Workforce Development: Planning for Prosperity (USP 410/510)
Winter 2013

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Class Time: 9:00-11:40am, Thursday, Urban Center Room 311
Office Hours: 1:00-3:00pm, Tuesday and Thursday, other times by appointment

OVERVIEW

This course introduces students to theory and practice of workforce development, which is the system of programs, public policies and institutions that help workers and employers connect to one another in the labor market and make investments in skills and careers that promote household, business and community economic prosperity.

The course is divided into two sections. In the first portion of the course we will discuss the challenges of contemporary urban labor markets, and focus on three issues of central concern to the workforce development field – skill formation, employment networks, and career advancement – and role of public policy in addressing systemic failures and inequities in labor markets.

The second portion of the course will introduce different domains of the field of workforce development, as practiced in U.S. cities. Through case material and guest speakers, a variety of topics will be covered, including: publicly-funded employment centers (e.g., Worksource Oregon), welfare-to-work, community colleges, unions and apprenticeship programs, community development and industry sector-based economic development initiatives.

TEXTS

There is no assigned text for the term. Each week there will be a series of readings (approximately 50-75 pages per week) that will be made available via D2L.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Your grade for the course will be based upon five components. Further details and guidance about each assignment will be provided in class and on D2L.

Worker Career Profile (due 1/31, 15% of grade): For this assignment you will analyze and compare the career of two people that you know in relation to the three topics in Part I of the course: how/where they developed their skills, the networks used to find work, and their career pathway. You will identify challenges that they have faced/overcome (whether personal or work-related) to get where they are, and discuss the role that public policy has played in their respective labor market experiences.
WD Organizational/Initiative Profile (due 2/7 – 3/14, 20% of grade): For this assignment you will identify a workforce development organization or initiative, either in Portland or elsewhere, and complete a brief (6-8 page, double-spaced) profile of it – who the organization is, who it serves and how, what issues it addresses, etc. – based on available primary and secondary materials. The due date will depend on the organization or initiative chosen, reflecting which of the topics in Part II of the course to which it fits most closely. Students will be expected to give a brief (5-10 minute) classroom presentation of their profile. Students may choose to complete this assignment individually or in groups of up to two.

Final Assignment: (due finals week; 30% of grade - 25% paper, 5% presentation): For your final assignment you will choose either a segment of the population (demographic or geographic), or a particular industry or occupation, and analyze the role of workforce development in addressing the challenges facing it. You will be expected to utilize a combination of primary and secondary sources, including data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics and state labor market information agencies (e.g., Oregon Employment Department). Students will present their paper during finals week.

Weekly Reading Responses (15% of grade): In six of nine weeks (not including the first week), students will post a brief, 200-300 word response to the assigned readings via a D2L discussion board.

Class Participation (20% of grade): Students are expected to come to class prepared to contribute, having read (and thought about) the assigned material. While I do not take attendance, excessive absence will certainly harm your participation grade. Class participation can include sharing of materials (e.g., newspaper articles) via email or D2L relevant to class discussions.

GRADUATE COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Per PSU Graduate College policy, students enrolled in the USP 510 (graduate) section must complete additional work beyond the requirements for the USP 410 (undergraduate) section. This will be reflected in the length requirements for the three written assignments; submissions for USP 510 will be expected to be approximately one-third longer than submissions for USP 410.

LATE SUBMISSION POLICY: Late submissions for all written assignments will be accepted with a 1 percent per hour penalty (based on 100-point scale). Students may request additional time without penalty to complete assignments, as long as the request is submitted at least 24 hours ahead of the deadline and accompanied by a reasonable justification (to be determined by the instructor). A good rule of thumb is: if the reason could not have anticipated in advance, then it is generally reasonable. Deadlines in other classes or at work generally do not meet this criterion.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS: If you have a verified disability and are in need of academic accommodations, please let me know and I will work with you to arrange appropriate supports through the Disability Resource Center.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: It should go without saying that plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated, but I will say it anyway. “Academic dishonesty,” according to Section 577-031-0136 of the PSU Student Code of Conduct, refers to as “the act of knowingly or intentionally seeking to claim credit for the work or effort of another person or participation in such acts.” [http://www.pdx.edu/dos/codeofconduct] This encompasses both egregious acts of cheating like copying the answer to someone else’s exam, but also more mundane acts like lifting reference
material from websites without attribution. Per university policy, instances of academic dishonesty may result in a zero grade for those assignment(s).

**COURSE OUTLINE (Subject to change)**

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<td>In the first week we will set the context for the practice of workforce development in U.S. cities and urban regions. How have contemporary labor markets been changing – both prior to and since the Great Recession? What issues can planners and policymakers address through workforce development (and which ones can’t they address)?</td>
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<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<th>Part I: Issues</th>
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<td><strong>Week 2 (1/17): Skill formation systems</strong></td>
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<td>In this week we address what is arguably the core concern of workforce development – helping to &quot;develop the workforce&quot; in ways that improve both individuals’ labor market potential, but also the economic potential of regions and nations. How does “human capital” theory inform workforce development practice, and what are its problems and limits?</td>
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<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<th>Week 3 (1/24): Employment networks</th>
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<td>The old saying, “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know,” underscores an important challenge for workforce development. One’s ability to find jobs is shaped heavily by the networks that connect</td>
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workers and employers, via matching processes that can generate inequality in labor market outcomes across race, gender and space. In this week we discuss how economic and sociological theories conceptualize the matching process, and how workforce development strategies attempt to enhance both the efficiency and equity of the matching process in local labor markets.

Readings:

Week 4 (1/31): Careers and advancement

It is hardly an understatement to say that the nature of careers and career advancement has radically changed in recent generations, for white- and blue-collar workers alike. Long-term relationships between employers and workers have given way to external job mobility and employment relationships punctuated by corporate restructuring. In this week we discuss the impacts of these trends for the economic security of workers and families, and the role of workforce development in supporting career advancement.

Readings:
Read either:

In addition, students will read one of several industry restructuring case studies from Low-Wage America, Appelbaum, Bernhardt and Murnane (eds.).

Assignment 1 Due: Worker Career Profile

Guest speakers: Amy Vander Vleit and Christian Kaylor, Regional Labor Market Analysts, Oregon Employment Department

Part II: Institutions

Week 5 (2/7): Workforce development system overview

We begin the second part of the course with an overview of the various policies and institutions that are generally considered part of the “workforce development” system in the United States. We will discuss the historical track record of job training programs, and recent trends within the field.

Readings:
Week 6 (2/14): Workforce intermediaries: connecting to opportunity

One of the most important functions of the workforce development system is enhance access to good jobs for disadvantaged and underrepresented populations. In this week we discuss the role of “workforce intermediaries” in shaping labor market outcomes by connecting employers and jobseekers.

Readings:

Guest speakers: Patrick Gihring, Director of Adult Services, and Sean Kelly, Senior Project Manager, Worksystems Inc. (WSI)

Week 7 (2/21): Moving from Welfare to Work

Workforce development programs have historically served populations with low skills and work experience, and substantial barriers to employment. However, the imperative to promote work and labor market attachment has increased dramatically in the last two decades as a result of welfare reform and other policies requiring most individuals on public assistance to work. In this week we discuss welfare-to-work programs and other initiatives targeted at helping individuals connect with jobs and advance in the labor market.

Readings:
Week 8 (2/28): Community Colleges and WD

Community colleges are arguably the most important institution in the workforce development system today, as they provide a wide range of education and training opportunities to diverse populations. In this week we will talk about how community and technical colleges are attempting to pull together their resources in new ways to meet the needs of jobseekers for career advancement, but also the changing workforce needs of business and industry in their community.

Readings:


Guest speaker: Pamela Murray, Dean, Workforce, Economic and Community Development, Portland Community College

Week 9 (3/7): WD and Community economic development

Historically workforce development programs have focused on “people prosperity,” but what role can they play in “place prosperity”? In this week will talk about the possibilities and barriers to connecting workforce and community economic development efforts.

Readings:


Guest speaker: Alan Hipólito, Executive Director, Verde

Week 10 (3/14): Sector programs and regional economic linkages

Another approach to connecting workforce development with place prosperity is by supporting the changing needs of industry sectors that are important to the local and regional economy, helping

Baltimore: Annie E. Casey Foundation.


Guest speakers: Rachel Devlin, Community Initiatives Manager, Home Forward, and Sherrie Burrell, Program Analyst, Multnomah County Human Services Office.
those businesses to adapt and change more effectively. In this week we will discuss “sectoral” models of workforce development, and efforts to connect workforce with regional economic development.

Readings:


Guest speaker: John Gardner, Director of Business Services, WSI, and Lisa Nisenfeld, Executive Director, Columbia River Economic Development Council.

Finals Week (3/18 – 3/22)

Final Assignment Due, Presentations (Date/Time TBD)