

School of Management

HRIR 401 LABOUR POLICY

Trimester 2, 2015

COURSE OUTLINE

Names and Contact Details

Course Coordinator

Carol Jess
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Administration Assistant

Ina Yoo
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Office hours: by appointment on Tuesdays during teaching.

Trimester Dates

From Monday 13th July to Friday 16th October

Withdrawal from Course

1. Your fees will be refunded if you withdraw from this course on or before Friday 24th July 2015.
2. The standard last date for withdrawal from this course is Friday 25th September. After this date, students forced to withdraw by circumstances beyond their control must apply for permission on an 'Application for Associate Dean's Permission to Withdraw Late' form including supporting documentation. The application form is available from either of the Faculty's Student Customer Service Desks or [online](#).

Class Times and Room Numbers

Wednesday 9.30am – 12.20pm
Location RWW125

Course Delivery

Each session will be loosely based around the following structure. The order of these parts may vary depending on the topic and in some cases the availability of outside speakers:

- Overview of the issue from Course Coordinator
- Discussion of readings – key questions and debates – based on student input and participation.
- Further detail designed to stimulate thinking – eg; invited speaker, class exercise, case study etc

This course is essentially topic-based and thus structured around a series of presentations and discussions, based on resource material. Students will be expected to engage in class discussion and debate in order to facilitate the formation of their critical judgements. To this end, class participation, independent reading and reflection are essential components of the design of this course. It is expected that students will read widely for this course. Lectures and class presentations are designed to introduce concepts, theories and evidence. Students are expected to engage with the relevant material prior to class so that issues can be explored in greater depth during the class.

Expected Workload

Students will be expected to have read required readings before each class. It is anticipated that around 5 hours' work per week will be needed to read, digest, and develop questions about these readings. Students are also encouraged to read more widely on a topic than the required readings, and to bring perspectives to bear from other courses or disciplines.

In addition students will be working throughout the trimester on assignments related to one specific policy area. This will require research, reading and writing of, on average, 10 hours per week.

Prescription

This course examines matters related to the policy-making role of the State in industrial relations. Areas covered include issues related to the Minimum Code, minimum wage, pay equity, employment equity, workers' compensation, occupational health and safety and labour legislation.

Course Learning Objectives

On successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Articulate their understanding of the reasons why the state chooses to become involved in general and specific labour policy issues, and what it seeks to achieve by doing so;
2. Use this understanding to define a specific chosen labour policy issue, and to assess possible policy solutions in the light of international experience with alternative solutions;
3. Offer a reasoned assessment of the likelihood of achieving the policy outcomes in a New Zealand context, including factors which might impinge on its achievement and any mitigation strategies which may need to be put in place.

Course Content

There is a wide range of labour policy issues that are current in New Zealand, and are subject of active debate within employer, union and policy circles. An in-depth consideration of all of them is not possible in the time available! Accordingly, and in order to respond as much as possible to student research interests, the main bulk of the course content will be determined following an overview and discussion at the first session on 15 July.

The course will be structured as follows:

- First two Sessions: Introduction to labour policy and overview of current labour policy issues in New Zealand, historical development and scope of labour policy issues, the role of labour policy for economic and social development; the global context.
- Intervening Sessions: Discussion of selected current labour policy issues (see table below for some possibilities). The specific topics to be covered will be determined at the first session, and will be based on student preferences.
- Final two Sessions: Student presentations on selected labour policy topic; Course review and assessment of New Zealand labour policy directions.

Potential selected topics to be covered in sessions include:

Topic	Key policy questions
Collective bargaining	The ERA 2000 had promoting collective bargaining as one of its key policy objectives. Has it succeeded? Why/Why not? The 2012 national-led government has changed requirements to conclude on bargaining, why? What impact may this have?
Employment protection	How does current practice around employment protection (either from dismissal or redundancy) impact on the need for NZ workplaces to be flexible in response to changing circumstances? What impact has the 90 day trial period had? Would macro-economic flexibility be enhanced by the adoption of a European –style “flexicurity” approach?
Health and safety	Have the 2001 amendments to the Health and Safety in Employment Act met their objectives? What is the impact of a greater focus on occupational health as opposed to the traditional emphasis on accidents and injuries? How will an aging workforce impact on health and safety concerns? How do public health issues interface with workplace issues? What is the impact of the Pike River Mine enquiry?
Good employer, good workplace	What is a good employer? What is a good workplace? How does the law encourage good employer behaviour? How else can this behaviour be encouraged? New Zealand is reported as having weak people management particularly in manufacturing companies, how can this be improved?
Immigration	In New Zealand, as in other countries, labour market problems (particularly international skill shortages) are an important driver of immigration policy. However, the experience of immigrants within New Zealand workplaces (in terms of recruitment and hiring, and their treatment by fellow workers and management) is often quite negative. Why is this, and what role should labour policy play in addressing these issues?
Labour standards	New Zealand already has free trade agreements with a number of nations, and is actively seeking other agreements eg the Transpacific Partnership. What principles apply in relation to labour standards in the countries with whom we negotiate? What are the implications of those agreements on domestic labour relations policies? What stance should NZ adopt to international labour standards in an increasingly globalised world?
Skills	What is the responsibility of government to ensure the current and future workforce has the right? How does this interface with the employer obligations to train and develop staff? Has industry training worked? Why/why not?
Managing diversity	How can/do workplaces manage a more diverse workforce in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, disability? Why should the government care?
Minimum wage	Should there be one? What is its impact? How should the rate be determined? Should the minimum wage vary according to characteristics of the employee?
Pay equity & wage inequality	How successful have the current public sector initiatives on pay equity been? Should they be extended to the private sector, and if so, how? Do growing disparities in pay levels matter?
Quality of work life	If NZ is a “good place to bring up kids” is that enough? What is it like to work in? Is it better or worse than in other countries? Why might the government want to take steps to influence how people experience work?
Unionisation	Like other countries, NZ has a declining rate of union density, except in the public sector. What is the impact of this? Is it something the government should be concerned with? Do other (non-union) forms of employee involvement and participation fulfil the same needs? How desirable and likely is the prospect of a

	“social pact”?
Vulnerable workers and precarious employment	Do we still have an under-class? How have changes in labour policy contributed to this? Should some groups of workers be assisted through regulations that address specific labour market disadvantage (including anti-discrimination law), or should all workers be subject to the same range of protections?
Work, life and family	In the face of organisational strategies which seek increased employee commitment, where does life fit in? Why does government seek to influence the balance? Why do people in New Zealand work longer annual average hours of work than comparable OECD countries? What impacts have flexible working hours policies had?
Sustainable development	How should sustainable development be reflected in labour policies?

Readings

There is no core textbook for this course. Readings for the first 2 lectures will be made available on Blackboard. Readings for subsequent lectures will be made available on Blackboard once the preferences for these sessions have been determined.

Assessment

The Assessment Handbook will apply to all VUW courses: see <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf>.

Assessment for this course consists of three assignments—three essays (worth 20%, 30% and 25%), 2 in-class presentations worth 10% and 15%.

Learning objective	Title	% of Marks Available	Due Date
1 & 2	Scoping & definition Assignment #1	20	7 August 2015
1 & 2	Literature review Assignment #2	30	18 September 2015
3	Options paper Assignment #3	25	16 October 2015
1,2,3	2 X Student Presentations (1st presentation- 10%; 2nd presentation – 15%)	25	TBD & 14 October 2015
	TOTAL	100	

Written Assignments (total 75% of final grade)

Students are required to select one well-defined area of labour policy and complete the following three assignments related to that policy area:

Assignment 1: Scoping and definition (20%) Due August 7 2015

Students are required to write a paper (approximately 2,000 words) analysing the policy issue that they have chosen to address. The paper should clearly outline what the policy problem is (problem definition) and what the desired policy outcome is. Other issues to address include contextual factors that may impact on the issue – these may include demographics, other policy settings, and stakeholder views and interests.

Assignment 2: Literature Review (30%) Due September 18 2015

Students are required to complete a paper (approximately 4,000 words) summarising the international and New Zealand academic and policy literature on their chosen labour policy area. This review should contain an outline of any relevant NZ attempts to address the issue (or related issues), together with analysis on policy solutions utilised in other jurisdictions

Word of caution: The preparation for the second assignment should start concurrently with the first assignment, as some of the literature might need to be inter-loaned, which might take considerable time.

Assignment 3: Options Paper (25%) Due October 16 2015

Based on their understanding of the state of affairs of their chosen labour policy field in New Zealand (Assignment 1) and the international literature on the topic and the practices followed in other jurisdictions (Assignment 2) students are required to write a 2,500 - 3,000 word policy options paper suggesting several courses of action for government to take and a recommendation for action with justification.

In the options paper they should consider:

- Who the major stakeholders are and how their interests will be affected by the various options;
- What are the costs and the benefits of the various options;
- What will be the impact of the various options on economic and social development within New Zealand;
- Risk management/mitigation;
- Recommendations.

Students will prepare two copies of each hand-in and keep the second copy for their own reference. Students must also keep an electronic copy of their work.

Presentations: (25% of final grade)

Students will make 2 presentations on their chosen policy topic (the first presentation is worth 10%, and the second is worth 15 %).

- 1) The first presentation (**on a date to be agreed**) will relate to the scoping and definition of the labour policy topic the student has chosen. The presentation should be about 15 to 20 minutes, and should end with some discussion questions for the class and leading of that discussion.
- 2) The second presentation will be done by all students in class on **14 October**. This will be a presentation of the analysis and options for action on the policy issue. Presentations should be around 30 minutes, and be prepared to answer questions following the presentation.

Presentation assessment criteria are:

- Quality of content (clearly defined policy problem, evidence and presentation of knowledge, use of examples and findings from literature and examples where relevant)
- Presentation and communication skills (engaging audience, use of language, ability to invoke discussion, answering questions, professionalism)
- Preparation (well prepared and familiar with material, use of visual material, organisation and timing).

Quality Assurance Note

Your assessed work may also be used for quality assurance purposes, such as to assess the level of achievement of learning objectives as required for accreditation and audit purposes. The findings may be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of FCom programmes. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential, and the outcome will not affect your grade for the course.

Handing in assignments:

Assignments should be emailed to the course coordinator by the due date. Students are requested to keep a copy of their assignments and of all source materials used in their assignments.

Penalties

- (i) In fairness to other students, work submitted after any deadline will incur a penalty for lateness. *The penalty is 2 of the marks available for each day it is overdue, unless there is a valid reason as to why it is late and this is accepted by the course coordinator.* Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays will be included when counting the number of days late. Assignments received more than 7 days after the due date will not be accepted and the student will automatically fail the Mandatory Course Requirements.
- (ii) Course Outlines provide a signal to student of forthcoming workload, dates of submission etc, and thus student study plans should take account of course requirements across all courses. Consequently, workload issues related to other courses and employment will not be accepted as reason for dispensation from mandatory requirements or waiver of penalties. Extensions to submission deadlines for any assigned work will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
- (iii) Students who are unable to comply with any of the mandatory requirements should make a written application for an extension to the due date for submission of assigned work or for waiver of a penalty, *in advance*, to the course coordinator, providing documentary evidence of the reasons of their circumstances.

All such applications must be made *before* the deadline and be accompanied by documentary evidence, eg a medical certificate, or counsellor's report that indicates the degree of impairment, and for how long the student has been impaired. Please be sure to ask at the time of consultation for the degree of impairment to be stated in any certificate you provide to support your case.

- (v) In the event of unusual or unforeseeable circumstances (e.g. serious illness, family bereavement or other exceptional events), that precludes an application in advance, students should make contact with the course coordinator, as soon as possible, and make application for waiver of a penalty as soon as practicable.

Use of Turnitin

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <http://www.turnitin.com>. Turnitin is an on-line plagiarism prevention tool which compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material. At the discretion of the Head of School, handwritten work may be copy-typed by the School and submitted to Turnitin. A copy of submitted materials will be retained on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

Mandatory Course Requirements

To meet mandatory course requirements, students are required to:

- 1) attend all sessions (or notify the course coordinator of the reasons for non-attendance ahead of time, except in the case of an emergency);
- 2) submit the three graded assignments by the scheduled dates and times;
- 3) conduct two in-class presentation during the term

Students who fail to satisfy the mandatory requirements for this course but who obtain 50% or more overall, will be awarded a "K" grade. Standard fail grades (D or E) will be awarded when the student's overall course mark falls below the minimum pass mark, whether or not the mandatory course requirements have been satisfied.

If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat

Class Representative

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details made available to VUWSA, the course coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the course coordinator on behalf of students.

Communication of Additional Information

All information will be communicated in class or via email. An email address list will be collated in the first class. Any changes to the course schedule or activities will be emailed to that distribution list, so please make sure that any changes to your details are notified to the course coordinator or course administrator.

Student feedback

Student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php

Link to general information

For general information about course-related matters, go to <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/vbs/studenthelp/general-course-information>

Note to Students

Your assessed work may also be used for quality assurance purposes, such as to assess the level of achievement of learning objectives as required for accreditation and academic audit. The findings may be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of VBS programmes. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential, and the outcome will not affect your grade for the course.
