

**POLS 6370 Public Sector Labor Relations**  
**CRN:17134**  
**Spring 2023**

Instructor: Dr. Dominic Wells

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Office: 127 Williams Hall

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Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 9:30am to 11:00am & by appointment

Class Meeting Time: Tuesday 6:00pm to 9:00pm

Location: Central Hall 113

**Required Texts:**

Labor Relations in the Public Sector 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Kearney and Mareschal (2014)

Public Workers: Government Employee Unions, the Law, and the State, 1900-1962.  
Slater (2006).

From Collective Bargaining to Collective Begging: How Public Employees Win and  
Lose the Right to Bargain. Wells (2021).

Government Against Itself: Public Union Power and Its Consequences. DiSalvo (2015).

\*All books for the course are available electronically for free through the university  
library

\*Other readings will be provided by the instructor

**Course Description**

This course is concerned with the challenges that public administrators face in unionized workplaces. The course aims to answer the following questions: What are the causes and consequences of unionization in the public sector? How are collective bargaining agreements negotiated and implemented? How do politics influence public sector labor relations? This course covers the development of public sector labor unions, the collective bargaining process, strikes, and impasse resolutions. Special attention is given to the politics of teacher, police, and firefighter unions. Students will analyze state policy that increased or decreases public sector unionization. Students will also participate in a simulation of the collective bargaining process that includes drafting and exchanging proposals, conducting negotiations, and drafting an agreement.

**Course Objectives (Assessment Method)**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the development of public labor policy and its influence on the growth of public sector labor unions (Reaction Papers)
- Explain the collective bargaining process and the problems that face public administrators in unionized workplaces (Simulation)
- Analyze the political, economic, or social consequences of public sector labor policy (Policy Brief)
- Communicate effectively, verbally and in writing, complex issues related to public sector labor policy and administration (Discussion Leadership; Policy Brief; Policy Brief Presentation)

## Course Delivery

This is not a lecture class, but I will begin each class with an overview of the central themes from the readings. Sometimes I will give a short presentation on the material. Following this introduction to the material, the discussion leaders for the day will be responsible for guiding class discussion (see discussion leader requirements below) with my assistance as needed. This course will follow the seminar (discussion) format and students are expected to attend regularly, complete all readings, and be prepared to discuss the concepts in a critical and thoughtful fashion.

## Course Grades

The following assignments will determine your course grade:

- Discussion Leader (20%)
- Reading Response Papers (15%)
- Collective Bargaining Simulation (40%)
  - Explanation of Priorities
  - Initial Contract Proposal
  - Final Negotiated Agreement
  - Reflection Questionnaire
- Policy Brief (20%)
- Policy Brief Presentation (5%)

The following is the grade breakdown for this course:

- A 89.5% to 100%
- B 79.5% to 89.49%
- C 69.5% to 79.49%
- D 59.5% to 69.49%
- F 59.49% or below

## Assignments

*Discussion Leader:* Each class 2-3 students will lead discussion covering the day's readings. This entails providing key questions for discussion, as well as facilitation of the dialogue. Discussion leaders should not just summarize the readings, rather you should find questions that will foster discussion of the main points, illuminate controversial claims, critique the theory/readings, and evaluate the efficacy of the authors' arguments. Students will be responsible for leading class 2 times during this semester. I strongly encourage students to coordinate with the other discussion leaders for the days that they are responsible.

*Reading Response Papers:* Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings for the week and be prepared to participate in discussion. Students must submit 8 reading response papers (meaning they can skip 3). Students will submit a 1-page single-spaced (12pt font; Times New Roman or other standard font, 1-inch margins) response paper addressing the readings for the week. These response papers should summarize the readings and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of them. Students do not have to address every reading for the week, but should evaluate more than one. Students will upload their response papers for the

week to Canvas by 6:00pm on the class meeting day. Students must be present for class sessions to receive credit for the response paper. Late response papers will not be accepted for credit.

*Policy Brief:* Students will write a 7-10 page policy brief analyzing a public policy issue relevant to labor in the public and/or nonprofit sectors. In the brief, students will provide a background/overview of the public policy, describe the previous research findings on the policy, explain the current federal/state policy, assess/evaluate policy alternatives, and make policy recommendations. Students must upload their brief in a Word document to Canvas by the due date. Late assignments will be penalized 10% for each day they are late. This penalty does not include weekends. Policy briefs will not be accepted if they are more than 3 days late. The brief must be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins, using Times or Times New Roman 12-point font or other standard font. In-text citations should be used in the body of the policy brief and a reference page should be attached to the back of the final product. Citations should be in APSA (or APA) format. Policy brief topic must be approved by the instructor.

*Policy Brief Presentation:* Students will present their policy brief to the class at the end of the semester. The presentation should include an overview of the policy problem, a description of previous research on the policy, an assessment of the policy alternatives, and a policy recommendation. Students may use PowerPoint or other visual aid for their presentation.

*Collective Bargaining Simulation:* Students will participate in a collective bargaining simulation. The instructor will assign half of the class to the bargaining unit for public school teachers and half of the class to the bargaining unit for public school administration. The instructor will select one student to serve as superintendent and one to serve as teacher association president. These students will take leadership roles during the simulation, but all students will participate in the process of negotiations within their assigned roles. Collective bargaining discussions and negotiations will take place during class sessions and all students are expected to participate throughout the semester. Each group will produce an explanation of priorities for the bargaining unit to consider in negotiations. This list of priorities will be used to design an initial contract proposal as a group. Following an exchange of initial contract proposals, the two sides will negotiate the terms of the agreement. Following negotiations, representatives from both sides will sign a final negotiated agreement. In the event of an impasse, the instructor will play the role of mediator or arbitrator. When the simulation is completed, students will fill out a questionnaire about the simulation. The final negotiated contract will be scored based on how well each side does in achieving their goals in negotiations. The formula for the final negotiated agreement score is listed below.

Score = Priority 1(.40) + Priority 2(.20) + Priority 3(.15) + Priority 4(.15) + Other Areas(.10)

### **Academic Honesty Policy/Codes of Conduct**

The instructor and students in this course will adhere to the University's general Codes of Conduct defined in the BGSU Student Handbook. Specifically, the Code of Academic Conduct (Academic Honesty Policy) requires that students do not cheat, fabricate, plagiarize, or facilitate academic dishonesty. For details, refer to:

- *BGSU Student Handbook*, <http://www.bgsu.edu/student-handbook.html>
- *The Academic Charter*, <https://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/faculty-senate/documents/academic-charter/ACADEMIC-CHARTER-fall-2018.pdf>

### **Plagiarism Detection Software**

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.

### **Expectations for Behavior**

Students will not and are not expected to agree with each other on all topics covered in this course, but it is expected that students will respect each other. Students are expected to display tolerance and respect in all communication. Comments and language should be respectful and appropriate for a college community.

### **Accessibility Services**

If you have a disability that I should be aware of, please notify me so that I can make arrangements to accommodate your learning needs. To get more information about your rights, contact the Accessibility Services office (<https://www.bgsu.edu/accessibility-services.html>) for Students located in 38 College Park, 419-372-8495.

### **The Learning Commons**

The Learning Commons provides free tutoring services to all BGSU students and is located on the 1st floor of Jerome Library. You can find some information at <https://www.bgsu.edu/learning-commons.html>. If you need online help with the writing process, visit <https://www.bgsu.edu/learning-commons/writing.html>.

### **Student Technology Assistance Center (STAC)**

Students are expected to participate in this course through Canvas. Students looking for Canvas support or more in-depth assistance with computer technology for a class project should contact STAC. Students can get help in person at 122 Jerome Library (1st floor), by phone (419-372-9277) or visiting their web page at <https://www.bgsu.edu/library/stac.html>.

### **University Libraries**

The University Libraries supports the teaching, learning and research mission of BGSU by advancing scholarship and creativity through collections and user-centered services that connect faculty and students to high quality information resources. For more information, to reserve a study space or to make an appointment: <http://www.bgsu.edu/library.html>.

### **Student Veteran-Friendly Campus**

BGSU educators recognize student veterans' rights when entering and exiting the university system. If you are a student veteran, please communicate with your instructor so reasonable accommodations can be made for absence when drilling or being called to active duty. See (<http://www.bgsu.edu/veteran/>) for more information.

### **Religious Holidays**

It is the policy of the University to make every reasonable effort to allow students to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. In such cases, it is the obligation of the student to provide the instructor with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which he or she will be absent. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve the student of responsibility for completing required work missed. Following the necessary notification, the student should consult with the instructor to determine what appropriate alternative opportunity will be provided, allowing the student to fully complete his or her academic responsibilities.

### **Contacting the Instructor**

The best way to contact me is through email at [wellsd@bgsu.edu](mailto:wellsd@bgsu.edu). I will usually respond within a few hours during weekdays. However, I cannot promise quick responses to emails sent after 10pm or on weekends. If we are unable to meet during office hours, I will be happy to schedule a time to speak with you on the phone or Zoom.

### **Course Schedule**

Students are required to complete the assigned readings for the week prior to class. Due dates for assignments are listed on the course schedule.

#### **Week 1 (January 10<sup>th</sup>): Introduction and Historical Development**

- Presentation
  - History and Development of Public Sector Labor Unions
- Reading
  - The syllabus
  - Slater (2006): Chapter 3- Public Sector Labor Law before Legalized Collective Bargaining
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 1- History and Development

#### **Week 2 (January 17<sup>th</sup>): Public Sector Unions vs. Private Sector Unions**

- Presentation
  - The Public Sector Union Debate
- Reading
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 2- Unions Today
  - DiSalvo (2015): Chapter 1- The Battle over Collective Bargaining in Government
  - DiSalvo (2015): Chapter 2- The Government Union Difference
  - Wells (2021): Chapter 1- The Public Sector Union Puzzle

- Wells (2021): Chapter 2- The Difference between Public Sector Unions and Private Sector Unions
- **Reading Response Paper 1 (Due at 6:00pm on 1/17)**

### **Week 3 (January 24<sup>th</sup>): The Expansion of Collective Bargaining Rights to the Public Sector**

- Presentation
  - The Expansion of Rights into the Public Sector
- Reading
  - Slater (2006): Chapter 6- Wisconsin's Public Sector Labor Laws of 1959 and 1962
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 3- Legal Environment of Public Sector Labor Relations
  - DiSalvo (2015): Chapter 3- The Unseen Rights Revolution
  - Wells (2021): Chapter 3- The Expansion of Rights into the Public Sector
- **Reading Response Paper 2 (Due at 6:00pm on 1/24)**

### **Week 4 (January 31<sup>st</sup>): Collective Bargaining Fundamentals and Process**

- Presentation
  - The Collective Bargaining Process
- Reading
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 4- Fundamentals of the Bargaining Process
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 5- Process and Politics of Public Sector Collective Bargaining
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 6- Financial Impacts of Unions and Collective Bargaining
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 7- Union Impacts: Personnel Process and Policies
- Guest Speaker: Nick Wells, Former President of the Huron Classified Education Association
- **Reading Response Paper 3 (Due at 6:00pm on 1/31)**

### **Week 5 (February 7<sup>th</sup>): Strikes!**

- Reading
  - Slater (2006): Chapter 1- The Boston Police Strike of 1919
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 8- Strike!
  - Karp and Sanchez (2020): The 2018 Wave of Teacher Strikes- A Turning Point for Our Schools?
  - Hanrahan and Amsler (2022): "Who Else is Gonna Do it if We Don't?" Gender, Education, and the Crisis of Care in the 2018 West Virginia Teachers' Strike
- Guest Speaker: Dan Wendt, City Manager of the City of Vandalia, Ohio
- **Reading Response Paper 4 (Due at 6:00pm on 2/7)**

## **Week 6 (February 14<sup>th</sup>): Mediation and Arbitration**

- Presentation
  - The Akron-AAUP Arbitration Decision
- Reading
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 9- Resolving Impasses: Alternatives to the Strike
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 10- Living with the Contract
  - Wells and Peters (2022): Retrenchment Clauses and the Problem of Force Majeure: Evidence from AAUP Chapter Collective Bargaining Agreements in Ohio
- **Reading Response Paper 5 (Due at 6:00pm on 2/14)**

## **Week 7 (February 21<sup>st</sup>): Government Against Itself, Part 1**

- Reading
  - DiSalvo (2015): Chapter 4- Electing Your Own Boss
  - DiSalvo (2015): Chapter 5- The Distortion of Direct Democracy
  - DiSalvo (2015): Chapter 6- Government Lobbies Itself
- **Reading Response Paper 6 (Due at 6:00pm on 2/21)**

## **Week 8 (February 28<sup>th</sup>): Government Against Itself, Part 2**

- Reading
  - DiSalvo (2015): Chapter 7- The Price of Government Work
  - DiSalvo (2015): Chapter 8- Spending More, Getting Less
  - DiSalvo (2015): Chapter 9- Shelter from the Storm
- **Policy Brief Instructions Posted**
- **Reading Response Paper 7 (Due at 6:00pm on 2/28)**

## **Spring Break (March 6<sup>th</sup>- March 10<sup>th</sup>): No Class**

## **Week 9 (March 14<sup>th</sup>): Retrenchment of Collective Bargaining Rights**

- Presentation
  - The Restriction of Rights in the Public Sector
- Reading
  - Hertel-Fernandez (2018): Policy Feedback as Political Weapon: Conservative Advocacy and the Demobilization of the Public Sector Labor Movement
  - Ford and Ihrke (2018): The Impact of Wisconsin's Act 10 on Municipal Management: Views from Local Elected Officials
  - Wells (2021): Chapter 4- The Restriction of Rights in the Public Sector
  - Wells (2021): Chapter 5- The Stories of Ohio Senate Bill 5 and Wisconsin Act 10
  - Wells (2021): Chapter 6- The Narrative Strategies in Ohio and Wisconsin
- Collective Bargaining Simulation
  - Assignment of Roles

- Background Information of School District and CBA
- **Policy Brief Topic (Due at 6:00pm on 3/14)**
- **Reading Response Paper 8 (Due at 6:00pm on 3/14)**

### **Week 10 (March 21<sup>st</sup>): The Politics of Teacher Unions**

- Reading
  - Hartney and Flavin (2011): From the Schoolhouse to the Statehouse: Teacher Union Political Activism and US State Education Reform Policy
  - Finger (2018): Vested Interests and the Diffusion of Education Reform Across the States
  - Paglayan (2019): Public-Sector Unions and the Size of Government
  - DeAngelis and Makridis (2021): Are School Reopening Decisions Related to Union Influence?
- Collective Bargaining Simulation
  - Explanation of Priorities
- **Reading Response Paper 9 (Due at 6:00pm on 3/21)**

### **Week 11 (March 28<sup>th</sup>): The Politics of Public Safety Unions**

- Reading
  - Wade (2018): Targeting Teachers While Shielding Cops? The Politics of Punishing Enemies and Rewarding Friends in American State Collective Bargaining
  - Anzia (2022): Chapter 8- Unions, Public Safety, and Local Government Spending
  - Frandsen (2016): The Effects of Collective Bargaining Rights on Public Employee Compensation: Evidence from Teachers, Firefighters, and Police
- Collective Bargaining Simulation
  - Initial Proposals
- **Explanation of Priorities (Due at 6:00pm on 3/28)**
- **Reading Response Paper 10 (Due at 6:00pm on 3/28)**

### **Week 12 (April 4<sup>th</sup>): Economic Effects of Public Sector Unions**

- Reading
  - Anzia and Moe (2015): Public Sector Unions and the Costs of Government
  - Bucci (2018): Organized Labor's Check on Rising Economic Inequality in the United States
  - Rosenfeld and Denice (2019): What Do Government Unions Do? Public Sector Unions and Nonunion Wages, 1977-2015
- Collective Bargaining Simulation
  - Present Initial Proposals
  - Begin Negotiations
- **Initial Contract Proposal (Due at 6:00pm on 4/4)**
- **Reading Response Paper 11 (Due at 6:00pm on 4/4)**



### **Week 13 (April 11<sup>th</sup>): The Future of Public Sector Unions**

- Reading
  - Kearney and Mareschal (2014): Chapter 11- Public Employees in the Future
  - DiSalvo (2015): Chapter 10- A Day of Reckoning?
  - Wells (2021): Chapter 7- The Paths Forward for Public Employee Labor
- Collective Bargaining Simulation
  - Negotiations

### **Week 14 (April 18<sup>th</sup>): Collective Bargaining Simulation and Policy Brief Preparation**

- Collective Bargaining Simulation
  - Final Negotiations
- Policy Brief Presentation Preparation

### **Final Exam Week (April 25<sup>th</sup>)**

- Collective Bargaining Simulation
  - Sign Negotiated Agreement (unless still negotiating or at an impasse)
  - Reflection Questionnaire
- Policy Brief Presentations
- **Policy Brief (Due at 6:00pm on 4/25)**
- **Final Negotiated Agreement (Due by end of class on 4/25)**
- **Reflection Questionnaire (Due by end of class on 4/25)**

*Syllabi are contracts between instructors and their students. They provide clear guidelines for the expectations of students and instructors. To that end, I reserve the right to make minor alterations to this contract at any time. By remaining enrolled in this course, you tacitly acknowledge acceptance of these terms.*