



## Special Call for a Set of Sessions on

### **Teaching Labour and Employment Relations**

as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> International Labour and Employment Relations Association  
(ILERA) Regional Congress of the Americas

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

June 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020

As scholars of labour and employment relations, labour law and labour studies, we see the value in university courses that cover topics such as unions and collective workplace representation, negotiations and collective bargaining, labour history, worker's movements and class struggles, worker's rights, and labour and employment law. We see the value in these topics being taught from a particular vantage point that acknowledges the inequities and inherent conflicts, contradictions and imbalances of power that exist in the employment system and the larger ecosystem of paid and unpaid labour. And as Adam Seth Litwin from the Cornell ILR school wrote in a recent LERA listserv discussion on the topic, we see the value in understanding the ways that the "global, economic, social and political pressures influence workers – through their unions – and managers – through these same forces as well as through the firms that employ them."

However, the field is confronted with an environment that promotes distinctly individualistic and managerialist perspectives which often focus on the individual within organizations rather than any collective or set of institutional actors embedded in societal context, and champions entrepreneurialism and shareholder value over stakeholder and human rights perspectives. Students therefore may view our courses as antiquated and irrelevant, particularly in the face of declining union density, the shift from manufacturing, and the downsizing and villainization of the public sector.

In response to the aforementioned call on the LERA listserv to talk about how to teach labour and employment relations courses to the 'next generation' we seek to make a special space at the ILERA2020 meetings to facilitate discussions and exchanges around teaching labour and employment relations. We welcome contributions on a wide variety of topics, ranging from overall strategies to create courses that are seen as relevant to particular teaching innovations that engage students on specific topics.

Three forums for discussion and exchange are planned:

1. **Panel discussion** organized by John Budd, Professor of Work and Organizations at the University of Minnesota. This will be included as a regular conference session in the ILERA2020 program.
2. **Open and informal workshop session** held as part of the regular conference program. Everyone is welcome to attend and share concerns, tips, and tricks of the trade. Participants are

encouraged to bring materials and/or resources that they might like to share with colleagues. This workshop will be lightly facilitated and, depending on numbers, may take the form of simultaneous small group discussions.

3. **Formal poster submission** on the topic of 'Successful strategies for teaching labour and employment relations'. The intention is not for empirical research on the topic, though these submissions are not excluded. Rather, the idea is that participants may wish to formally showcase and share a particular approach, technique, topic or theme, exercise, assignment, etc. which they have found to be successful in generating interest and engagement amongst students. Posters will be set up at the start of the conference and remain prominently on display throughout. Presenters will be asked to staff their poster at select and indicated times (outside of regular session times) to engage with conference participants.

If you are interested in participating in either #1 or #2, register for ILERA2020 at the link below and mark these sessions in your conference program. Bring any materials you would like to share in the informal workshop.

If you are interested in participating in #3 and preparing a formal poster, please submit an abstract as a 'Communication Proposal' through the conference website by September 15, 2019 and indicate on the form that you wish to be considered for the 'Teaching Labour and Employment Relations' track. You will be contacted with further details about the requirements for the poster upon acceptance (size guidelines, presentation times, etc.).

**Please submit abstracts for the poster session (1000 words maximum) by September 15, 2019 at the conference website – chose the Communication Proposal option:**

<https://www.ryerson.ca/tedrogersschool/ilera2020/>

**Please direct inquiries or ideas to:** Johanna Weststar [weststar@uwo.ca](mailto:weststar@uwo.ca)

**We look forward to seeing you at ILERA2020!**

Johanna Weststar, DAN Department of Management and Organizational Studies, Western University

John Budd, Department of Work and Organizations, University of Minnesota