challenges facing labor organizations, and a working understanding of how the legislative process operates in West Virginia and how it impacts labor, the economy, and society.



Leadership Development

Course Overview

This course will help participants identify their leadership style and enhance the skills, knowledge, and attributes necessary for effective organizational leadership. The course will include core issues such as conducting organized meetings, labor relations with supervisors, communication and conflict resolution strategies, and the rights and responsibilities associated with heading up labor unions. In addition, the class will facilitate participants' personal leadership development and promote an understanding of how leaders motivate others and influence their organization. Course materials and activities will encourage students to connect theory to practice and provide practical opportunities and assignments for making this connection.

U.S. Labor History

Course Overview

This class acquaints students with historical developments affecting and affected by working people and the labor movement, from the late nineteenth century to the present. Interactive discussions and lectures will analyze important changes in the lives of workers, their organizations, and their outcomes over time, including but not limited to industrialization, immigration, craft and industrial unions, changes in the organization of work and businesses, class and political issues, relevant labor laws, and globalization. Additionally, we will examine the ascent of public-sector unions, and locate West Virginia's historical events and institutions within the broader historical trajectories. Students will emerge from the course immersed in important trends, events, and figures shaping the opportunities and outcomes for working women and men in the United States.

Strategic Organizing

Course Overview

This course familiarizes students with the theories and practices involved with strategic planning for labor organizations. Combining short lectures with discussions, small group work, role playing, case studies, and peer reviews, students will become acquainted with various "best practices" that many groups adopt for effective internal work and communication, and external coalition building with constituents. For new and experienced members and leaders alike, the class is intended to sharpen leadership skills and attributes, present participants with scenarios affecting and approaches adopted by other organizations, and build capacities for adaptive problem solving. Students will emerge from the course with a fuller context for how and why organizations develop organizing and mobilizing avenues.
