

Strategic Corporate Research Summer School 2015

June 14-19, 2015 - Cornell University campus, Ithaca, NY

Understanding and researching corporate ownership structure, corporate finance, and the sources of corporate power.

Sponsors: The Strategic Corporate Research program is offered by the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations and co-sponsored by the AFL-CIO Center for Strategic Research and is intended for undergraduate and graduate students interested in working in the labor movement.

The Course

Despite enormous challenges in organizing and bargaining in a rapidly changing global economy, this is a time of great opportunity and innovation by U.S. unions and their allies. Along with a resurgence of action among working people in the past year, there has been a new level of inventiveness in campaigning, evident in recent union organizing and bargaining campaign victories such as:

--The rising up of low-wage workers in the fast food and retail industries taking on the world's largest and most well-known transnational firms with the most basic demands: a living wage of \$15 an hour, safe working conditions, and a union. They have struck and engaged in civil disobedience in cities across the US and in doing so changed the national discourse about corporate and government responsibility for the workers.

-- These campaigns are often multinational and multi-union. Teamsters and Unite Here won a successful card check to represent a combined total of 900 employees in Harrah's Hotel and Casino in New Orleans. In May 2014, workers in 30 countries protested in solidarity with the Fight for 15 in fast food in the US. In January Coca-Cola workers in Guatemala became 100 percent organized in a multi-union campaign under the leadership of the Global Union Federation for the food industry (IUF). This followed on the heels of a similar IUF led victory in Pakistan. In both cases the workers, organizers, and the Global Union had to overcome enormous hostility and repression.

-- At the same time there has been an increase in rank-and-file community-based campaigns in a broad range of occupations and industries who either do not fit under the NLRB format or are specifically denied employee status, ranging from collegiate athletes at Northwestern University, car wash workers organizing with RWDSU in NY and the Steelworkers on the West Coast, Domestic Workers United gaining employee status in New York and California and collective bargaining rights in New York after a historic struggle, and the Model Alliance, connecting with workers along the apparel supply chain to take on some of the most powerful players in the apparel and fashion industry.

These victories came about because of a combination of grassroots rank-and-file mobilizing and leadership development, and escalating actions in the workplace and broader community; fundamental to all these campaigns was careful strategic research.

Unfortunately the U.S. labor movement today is facing a critical shortage of organizing, bargaining, and campaign staff with strategic research training who understand both corporate structure and finance, and union campaign strategies. To help meet this need thirteen years ago the AFL-CIO asked the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations to develop a one-week intensive credit course on strategic corporate research for graduate students and upper-level undergraduates interested in working with the labor movement upon completion of their degrees. The course will be available as either a non-credit course or as a 1.5-credit undergraduate course with an additional research and writing assignment. Those interested in pursuing strategic corporate research positions within unions are strongly advised to take the course for credit irrespective of whether they actually need the credit, so that they will have the additional experience of researching an actual corporation and have a completed strategic research report to show prospective union employers.

This course will be designed to provide a comprehensive introduction to the nature and structure of corporate ownership, finance, and power in today's economy. Through lectures, readings, case studies, research training and exercises the class will provide students with the tools to pose and answer basic questions on the operations, structure, and industrial relations strategies of corporate America. In particular, this course will focus on how these company characteristics, structures, and practices impact the firm's labor relations policies and strategies, and how unions can best respond to and capitalize on these characteristics in union comprehensive organizing and bargaining campaigns.

The course will also provide in-depth hands-on training in the online and library research tools required to conduct strategic corporate research. As part of this course students will work through a series of case studies dealing with diverse firms and industries, as well as have an opportunity to conduct in-depth research on an actual firm in the context of union organizing or bargaining.

Because of the limited time available while students are here on campus, they will be sent books and a course pack several weeks before the class takes place to give them an opportunity to complete all the reading before they arrive. In addition to reading assignments, there will be short written exercises and class presentations to be completed while the class is in session. Students taking the course for credit will be required to conduct independent research and write a 25-30 page paper summarizing comprehensive corporate research and analysis for a designated company. The final paper will be due six weeks after the class and will count for 50 percent of the grade for the course.

The Faculty

Kate Bronfenbrenner

Kate Bronfenbrenner is the Director of Labor Education Research and a Senior Lecturer at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR). She is also an Associate of ILR's Worker Institute. She received her Ph.D. in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University in 1993. Bronfenbrenner's primary research and teaching interests focus on union and employer behavior in organizing, bargaining, and contract administration, strategic corporate research and comprehensive cross-border campaigns, and the impact of global trade and investment policy on workers, wages, and unions.

Julie Farb Blain

Julie Farb Blain is Director of the Center for Strategic Research at the AFL-CIO. She leads a team of strategic researchers and campaigners in support of affiliate unions' organizing initiatives. Previously, she worked as a union researcher developing and executing strategic approaches for organizing and contract campaigns. She has taught the craft of strategic research and campaign planning to students, workers, and union staff both in the classroom and in the field and has mentored and trained many union researchers on the job. She has an MA in Urban Planning from the University of Washington.

Aaron Brenner

Aaron Brenner is a senior capital markets analyst at the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union. He does research and organizing for the UFCW's capital stewardship department. His work includes comprehensive organizing campaigns, shareholder activism, retirement security, and financial advising to locals. Prior to UFCW, he was a union researcher, freelance financial analyst, professor, and journalist. He is on the board of Homeland Stores, an employee-owned, 80-store unionized grocery chain in Oklahoma and Texas. He holds a PhD in labor history from Columbia University.

Chad Gray

Chad Gray is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Center for Global Workers' Rights in the Labor and Employment Relations School at Penn State. He received his Ph.D. from Cornell's ILR School in 2014 where his dissertation focused on transnational organizing and bargaining campaigns in Latin America. He has worked on labor research projects for the Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research (PODER), the National Guestworker Alliance (NGA), the ILR Office of Labor Education Research, and the Service Employees' International Union (SEIU). Before studying at Cornell, Chad worked as an organizer for the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) from 2002 to 2005.

Job Placement

Program instructors are committed to assisting successful graduates of the program in finding strategic corporate research positions within the labor movement. In the first thirteen years of the program we have been able to place more than 350 students in top research positions in the AFL-CIO, CTW, UNITE HERE, SEIU, USW, LIUNA, IBT, UFW, UFCW, AFT, AFSCME, ATU, NNU, NYSNA and other unions across the United States and around the world. The majority of those we place in research positions have taken the course for credit.

Campus Life

Schedule for the week

Registration, orientation, and an opening reception and plenary panel will take place from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 14, at the ILR Conference Center.

Registration will begin at 5:30, and the orientation and introductory program will begin at 7:15 p.m. In order to accomplish the aims of the program in the short time allotted, students should be prepared for a schedule that is both rigorous and intense. Attendance in all class time, including the opening session, is mandatory for all participants in the program. Full days will be the norm, including out-of-class small-group assignments and one evening session. Class will meet Monday through Thursday at the ILR Conference Center from 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday evenings through 9:00 p.m., and Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Students should be prepared to work in small-group assignments on every night outside of class and should not be making other social arrangements while they are in Ithaca. Further details will be sent with confirmation letters.

Housing

Students will be housed in a unionized residence hall on North Campus. Each bedroom is furnished with twin beds, desk, chair, lamp and dresser. The rooms are in suites of four to six rooms clustered around a shared bathroom and living space. Room rates are \$50 per night for "singles" (one person each bedroom) or \$36 per person/per night for "doubles" (two persons each bedroom) plus a one-time administrative fee of \$32 per person. The separate parking fee at the dorm is \$6/day. All students will also be provided with a campus bus pass, free of charge. Parking and housing costs are the responsibility of the individual student. Room reservations must be received at Cornell by May 22, 2015. **Note:** *If you choose a "single," you will be sharing your suite with several other people of the same gender. You will have a private bedroom, but a shared bath. Beds are made on arrival and linens and towels are provided, but there is no daily housekeeping service.* This is dorm housing. Most important to note it is not air conditioned. If you would prefer to stay in a hotel, you are free to make your own arrangements with area hotels. However, be advised that all of them will cost you a great deal more than the dorm and most of the students stay in the dorm. Please refer to ILR's hotels page:

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/conferencecenter/directions/hotels.html>

Transportation

From the dorms at North Campus to the classrooms of the ILR Conference Center you may walk (about 20 minutes), bike (5 minutes), or use the campus shuttle bus service (bus passes provided free to all students). If you are housed off campus, we strongly encourage you to use the bus. On-campus parking is severely limited, expensive, and discouraged.

Meals

Included in the registration fee is a picnic on Wednesday evening at Taughannock State Park on beautiful Cayuga Lake, and the graduation lunch on Friday afternoon. Meals, including breakfast, are available at several on-campus dining facilities on a cash basis both near the dorms and near the conference center. We will also be providing a continental breakfast at the conference center each morning before the program begins. A dining guide of on-campus and off-campus locations will be provided for your convenience, many of which are within walking distance of the dorms and the conference center.

Weather

The climate in upstate New York in June can be quite variable, ranging from a rainy 40 degrees to a humid and hot 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Thus, we suggest you bring clothing suitable for both, including a rain jacket, sweaters, shorts, and a swimming suit.

Accessibility

The ILR classrooms are all accessible. Please let us know about any other accommodations you may require for housing or meals.

Application

The application process, including essays, registration, and payment is done on line through our secure application website powered by Survey Gizmo.com and the Cornell Campus Store Billing Services.

Registration Fee

The registration fee covers all instruction, books and materials, bus passes, opening reception, picnic on Wednesday night, and closing luncheon on Friday. A \$100 tuition deposit is required for all registrations no later than May 1, 2015.

- Non-credit fee: The non-credit fee is \$580 for all INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS, thanks to an AFL-CIO grant of \$365. Those who work for a union, NGO, or other employers should have their non-credit tuition paid by their sponsoring employer at the Full \$985 non-credit fee.

- Credit course fee: The tuition for those enrolling in the 1.5-credit class is \$1,890. And all individual credit students receive an AFL-CIO grant of \$890, reducing the cost to \$1000, except for those whose tuition is being paid by their sponsoring union, NGO, or other employer. Those students will have their employer pay the full \$1,890 credit tuition fee.

Scholarships

The AFL-CIO will provide a limited number of additional needs-based scholarships to further reduce the cost of tuition for students taking the course for credit. **THESE SCHOLARSHIPS ARE ONLY FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS TAKING THE COURSE FOR CREDIT AND WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER; EMPLOYER-PAID AND NON-CREDIT STUDENTS DO NOT QUALIFY nor do students who are not seriously committed to doing the 25-30 page research paper.** Except in special circumstances, the scholarships only cover half of the tuition and do not cover housing or transportation. To apply for a scholarship, you will need to upload an additional one-page essay outlining your reasons for requesting this scholarship. Also explain how you are going to make the time commitment to complete the research and the writing within the timeframe allotted.. Please note that the scholarships only apply to those students interested in taking the course for credit, and will only cover a portion of the credit tuition cost. Union employees and other students who are funded by their employers are not eligible.

Admission

Acceptance to the program will be limited based on space, experience, and qualifications. Because of the combination of limited space and high demand for the course, we urge students to send in their application forms as soon as possible. The closing date for applications will be May 1, 2015, and acceptance letters will be sent out on May 6, 2015. All students interested in attending the program must complete the online application including a two- to three-page single-spaced essay explaining why they are interested in attending the program and what they plan to do upon completion of their degree. Each applicant should also have at least one letter of reference sent by the reference directly to Kate Bronfenbrenner either by email to klb23@cornell.edu or by mail to Kate Bronfenbrenner, Director of Labor Education Research, 262 Ives Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca NY 14853. The letter(s) should speak to as many of the following attributes about the applicant as possible: research and writing aptitude and experience; depth of knowledge and experience relating to strategic corporate research, labor policy, globalization, organizing, bargaining, and comprehensive campaigns; and finally long term academic and career goals.

Application Form

Fill out the application form on line effective January 23:

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1967425/Cornell-AFL-CIO-Strategic-Corporate-Research-Summer-School-Application-2015>

Refund Policy: To withdraw from this special program, you must notify the Special Programs office. Your refund amount will be determined by the date on which you notify the director. Barring special circumstances all \$100 deposits are nonrefundable after the registration deadline is reached on May 1, 2015 and your application is under consideration.

For more information about the Strategic Corporate Research Summer School 2015 program, please contact ILR Office of Labor Education and Research at (607) 269-7246 or e-mail scsummer@cornell.edu.