



Society for the Study
of Social Problems
In Pursuit of Social Justice

Labor Studies Division Fall 2017 Newsletter

Note from the Chair

Greetings. I tried to begin this letter with some sort of wishes for the Season but quite honestly all I can think to say at this moment—the day after the Senate Republicans passed their “tax bill” unread and undebated— is “If you aren’t outraged, you aren’t paying attention.” I worry, as perhaps you do, about being a practitioner of what Thomas Kuhn calls “normal science” in a time of revolution.

But I also remember a line spoken by Linda Hunt in *The Year of Living Dangerously*: “What is to be done? We must treat with love and kindness those whom god has placed in our path.” One duty we have as sociologists is to help create structures that facilitate and support such action. SSSP as an organization supports us all in that quest and one thing we can do is try to support and strengthen it through participation in its Divisions.

I have **three** projects for my time as Chair. **One** is to improve the structure of the Labor Studies Division by changing our constituting documents to create the position of a vice chair or a chair elect or a small governing council. I know in my short time as Chair, that I would perform better and give better service if I had some people whose job it was to talk on a regular basis about where the Division is heading. **Two** is to make our Division meeting a real chance to exchange ideas and that starts with improving attendance. At the 2017 meeting, only one other person showed up besides me—now she (grad student Tracy Vargis) proved to be a real find as you will discover as you read the newsletter or the Program. But if we can get this much with one person in attendance, think what we might do with ten. I will start promoting attendance at the Division Meeting as soon as the official 2018 Program is published. **Three** is to help get more publicity for the research and community activities our members are engaged in. You can help with this right now—**write me today** (niebran@attglobal.net) about what you are doing—in your research, in your classroom, in your community.

Finally, we should all take heart and pride in President Luis A. Fernandez's wonderfully prescient theme for this year's meeting: Abolitionist Approaches to Social Problems—a chance to practice revolutionary science.

Yours in solidarity,
Gillian "Jill" Niebrugge-Brantley
Sociology Department, The George Washington University
SEIU Vice President for Adjunct Faculty at GWU
Dec. 2, 2017

Philadelphia 2018

The annual meeting will be held in Montreal (August 10-12, 2018). The theme of that meeting is Abolitionist Approaches to Social Problems. If you are able to join us in Philadelphia that would be great. The Labor Studies Division is sponsoring or co-sponsoring a new of sessions, please see the list below. Each of you is strongly encouraged to submit a paper for presentation at the meeting. Also, please encourage your graduate students and colleagues to consider submitting a paper as well.

1. The politics of getting labor to support an abolition of capitalism- *Thematic Session*

Organizer: Sam Friedman friedman@ndri.org

Topics that could be included (as examples) include labor struggles anywhere in the world where some participants tried to figure out how to raise issues of moving beyond capitalism; reactions of union officials and members during mass uprisings in terms of setting up workers councils and other coordinating bodies to strengthen the working class component of the new regime or order (eg, during the Arab Spring or the Maidan uprisings in Ukraine or in Argentina 15 years ago); or efforts of labor activists and political groups to the left of SYRIZA to work together to resolve the Greek crises.

2. Alternatives to capitalist economic formations—or not? -*Critical Dialogues Session*

Organizer: Melanie Bush melanie.e.l.bush@gmail.com

The Alternatives to Capitalist Economic Formations session will focus on non-market projects and solutions that people are engaging in globally to meet human need and build communities. These include for example cooperatives, time banks, reciprocity networks and other initiatives. The format is open so that papers that emphasize theoretical frames, ethnographic research,

praxis orientation, and/or with an analytical or polemical focus are all welcome. Papers that examine approaches and projects both within and outside the United States are of particular interest.

3. The Varieties of Precarity- *Regular Session*

Organizers:

George Gonos ggonos@fiu.edu; gonosgc@potdam.edu

Jackie Krasas jkr205@lehigh.edu

The most prominent feature of the new labor landscape has been the spread of precarious forms of work across diverse labor market sectors and occupations. The organizers of this panel call for critical papers on the social structure and legal mechanics of these precarious forms, their historical and political evolution, their global spread and utilization, the abuses inflicted on workers, the workers' experiences, and the emerging forms of organization and resistance.

4. The Rise of Adjunct Faculty: The Elephant in the Room-*Regular Session*

Organizers:

Nicholas Pagnucco <npagnucco@gmail.com>

Gina Petonito <petonig@miamioh.edu>

This section focuses on a problem for Social Problems Theory—when is a situation exploitative? Particularly it looks at the use of adjunct or contingent faculty in higher education and the differences among adjunct faculty responses to what is frequently described as an “exploitative situation.” This session considers both the possibility of an objective assessment of exploitation, regardless of actors' responses and also the agentic and experiential aspects of exploitation. Individuals have the potential to perceive, denounce, and resist exploitation as individual actors. Inversely, they also have the ability to ignore, justify, and perpetuate exploitation. This session is interested in these actions and strategies of individuals, be they studied in a primarily experiential and subjective form, or in terms of how they evoke intersubjective meanings, criteria, and institutions as they navigate through economic power relations.

5. When the Company Leaves the Company Town: Research from Rustbelt Communities and Beyond- *Regular Session*

Co-Sponsored with Community Research and Development

Junior Hopwood <jrhopwood60@gmail.com>
Meghan Ashlin Rich (meghan.rich@scranton.edu)

As the process of post industrialization continues its global progression, the plight of the poor and oppressed emerges as a major social problem along with congruent problems related to annexation of non-urban communities, crime, homelessness, unemployment, occupational opportunities, etc. This session encourages scholarly works that investigate social issues/problems of the community (both urban and non-urban) and/or suggests cultural, political and socioeconomic activities that will foster community development and sustainability. Particularly as it relates to issues of race, gender and social class; the Rustbelt vs Sunbelt development, the North/South discourse, globalized social inequalities and stratification etc.

6. Supporting Work-Life Balance-The Impossible Dream? -Regular Session

Co-Sponsored with Family

Organizer:
Cassandra Engeman cassandra.engeman@sofi.su.se

Research on the effects of family-friendly provisions, such as state-subsidized or on-site childcare and maternity, parental, and family leave policies, show wide-ranging benefits for maternal and infant health, family economic well-being, gender equality, and decreased workforce turnover. Yet, employers have been slow to voluntarily adopt such policies, and many governments have expanded family policies only recently. Notably, the U.S. remains an exception among affluent democracies for offering no paid leave for new parents under federal law. Session papers will explore questions, such as: When do governments or employers adopt policies that help workers balance responsibilities at and outside work? What policy or set of policies are ideal or novel for helping workers achieve balance? What are the intended effects of family policies, and what are their intended and unintended consequences? Topics may include policies but also services that help workers manage demands of new parenthood or other care needs throughout the life course.

7. Sports Analogies and Workplace Culture - The Language of Exploitation – Regular Session

Co-Sponsored with Sport, Leisure and the Body

Organizer:
Sara Chaganti schagant@brandeis.edu

In an era of increasing precarity in employment, management rhetoric originating in the 1980s uses the language of sports to define relationships among workers and between workers and management. Invoking images of teams and teamwork seems ironic when labor force attachment is increasingly tenuous. Recent scholarship suggests that the use of these images is part of a new method of worker control intended to put the burden of self-management on workers. This session interrogates the use of sports-related language in workplace culture and managerial practice and its implications for work in the post-industrial economy.

8. The Working Poor – *Critical Dialogue Session*

Co-Sponsored with Poverty, Class, Inequality

Organizer:

Tracy Lynn Vargas tlpeterc@syr.edu

For an increasing number within the U.S. and across the globe, working hard is simply not enough. This critical dialogue will shine a spotlight on today's working poor and highlight new substantive insights, concepts, and findings. We invite papers that investigate the experiences and politics of those working for poverty wages and look forward to an insightful dialogue formed around groundbreaking research.

9. The Hostile Work Environment –*Regular Session*

Co-Sponsored with Mental Health and Society

Organizer:

Keith Johnson keithjohnson101@gmail.com

A hostile workplace can be examined through several different sociological lenses: those of inequality, marginality, and/or anomie, among others. Papers are invited that adopt any of the possible sociological lenses, particularly papers applying/comparing multiple theoretical perspectives to negative workplace experiences. Autoethnographies will also be considered.

10. Invisible Work as Part of the Job – *Regular Session*

Co-Sponsored with Ethnography and Labor Studies

Organizers:

Sugrue, Noreen M nsugrue@illinois.edu

Cathy Ringham email: clringha@ucalgary.ca

This session will include papers that explore invisible work as part of the job. Contributions may highlight work that is being done but that does not find its way into texts and technologies at the front line of practice.

AND REMEMBER THE DIVISION MEETING—YOU WILL BE GETTING DETAILS ABOUT THIS AS SOON AS SSSP RELEASES THE FINAL PROGRAM.

Hotel Reservation Information
Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Hotel
201 N. 17th Street
Philadelphia PA 19103

Room Rates:

Single/Double Occupancy: \$187 per night plus 15.5% taxes*

Triple Occupancy: \$207 per night plus 15.5% taxes*

Quad Occupancy: \$227 per night plus 15.5% taxes*

Reservations:

To make reservations, click here:

<https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/events/start.action?id=1710127864&key=2E5B4B24>

You may also call toll free number 1-800-325-3535 and ask for the group rate for “2018 SSSP Annual Meeting.” The cut-off date for the SSSP group rate is July 23, 2018. Please make your reservations by this date in order to guarantee the group rate. Reservations made after July 23rd or after the room block is filled are subject to availability or increased rates.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

New Job

Valerie Adrian has accepted a position as a program specialist for the Multnomah County (Oregon) Department of Community Justice-Research and Planning Unit.

Paper Award

Please let us know!

Member Articles and Chapters

Please let us know!

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ABOUT OUR MEMBERS

Tracy Lynn Vargas, a PhD candidate at Syracuse University, is nearing the completion of her dissertation writing. In her workplace ethnography titled *Dollar Store Economy: Reproducing Inequality within the Organization of Retail Service Work*, she works as a minimum wage sales associate at a prominent U.S. dollar store to closely examine intraclass service relations between poor frontline service managers, employees, and customers. Her work is the first sociological study of U.S. dollar stores and was recently published in the *Journal of Labor and Society* in an article titled "Employees or Suspects? Surveillance and Scrutinization of Low-wage Service Workers in U.S. Dollar Stores."

Andjela Kaur is researching possible connections between rehabilitation counseling theory and critical theories from a variety of disciplines in order to develop a critical rehabilitation theory. Currently, the rehabilitation counseling profession has two central questions: "Why are disabled people excluded from employment?" and "How can rehabilitation counseling professionals help increase the employment of disabled people?" Critical rehabilitation counseling theory is needed in order to reformulate these questions so that they become inquiries into the profession's relationship to the political economy of the capitalist state. Instead we might ask, "What political and economic systems and structures create and sustain unemployment for disabled people?" and "What ideological commitments should the professionals examine and change in order to respond to the systemic problem of unemployment of disabled people?" This reformulation creates a politically engaged way of thinking about the profession that could yield to alternative ways to practice it.

Valerie Adrian, a PhD candidate at Washington State University, is completing her dissertation in sociology. Survey data is used to explore how recent college graduates search for career-track jobs, and the impacts social class, gender, and parenting styles have on the job search. Interview data is used to discuss parent roles and motivations in their children's job search. Valerie is in applied research, working on innovative programs that aim to increase community integration and reduce recidivism among justice-involved individuals.