Crete University / School of Social Sciences / Department of Sociology

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Postgraduate programme in "SOCIOLOGY"

Course: industrial relations

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Industrial relations : the academic field

The field of industrial relations is considered as being a multidisciplinary field examined from the perspective of political science, sociology, psychology, human resource development, finance, etc.

Like any other field so in the case of industrial relations there is no one and unique definition, but a plethora of definitions reflecting individual research interests and priorities, ideological orientations, theoretical approaches, national research traditions, etc. Depending on the narrowness or breadth of the definitions, industrial relations cover a wide range of practices and actors that are met in the sphere of labor and employment, individual as well as collective.

Objectives of the course

The aim is to examine a range of theoretical and empirical issues related to the field of industrial relations. Initially we will make a historical overview, followed by an overview of the main theoretical approaches. In a second time, changes in production patterns, and the implications of these changes for work organization and labor relations (individual / collective) will be examined. Third, we will explore the historical development and specific issues relating to two main issues in the field of labor relations: trade unionism and forms "workers’ struggles " (strike and industrial action). Subsequently, we will examine various issues related to the impact and challenges of globalization and European integration on industrial relations. Finally, we will explore the impact of economic crisis, the amplification of neoliberal policies and the implementation of austerity policies on employment and industrial relations.

Topics of the course

Considering the above, in the framework of this course we will deal with the following issues:

1. Historical evolution of the field, key concepts and theoretical approaches
2. Aspects of the transition from the Taylorism/Fordism to Post-Taylorism/Fordism : implications for work organization and individual and collective labor relations
3. Dimensions of collective organization and action I: syndicalism
4. Dimensions of collective organization and action II: strike and industrial action
5. Industrial relations at transnational level: the challenges of globalization and European integration
6. Employment and industrial relations during the period of the recent economic crisis

Contents of each thematic

1. Historical evolution of the field, key concepts and theoretical approaches

This section seeks to first introduce students to the field :

1. We will examine basic concepts that serve as tools of understanding of a multitude of issues in the field of industrial relations.
2. Historical evolution of the filed
3. Overview of key theoretical.
4. Aspects of the transition from the Taylorism/Fordism to Post-Taylorism/Fordism : implications for work organization and individual and collective labor relations

In this section, we will examine the consequences of changes in the production model and the organization of work for employment and industrial relations (individual / collective) and the criticisms that have been exercised:

1. Taylorism and Fordism: organization of work, labor relations and forms of regulation - The impact of changes in the production model and the organization of work for employment and industrial relations [School of Human Relations (Elton Mayo ...), Labor Process theory (Braverman, Burawoy ...)]
2. Post-Taylorism/Fordism: organization of work, labor relations and forms of regulation - The impact of changes in the production model and the organization of work for employment and industrial relations [School of Human Relations (deregulation theories, ….).
3. Dimensions of collective organization and action I: syndicalism
4. Union movement: key theoretical issues
* Why employees unionize - Issues regarding union commitment
* Role and functions of trade unions
* Union bureaucracy and democracy
* Union leadership
1. Development of trade unionism at national and international level
2. Trade unions’crisis
3. Trade unions’ revitalization strategies.
4. Unions and representation
5. Dimensions of collective organization and action II: strike and industrial action
6. Major protests and strikes in the late 19th and early 20th century (Chicago, slaughter of Ludlow ...)
7. Modern forms of collective action (strikes in cooperation with other social movements, 'online' mobilizations, actions at multinational companies ....)
8. Industrial relations at transnational level: the challenges of globalization and European integration

This section will examine issues related to the challenges raised by globalization and European integration on industrial relations and trade union action.

1. Regarding globalization, we will focus on issues such as: the development and role of the international trade union movement and the ILO, international alliances of unions with organizations / movements against globalization and multinational companies (collective bargaining at multinationals, World Works Councils ...)
2. Regarding European integration, we will consider: the role of ETUC, forms of employee participation (European Works Councils), the European social dialogue ...)
3. employment and industrial relations during the economic crisis period

In this section we will deal with issues related to the impact of economic crisis, the amplification of neoliberal policies and the implementation of austerity policies on employment and industrial relations. In particular, we will examine:

1. The changing model of governance at EU level since the beginning of the economic crisis and it’s impact on employment and industrial relations policies
2. The impact of crisis-related measures on the labor market, industrial relations and trade union action in the public / private sector.
3. Mobilisations of trade unions in response to these measures both at national and European level.