

THOU SHALT NOT STEAL: WAGE THEFT & MORAL THOUGHT

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Texts we'll read

*Wage Theft in America:
Why Millions of Working
Americans Are Not Getting
Paid And What We Can Do
About It (2011) – Kim Bobo*

*Nickel And Dimed: On
(Not) Getting By In America
(2011) – Barbara
Ehrenreich*

*On the Clock (2020) –
Emily Guendelsberger*

*"We Are All Fast-Food
Workers Now": The Global
Uprising Against Poverty
Wages (2018) – Annelise
Orleck*

Concerning this course

For many low-wage or part-time workers, wage theft is an inevitable aspect of their working lives. Wage theft includes not being paid for overtime, being paid less than the minimum wage, or not being paid at all. Once referred to as the crime wave that no one talks about, wage theft has become epidemic in the United States and elsewhere. But how did we get here? Most religious traditions and philosophies are very clear that theft of any type is wrong, yet wage theft and other workplace injustices are often justified by employers and some policy makers as “just the cost of doing business.”

In this course, we will examine not only wage theft but the conditions that lead to its occurrence including how wages and working conditions are determined from a moral standpoint. What does it mean to value workers? How do we determine which workers are essential? What can the voices of workers, advocates, and policy makers add to the discourse? In addition to examining research, articles, and other sources, this course will include conversations with workers and others who have either been directly affected by wage theft or directly advocated for policies to benefit workers.

We will not be limiting our explorations to the United States as this class will incorporate a collaborative online international learning (COIL) component with a university in Honduras. We will not only work directly with law students from the Universidad Tecnológica de Honduras (UTH) but, as a component of the course, you will also have the opportunity to interview workers in South Florida about their working conditions and present your findings.

Learning objectives

- Become familiar with wage theft, including how it occurs and to whom wage theft happens
- Engage in meaningful conversation with victims of wage theft and those who advocate on behalf of and with workers

Excerpts to be provided from the following

On the Job: The Untold Story of America's Worker Centers and the New Fight for Wages, Dignity, and Health (2021) – Celeste Monforton & Jane M. Von Bergen

The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time – Karl Polanyi

The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism – Max Weber



Honors College Learning Outcomes

Field Research – Research Skill, Leadership & Community Engagement

COIL with Universidad Tecnológica de Honduras - Interdisciplinarity & Connectivity

- Perform field research to better understand the conditions of workers in our community
- Develop your ability to work cross culturally and bilingually in both synchronous and asynchronous settings

GL Learning Outcomes:

- Global Awareness: Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems.
- Global Perspective: Students will be able to conduct a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.
- Global Engagement: Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.

Assignments

What follows is a general summary of the assignments for this course. Further details about each will be available on Canvas and in class.

Class Attendance, Participation, & Discussions: This class is a hybrid seminar that meets in person only once a week, so participation and discussion is an important part of the course. Every effort should be made to attend each session but should a situation develop that will impact your performance or attendance, please inform the instructor immediately. Participation includes reading and preparing for class and participating in both online and class discussions. We will have outside speakers joining us periodically, which should add to the experience for all of us.

Because this course is taught in hybrid mode, the face-to-face meeting time is reduced by 50%. The other 50% of the class takes place outside of the classroom, whether online, in the field, in the community, or someplace else. It is important to note that this out-of-class "meeting time" is in addition to the homework and preparation that are assigned in all classes regardless of format. In a hybrid course, you will need to self-regulate your out-of-class time so that you can keep up with both the face-to-face and out-of-class assignments and preparation.

Field Research: You will be part of a research team of three to four students who will work together to meet with and interview workers over the course of the semester, subsequently analyzing your team's findings, which will be presented to the class in late November.

COIL: Each of you will be part of a mixed group of FIU & UTH students who will work together on a comparative law case study that will take place throughout October and early November.

Changes

The instructor reserves the right to alter readings, assignments or the schedule as dictated by the needs and interest of the class. Any changes will be mentioned in class and announced on Canvas.

Grading

Attendance & Participation	15%
Weekly Online Discussions	25%
Field Research	30%
COIL	30%

Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %	Letter	Range %
A	93 - 100	B	83 - 86	C	70 - 76
A-	90 - 92	B-	80 - 82	D	60 - 69
B+	87 - 89	C+	77 - 79	F	59 or less

Religious Observances

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students whose religious practices coincide with class requirements or scheduling. Please make sure to notify your instructor at the beginning of the semester of which dates you will be absent or any anticipated problems with completing course work.

Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges

The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the DRC at 305-348-3532 (MMC) or at 305-919-5345 (BBC) to schedule an appointment. You can also visit them in person in GC 190 at MMC or in WUC 131 at BBC campus.

Honors College Policies and Requirements

Academic Misconduct Procedures and Policies

In The Honors College, the term “honor” refers both to academic accomplishment and character. Students in Honors should therefore adhere to and be held to the highest standards of personal academic accountability. Academic dishonesty in any form, including plagiarism, is antithetical to the very definition of being an Honors student at FIU. Consequently, an Honors College student found responsible for academic misconduct will be dismissed from the College.

An Honors faculty member may bring charges of academic misconduct against an Honors student if the faculty member suspects plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct. The faculty member will decide whether to pursue informal resolution, file formal resolution charges, or take no further action, and will follow the procedures outlined in the Academic Misconduct Procedures available at <https://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/get-support/student-conduct-and-academic-integrity/academic-integrity/index.php> . Please refer to the following documents for additional information:

FIU Student Handbook: <https://studentaffairs.fiu.edu/about/student-handbook/index.php>

Student Portfolios

The Honors College will be using a portfolio method to assess students' learning outcomes. The portfolio allows for maximum flexibility in gauging student learning. Students decide (with instructor consultation) what "artifacts" or assignments to include for consideration in their portfolios to demonstrate successful achievement of each of five key student learning outcomes over the 4-year Honors experience. Portfolios provide a rich context for students to show what they have learned and to explain their learning process. Because the Honors curriculum is meant to be thought-provoking and reflective, student self-assessment through portfolios will facilitate learning and provide in-depth assessment. Each Honors College course includes at least one assignment that could potentially fit portfolio requirements. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/portfolio/>

Honors Engagement

Requirements Honors College students are required to accumulate at least 20 engagement points each academic year (Fall and Spring) by attending Honors College activities. Students attending only one semester (Fall or Spring) are required to accumulate 10 engagement points. Each activity has a point value. Students may select which events and activities they want to attend. The new system is designed to be more flexible for students, offering events at various days and times (including some weekend events) and allowing for a variety of ways to meet the requirements. Please plan accordingly. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/citizenship/>

Community Service

Honors College students must also complete 20 volunteer service hours. These hours DO NOT count toward the 20 engagement points discussed above. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/community-service/>

Honors Education in the Arts (HEARTS)

The HEARTS program is designed to give Honors College students opportunities to "explore and appreciate different artistic and cultural traditions and modes of artistic expression. HEARTS will also serve as a clearinghouse (and curatorial framework) for our students to experience the arts on campus and in the community by providing them with information about cultural activities and access to performances with free or discounted tickets. <http://honors.fiu.edu/current-students/hearts/>

Resources:

Panthers Care & Counseling & Psychological Services

If you are looking for help for yourself or a fellow classmate, Panthers Care encourages you to express any concerns you may come across as it relates to any personal behavior concerns or worries you have, for the classmate's well-being or yours; you are encouraged to share your concerns with FIU's Panthers Care website.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers free and confidential help for anxiety, depression, stress, and other concerns that life brings. Learn more about CAPS at caps.fiu.edu. Professional counselors are available for same-day appointments. Don't wait to call 305-348-2277 to set up a time to talk or visit the online self-help portal.