

UNIV
SHELF

BERKELEY, CA 94720
(415) 642-0323

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

CENTER FOR LABOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION
INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS



LABOR CENTER REPORTER

Number 42

July 1981

FEB 12 1982

INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
BERKELEY

BAY AREA LABOR STUDIES COURSES

1. Fall 1981 Course Schedule:

A total of 35 semester courses in subjects of practical concern to trade unionists will be made available through Bay Area colleges this fall. These courses have been designed for shop stewards, business agents, union officers and staff members who want to improve their knowledge and skills in such areas as labor law, economics, grievance handling, arbitration, or fringe benefit programs. They have also been designed for union members who want to become more informed and active in their labor organizations or in their communities.

Starting in late August and early September, the courses will be taught in at least ten different campus locations and in several union halls in the Bay Area. Those who enroll can take course work for credit toward an AA (2 year) Community College degree, or toward a BA (4 year) University degree (through San Francisco State University). Trade unionists can also enroll in the community college courses for work on a Certificate in Labor Studies, which requires fewer credits than a 2 year AA degree.

There are now six different Bay Area colleges and universities participating in the development and teaching of Labor Studies courses. The community colleges include San Francisco and San Jose City College, Merritt College in Oakland, and the Contra Costa County Community College District. The only university in the Bay Area with a degree program in Labor Studies is San Francisco State University. The Center for Labor Research and Education at U.C. Berkeley participates in the development and teaching of Labor Studies courses at all five of these institutions, but does not offer its own courses or programs for credit in the U.C. system.

A poster is enclosed describing all Labor Studies courses available to Bay Area trade unionists this fall. Any union member can enroll in any course--but must comply with all of the requirements of the college or university offering the course. That is not hard to do at any of the community colleges, but there are more requirements to earn credit toward a B.A. degree at S.F. State University. There are also some expenses involved--normally \$20 or less for materials in the community college courses--but more at S.F. State University.

All 35 courses listed on the poster will be taught by active trade unionists, or by full time labor educators, or by practitioners who regularly work with labor in the Bay Area, or by AFT faculty members who identify with the interests of organized labor and working people. Most of them will be given at night or on Saturdays.

In addition to the semester courses listed on the poster, the six education institutions participating in Labor Studies in the Bay Area will schedule a number of special programs to meet the needs of labor organizations requesting such education or training. For these special programs, arrangements for instructors, materials, expenses, facilities and credit must be worked out in advance with the coordinators listed at the bottom of the enclosed poster.

2. Growth and Survival of Bay Area Labor Studies:

In the rest of Northern California outside the Bay Area, there are only a few similar Labor Studies courses or programs available to trade unionists. They will sometimes appear in community colleges when an interested Labor Council or union group has demanded the kind of educational programming that would serve the interests of union members (Sacramento is one example). Or they will sometimes be found in a four year college where there are faculty members (often only one) with an understanding of organized labor's history, its role in our society, its achievements, and its educational needs. Or there will sometimes be special programs for trade unionists that are given through a college because of the organizing abilities of young trade unionists enrolled in the college, who have established connections with labor organizations in the area. All of these efforts result only in occasional educational opportunities for trade unionists. The efforts come and go, and the opportunities do not survive and grow.

In the Bay Area in 1972, only one community college offered only three semester courses that were designed and taught to meet the needs of trade unionists. The growth of Labor Studies since that time occurred first at Merritt College, and is now proceeding most rapidly at the city colleges in San Francisco and San Jose, and at S.F. State University. The 35 course offerings this fall represent a high point in a decade of growth. But there is still no guarantee that this growth will continue. Instead, there are only conditions that must continue to be met.

The first and primary condition for continued growth in labor studies is for organized labor to continue to demand equal educational opportunity, especially in the community colleges. There are increasing funding problems at this level, which have already resulted in cut-backs in the Labor Studies program at Merritt College.

The second condition is that both labor officials and educators who understand labor must continue to give the time and attention that is essential to the development of relevant course content, teaching materials and techniques, and the recruitment of qualified instructors. Without this input, there is no quick and easy way to maintain high educational standards and at the same time meet the specific educational needs of trade unionists. Those who are in leadership positions in labor have exacting jobs which require a broad range of knowledge and skill. Education relevant to their need is no less exacting.

The third condition for continued growth of Labor Studies is to ensure the supply of competent teachers, including union officials, practitioners, and educators who have direct experience with unions and who also have working connections with organized labor. The primary reason for the growth of Labor Studies in the Bay Area in the past decade is because of the unusual abundance

of teaching resources here, and because those who have had much to contribute to labor education have been willing to take the time and make the effort that is always required. Their financial rewards for teaching have never matched their dedication, ability and effort.

The final condition that must be met to permit the continued growth of educational opportunities for trade unionists is actually a part of all the other conditions. The participants must continue to feel that they can obtain relevant information and improve their knowledge and their skills by attending Labor Studies classes, and that they can advance their own educational goals in the process.

3. How Your Labor Organization Can Help:

One effective way all unions can help to advance educational opportunity in the Bay Area is to get the information out about what is being taught in the Labor Studies programs, and when, and where. See that the enclosed poster gets the attention it deserves. Make your own announcement to your members about the educational opportunities available to trade unionists. Put an article in your paper or newsletter about these courses.

Then encourage your members and shop stewards, and also your officials and staff people to take advantage of the broad range of course work now available in the Bay Area. You may raise a lot of questions about the courses, so you can refer those who are interested directly to the Labor Studies coordinators who are listed at the bottom of the poster. They are good union people too, and they want to help other trade unionists to make the best use of available education.

Finally, please remember that the courses announced in the poster only represent what can be offered this fall in Labor Studies for trade unionists. The teaching resources and the materials and the classroom facilities have all been arranged for these courses. But at every participating institution, there are also minimum enrollment requirements which must be met before any course will actually be given. That part is up to you, and the response that comes from your ranks.

We hope there is enough interest to permit not only survival but further growth of Labor Studies in the Bay Area.

This article does not necessarily represent the opinion of the Center for Labor Research and Education, the Institute of Industrial Relations, or the University of California. The Reporter's Editorial Board is solely responsible for its contents. Labor Organizations and their press associates are encouraged to reproduce for further distribution any materials in these reports.