

## **Proposal to the Senate Committee on Educational Policy to Establish an Undergraduate Minor**

### **Title of the Proposed Minor**

Undegraduate Minor in "Global Labor Studies" (GLS)

### **Sponsoring Unit**

School of Labor and Employment Relations

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### **Description**

In Spring 2008 the Labor Education Program (LEP) in the School of Labor and Employment Relations (LER) embarked on a strategic initiative to offer online credit courses at the undergraduate level. The online courses are targeted at three key audiences: 1) undergraduate students currently enrolled in the University of Illinois system interested in these topics offered in this online format; 2) labor leaders and union members in the state of Illinois who have been traditionally served by the Labor Education Program and who seek a degree-completion program; and 3) union leaders and students around the world who will now have access to learning through distance education technologies.

Labor Studies analyzes issues facing workers and labor unions from a multi-disciplinary perspective, drawing on and synthesizing the fields of sociology, history, economics, political science, business, industrial relations, and international studies. As the U.S. and world economy is increasingly becoming globalized, it is necessary to recognize worker and labor union matters in a global context – hence the focus on global labor studies.

To our knowledge, the University of Illinois (UIUC) does not offer such a program; yet, doing so clearly makes sense to balance the educational opportunities that are offered on this campus on matters pertaining to managements' deployment of human resources, as well as management's financial and capital investment strategies in a global context.

The courses are taught using the Compass Platform, which is the primary instructional software used at the Urbana-Champaign campus. UIUC students enroll through Banner as they would for an on-campus course; continuing education students enroll through Academic Outreach.

### **Global Labor Studies as a Compelling Subject for Undergraduate Education**

In a nutshell, "global labor studies" provides a unique perspective on contemporary U.S. and international issues. And, as the U.S. economy is increasingly globalized, labor and work issues such as global poverty, income inequality, trade debates, and labor's role in establishing stable democratic governments, take on increased importance. Graduates are likely to take employment in a firm, labor union, or government agency that has a global reach. Alternatively, they may apply to graduate program in which they can build on this intellectual foundation. Indeed, in today's workplace, their coworkers are more likely than ever before to be local nationals of

countries half way across the globe. So they will be learning about workplace realities that will correspond to their future work experience – whatever career they choose.

Economically, politically, socially, and culturally, the nations and peoples of the world are increasingly interconnected. Globalization touches all of our lives in innumerable ways. The Internet facilitates immediate international communication. Cable television produces shows in dozens of languages that are viewed across the globe. Immigration issues are a hot political debate in the U.S. and Western Europe as many millions migrate each year.

The globalization of the world economy is unfolding at a rapid pace and manifests itself in a number of substantive ways:

- The sum of United States imports and exports totaled \$4 trillion in 2007, based on double-digit growth in recent past years.
- India and China are playing an increasingly central role in global trade; U.S. trade with China in 2007 exceeded \$385 billion.
- The largest 200 multinational corporations' combined sales surpass the combined economies of 182 countries.
- The World Trade Organization has grown to include 152 nations, with an additional 30 countries currently applying for membership.

U.S. unions, too, are internationalizing. For example, the United Steelworkers union is moving aggressively to build global labor networks. “More and more of our employers have become global corporations,” said USW International President Leo Gerard. “We have to deal with multinationals on a global basis. We’ve already formed six global alliances with unions in other countries and we’re reinforcing our cross-border networks in dealing with these employers.”<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, in May 2008 UNITE the Union, which represents more than 2 million workers in Britain's transportation, energy and public sectors, announced its merger with the United Steelworkers. “We're dealing with global companies that can move capital -- and employment -- around the world, at will in many cases,” said UNITE spokesperson Andrew Murray. “While big business is global, and labor is national, we're going to be at a disadvantage.”<sup>2</sup>

Labor “corporate campaigns” that span many countries are on the rise. Kate Bronfenbrenner, Director of Labor Education Research at Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations, is editor of the new book Global Unions: Challenging Transnational Capital Through Cross-Border Campaigns. For example, the Longshore Workers union (ILWU) initiated an international campaign targeting Blue Diamond Growers. The Service Employees union (SEIU) is part of a multi-union U.S.-England-New Zealand-Australia “Justice for Cleaners” campaign.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> USW website, “USW Joins Conference To Outline Global Strategies For Trade Unions”:  
<http://www.usw.org/usw/program/content/3174.php>

<sup>2</sup> “UK’s Largest Union to Join United Steelworkers,” May 25, 2008 Associated Press:  
[http://biz.yahoo.com/ap/080525/britain\\_union\\_merger.html](http://biz.yahoo.com/ap/080525/britain_union_merger.html). UNITE the Union website:  
<http://www.amicustheunion.org/default.aspx?page=0>

<sup>3</sup> Justice for Cleaners: <http://www.sfwu.org.nz/index.asp?pageID=2145839489>

The United Electrical Workers union (UE) has long had a collaborative relationship with Mexican unionists.<sup>4</sup>

### The Global Dimensions of the Proposed Minor

ILIR's "Global Labor Studies" program will strive to have a global focus in multiple and diverse ways:

Course Content: Curriculum will consist of courses that are exclusively focused on global issues, such as:

"Globalization and Workers" Offered spring 2008

"Comparative Labor Movements" To be offered fall 2009

"Global Immigration and Workers' Rights" To be offered spring 2010

"Wal-Mart and the Global Economy" To be offered spring 2010

"Workers, Trade and Latin America" To be offered 2011-12

"Worker Rights, Unions, and China." To be offered 2011-12

Additionally, each GLS class will strive to analyze the course topic from a global perspective. All three 100-level introductory courses explore global labor and economic issues. Even courses that are more focused on workplace practices, such as grievance procedures, will consider how these practices may vary across cultures and contexts.

Course Instructors: All LEP faculty have taught about globalization issues and will design courses focusing on global labor issues. As well, we intend to seek expert instructors to teach specialized courses. For example, LER is in discussions with Eric Lee, who is based in London and runs the Labour Start website that collects news coverage of the global labor movement, to teach a global labor course online.<sup>5</sup> When he taught this course for Indiana University (but no longer does so), each week he introduced students to guest lecturers who were labor leaders from a dozen countries across the globe.<sup>6</sup> Stephen Franklin, who will be teaching LER 220 "The Media, Workers, and Unions" which has a segment focusing on how the media covers global labor, has covered worker issues internationally for the Chicago Tribune and is interested in teaching a course on cross-border organizing and global unionism. Additional globally-focused courses will be planned including ones designed and taught by professors across the globe; the online format is perfectly suited for instruction by foreign-based faculty.

Guest Lecturers: The online format also easily facilitates guest lecturers and co-instructors from other nations. For example, a course on labor relations and trade issues such as NAFTA could be co-taught by an LER faculty member and colleagues at Mexican and Canadian universities. A course discussing sweatshops could have an online guest lecturer from the Mexican or Central American labor movements.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, David Bacon, Children of NAFTA: Labor wars on the U.S./Mexican Border (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.labourstart.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Guest lecturers have been from countries such as Australia, Israel, the Netherlands, England, Norway, South Africa, Canada, Trinidad & Tobago, and South Korea ; and representatives from the International Labor Organization and the International Confederation of Trade Unions.

International Students: As noted above, the third target audience of the Global Labor Studies online program is students and unionists around the world. In our first year, our primary focus was on UIUC undergraduates. We will exceed 1,200 enrollments in calendar year 2008. In summer 2008 we launched an outreach effort to the second group of Illinois adult learners, to significantly increase the 15 enrollments of unionists achieved by May 2008. In 2009 we will publicize the program nationally, and in 2010 we will begin an international publicity effort. We anticipate significant international interest from foreign-based students and unionists who are able to take University of Illinois courses without leaving home. We also recognize that labor unionists from countries with well developed union structures such as England, Germany, Italy and Japan, as well as emergent labor movements in South America, Africa and China are engaging more actively in cross-border forms of communication and interaction. Education that bridges national boundaries will become a priority as a global workforce responds to economic change. As well, we foresee establishing relationships and partnerships with universities across the globe.

In late April 2008 we surveyed students enrolled in our spring courses and received 160 responses. 116 students (73% of those who responded to the survey) expressed some or strong interest in pursuing a minor in Global Labor Studies. (Additionally, a total of 84 or 53% of respondents expressed interest in a major.)

### Spring 2008 Course Evaluations

#### Spring 2008 LIR ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION SUMMARY

Course/Section/Type	Instructor	Rank	Responses	G1	G2	G3	D2	D12	D13
<b>LIR 100 A AO1 Online<sup>s</sup></b>	Monica Bielski Boris	Assistant Professor	17/28 (61%)	3.94	4.00	4.35	4.65	4.19	4.59
<b>LIR 100 B Online</b>	Monica Bielski Boris	Assistant Professor	8/35 (23%)	3.63	3.75	4.00	4.50	4.00	4.63
<b>LIR 100 C AO2 Online</b>	Steven Ashby	Assoc Clinical Professor	10/35 (28%)	4.40	4.50	4.70	5.00	4.67	4.78
<b>LIR 100 D Online<sup>s</sup></b>	Monica Bielski Boris	Assistant Professor	17/29 (59%)	4.06	3.94	4.12	4.71	3.94	4.71
<b>LIR 100 E Online</b>	Steven Ashby	Assoc Clinical Professor	5/32 (16%)	3.20	3.40	4.20	4.80	4.20	4.40
<b>LIR 100 F Online</b>	William Noble	Visiting Lecturer	7/28 (25%)	3.14	3.00	3.43	4.00	2.86	3.86
<b>LIR 100 G Online</b>	Mark Berchman	Visiting Lecturer	5/30 (17%)	3.80	3.20	3.80	4.40	3.80	4.00
<b>LIR 100 H Online</b>	Carol Hawking	Visiting Lecturer	12/31 (39%)	3.33	3.33	3.67	4.08	3.42	3.50
<b>LIR 100 I Online</b>	Beverly Stewart	Visiting Lecturer	16/33 (48%)	3.88	3.69	4.25	4.75	3.94	4.31
<b>LIR 100, K, Online</b>	Steven Ashby	Assoc Clinical Professor	12/33 (36%)	4.08	3.83	3.92	4.58	4.00	4.08
<b>LIR 200 2 Online<sup>s</sup></b>	Steven Ashby	Assoc Clinical Professor	12/13 (92%)	4.25	4.17	4.50	4.82	4.08	4.67

Course/Section/Type	Instructor	Rank	Responses	G1	G2	G3	D2	D12	D13
LIR 200 1 AO1 Online <sup>S</sup>	Steven Ashby	Assoc Clinical Professor	20/28 (71%)	4.25	4.20	4.30	4.85	4.25	4.70
LIR 300 0 Online <sup>S</sup>	Robert Bruno	Associate Professor	14/19 (74%)	4.00	4.36	4.79	4.85	4.31	4.57

- G1 = Rate the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness.
- G2 = Rate the overall quality of this course.
- G3 = How much have you learned in this course?
- D2 = The instructor's knowledge of subject was...
- D12 = How effective was the instructor in presenting material in discussions?
- D13 = The instructor was frequently visible in the online environment throughout the semester.
- Superscript "S" = Semester-length course. All other courses were 2<sup>nd</sup> eight week.

Oversight of adjunct and LEP faculty instruction is provided on a continuous basis by the Coordinator of Online Programming and the Director of Labor Education. The online adjunct staff will hold a mid-semester meeting and an end of semester session to discuss course issues and instructional performance matters.

### Curriculum Overview

The submission of this proposal for a GLS minor is the first step in a possible LER proposed major in GLS. While a full compliment of courses is under consideration, three GLS courses were offered in Spring 2008, a fourth in Summer 2008, three more in Fall 2008, and three new courses in Spring 2009.

### Budgetary and Staff Implications

In anticipation of launching its online program, LER hired two experienced online instructors in fall 2007. Three of the five other full-time Labor Education Program faculty will regularly teach online; and the Hazardous Materials Program coordinator will design and teach an online workplace safety course. As enrollments and tuition income allows, LER will consider proposing a new LEP faculty line.

Additional courses are taught by qualified visiting lecturers, such as the six that were hired to teach in the spring 2008 semester and fifteen to twenty who will teach in fall 2008. Teaching assistants (academic hourlies) have been hired to assist with grading. Total costs per section when a course is taught by contingent faculty will be no more than 45% of LER's tuition share per lower-level course and 30% per upper level course.

LER will shift staff duties so that Yesenia Vargas, Chicago office program coordinator, will provide online technical support. As well, LER will hire an assistant to the ILIR Director of Student Services to meet the needs of the Master's and Ph.D. program but also, in part, to meet the needs of the expanding online program. Estimated annual additional overhead costs: \$50,000.

We do not project an impact on course enrollments in other departments. As all Global Labor Studies courses will be taught online, there are minimal demands on the university. We do not require any classroom space. Online courses allow the university to increase enrollments without concern about buildings, maintenance, new equipment purchases, custodial work, or utilities.

### Requirements

The GLS minor requires 18 credit hours in GLS courses. Among those, LER 100 "Introduction to Labor Studies" and LER 130 "Introduction to Labor and Working Class History" (submitted to the Provost for initial instruction in the Spring 2009 semester) are required; as well as two courses with a global focus. At least 6 credit hours in upper level GLS courses are required. A minimum grade point average of 2.75 is required for completion of the minor.

Regarding course development and minor requirements:

\* LER 100 and LER 110, required courses for the GLS minor, were designed earlier this year.

\* Two globally-focused courses are required for the minor. LER 200 was designed earlier this year, and LER will be offered next fall. We intend that, starting in spring 2010, at least 50% all new courses will have a global focus on worker and labor issues.

\* Finally, two upper level courses are required for the GLS minor; at this time this requirement is met by LER 300 and LER 320. Developing a third 300-level course is on the schedule for 2010-11; and there is discussion among the faculty about whether any of the six courses planned for fall 2009 and spring 2010 should be created as a 300-level course.

### Prerequisites for the minor

None.

### Expected enrollment in the minor

We anticipate 250-350 minors once the program has been established.

### Admission to the minor

The minor will be publicized on the LER website and through emails to students enrolled in GLS courses. Interested students will meet with LER faculty and staff to discuss requirements. Staff members Yesenia Vargas (Chicago) and Martha Kelley (Champaign-Urbana) will assist with paperwork. There will be no limitations on the number of GLS minors.

### Minor advisors

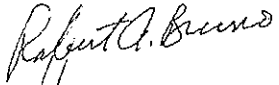
Faculty members Steven Ashby, LER Online Coordinator, and Monica Bielski, member of the LER online committee, will oversee admission to the minor and advise students. Other faculty and staff will build capability to provide advising support over time.

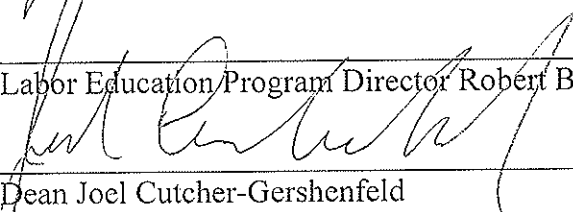
Students will find information on the GLS minor at the SLER website and be able fill out an application form online. If they prefer, they can fill out the form at office manager Martha Kelley's office in the SLER building on the UIUC campus. Program coordinator Yesenia Vargas, in LER's Chicago office, will keep records and begin the process of certifying completion of the minor requirements. Prof. Monica Bielski and Online Coordinator Steven Ashby will answer student questions about courses and the minor. Prof. Bielski can meet with students who prefer an in-person meeting with a faculty member; Prof. Ashby will address students' questions via email and phone conversations. Prof. Ashby has answered hundreds of students' questions about the online program in this manner throughout the past year. LER intends to accept any student interested in minoring in Global Labor Studies.

Certification of successful completion

The LER faculty online coordinator will send notification of completion of minor requirements to the LER Director of Student Services who will certify successful completion of the minor.

CLEARANCES:

  
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Labor Education Program Director Robert Bruno

  
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Dean Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Senate Educational Policy Committee

Proposed Effective Date

As soon as approved by all university bodies.

Statement for the Programs of Study Catalog

Minor in Global Labor Studies

Global Labor Studies analyzes the interplay of class, gender, race, and labor organizations in the workplace, the economy, and the political arena from a multi-disciplinary and global perspective. A minor in Global Labor Studies requires 18 credit hours in GLS courses. A minimum grade point average of 2.75 is required for completion of the minor.

Email: [illinoislabored@uiuc.edu](mailto:illinoislabored@uiuc.edu)  
Web address: [www.illinoislabored.org](http://www.illinoislabored.org)

Hours	Requirements
3	LER 100 Introduction to Labor Studies
3	LER 130 Introduction to Labor and Working Class History
6	Minimum of six hours 300- or 400-level courses.
6	Two courses that focus on international or comparative labor issues.
18	Total required hours

### Advising and Admission

Advising of students in the minor will be conducted by the faculty and staff in the LER Labor Education Program. Admission to the minor will be processed by the Labor Education Program Online Coordinator. Students may enter the Minor in Global Labor Studies from freshman year until such time that allows the completion of the minor before graduating in their major area of study.

### Certification of Successful Completion

The LER Director of Student Services will certify successful completion of the minor.

## **APPENDIX: COURSE DEVELOPMENT**

LER has offered nine courses, and ten have been approved. As the program is new, we have endeavored to produce a significant number of courses in our first two years. However, we are ever mindful of ensuring that all LER online courses have the highest quality, and we anticipate slowing the course development process by late 2010.

The following 10 courses have been approved by the Provost's office:

1. LER 100 Introduction to Labor Studies
2. LER 110 Labor and Social Movements
3. LER 120 Contemporary Labor Problems
4. LER 130 Introduction to Labor and Working Class History
5. LER 200 Globalization and Workers
6. LER 220 The Media, Workers, and Unions
7. LER 250 Grievance Representation
8. LER 260 Union Organizing
9. LER 300 Workers, Unions, and Politics
10. LER 320 Gender, Race, Class and Work

In Fall 2009 we anticipate offering two additional courses:

11. LER 230 Comparative Labor Movements
12. LER 270 Workplace Safety and Health



In Spring 2010 we anticipate offering four additional courses:

13. LER 210 Global Immigration and Workers' Rights
14. LER 240 Wal-Mart and the Global Economy
15. LER 280 Employment Law
16. LER 290 Labor Relations in Health Care

## **APPENDIX – DESCRIPTIONS OF DEVELOPED COURSES**

### **LER 100 Introduction to Labor Studies** (3 credits) *Also offered as a second eight weeks course*

The course provides an overview of workers and unions in American society. Looks at economic, political, and workplace issues facing working people, why and how workers join unions, how unions are structured and function, and how unions and management bargain a contract. Provides a historical overview of the American labor movement, and discusses the contemporary struggles workers and unions face in a rapidly changing global economy.

### **LER 110 Labor and Social Movements** (3 credits) *Also offered as a second eight weeks course*

This is an introductory course which explores the role of labor unions in American society. The course discusses the role of labor unions in initiating actions on social issues that impact the U.S. working class, the economy, public policy, and politics. The course will analyze the labor movement's interaction with the civil rights, women's, student, global justice, and living wage movements.

### **LER 120 Contemporary Labor Problems** (3 credits)

This course focuses on problems and challenges facing American workers and the U.S. labor movement. Topics include the deterioration of the labor-management "social contract" in recent decades; a review of labor and employment law; the health care crisis; globalization and cross-border union alliances; and union democracy.

### **LER 130 Introduction to Labor and Working Class History** (3 credits)

Do working people have a history worth studying? What does the history of the U.S. look like when viewed from the point of view of those who built the country? The course introduces students to U.S. labor and working class history. This class will examine the conditions of life and work of the various groups of working people: enslaved, indentured, small farmers, but especially wage workers and their families from the Civil War to the present. We will study the main collective actions workers have taken to protect and improve their lives and the organizations and social movements they created to do this.

### **LER 220 The Media, Workers, and Unions** (3 credits)

This is a course about workers, unions, and how the news media tells their stories. It will look at the past, the present, and future. It will analyze how these stories are told in the mainstream and independent news media in the U.S., and it will examine the Internet's explosion and impact on these stories. We will look at how blogs, online videos, citizen journalism, and the fast changing world of Internet communication has given voice to workers and their issues. We will compare the print and online media with the work done in documentaries and the cinema. In addition we will look at the global telling of these stories. Lastly, we will examine the ways that unions can better tell their stories.

**LER 250 Grievance Representation (3 credits)**

This is a practical course that examines how a union steward represents workers on the job, including how to investigate, write, and negotiate grievances; and how to utilize labor law to defend workers' rights on the job. Students work collectively to discuss how to resolve labor-management conflicts in case studies on insubordination, absenteeism, vacation, overtime, safety, and racial and sexual harassment grievances.

**LER 200 Globalization and Workers (3 credits)**

Is globalization good for working people in the United States and around the world? Globalization is the driving force in the world economy but it is also provoking tremendous debate and popular resistance. Students will learn the basics about globalization and its institutions from the perspective of workers' right in the U.S. and the Third World. Analyzes the debate over free trade and sweatshops, trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, and institutions such as the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. Closely examines working conditions in several Third World countries, and explores the role of the global justice movement.

**LER 260 Union Organizing (3 credits)**

The course will provide an in-depth understanding of how to organize a union. The first half of the course will review union organizing methods and labor law. The second half of the course will analyze debates over innovative strategies, best practices, and theories of union organizing. The course covers skills and theoretical analyses that are applicable for community, student, or social movement organizers.

**LER 300 Workers, Unions and Politics (3 credits)**

What is the meaning and impact of politics seen from the perspective of those at the bottom of the pyramid of political power rather than the usual focus on the actions and perceptions of political elites? In what ways do workers become involved in politics? Under what circumstances are they likely to be successful in bringing about change? The course explores political power, political participation, and political change from a broad historical and cross-cultural perspective, but always focusing on a view of politics from the bottom up. Analyzes the political economy of labor and the labor movement's political influence in politics. Prerequisite: Students should have taken a 100-level GLS course, or a course that discusses political issues.

**LER 320 Gender, Race, Class and Work (3 credits)**

This course provides a historical and contemporary overview of the impact and interplay of gender, race, class and other issues of identity in the workplace. The history of women, people of color and working class individuals in the workplace will be addressed. Contemporary issues of discrimination in the workplace will be examined including: the pay gap, occupational segregation and workplace harassment. In addition, the course surveys the remedies for dealing with workplace discrimination, with particular attention to employment discrimination laws. The particular challenges faced by those doing low wage work will also be explored. Finally, the course covers the response of labor unions to the issues of women, people of color, immigrants and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals. Prerequisite: Students should have taken a 100-level GLS course, or a course that discusses race or gender issues.