

1. Informations générales :

Titre du cours :	Trade unions and workers' rights		
NOM de l'enseignant-e :	Laurent Labrot	Semestre :	X Fall
Public visé :	☐ 1 ^{ère} année ☐ 2 ^{ème} année ☒ 1 ^{ère} année et 2 ^{ème} année	Langue :	English
Nombre maximal d'étudiant-es :	x Pas de maximum	Organisation du cours :	x 9 séances de 2h sur 9 semaines

2. Résumé du cours :

Today's world of work is shaped by organizational dynamics that generate tensions and crises, both at the collective level, through social conflicts and labor disputes, and at the individual level, through workplace grievances that may ultimately reach the courts, particularly the French Labour Courts (Conseils de Prud'hommes). Trade unions, whose mission is to represent employees, therefore play a fundamental role and support a large proportion of workers throughout their professional careers.

This course, taught by an instructor who worked for trade union organizations for more than ten years, aims to provide students with an understanding of how trade unions operate in practice, both in France and internationally. How were these organizations formed? How are they structured today, and what principles and practices underpin their day-to-day operations? What missions and services do trade unions provide to millions of people each year in France, and how and why should workers seek their assistance? What are the benefits of joining and becoming a member of a trade union?

The course also examines the tools available to trade union representatives for conducting negotiations and participating in social dialogue across all workplaces, including universities. How is a platform of demands developed? How are competing claims and priorities balanced? What is paritarianism (joint employer–employee governance), and how does it function in practice?

This specialized course answers all of these questions while also offering opportunities to meet and engage with trade union representatives, social dialogue practitioners, and labour court judges. The objective is to provide all participants with a clear understanding of the field, as well as practical and applicable knowledge of labor relations and trade union action.

3. Pré-requis éventuels :

None

4. Modalités de contrôle des connaissances et des compétences envisagées :

Dossier (paper) linked to the course topics.

5. Description détaillée du cours (facultatif)

Course Sessions

1. Introduction

Definition of trade unionism and historical overview of the origins and emergence of trade union organizations. Origins of the French model and major historical stages in terms of labor demands and social struggles. Development of paritarianism and the institutional role of trade unions in France.

2. Organization and Characteristics of a Trade Union Confederation

Structure of trade union organizations, including confederations, regional bodies, and local union sections. Distinction between interprofessional organizations and sectoral branches. Roles of each level and their evolution in recent years. Operating principles, membership dues, and elections of representatives at the section, departmental, regional, branch, and confederation levels. Role and organization of union congresses. International organization of trade unions. Main national and international demands and the evolution of collective bargaining processes.

3. Practical Functioning of a Trade Union Section

Differences between the public and private sectors. Establishment and registration of a union section, election procedures, rights and duties of union representatives, foundations of conflict resolution, bargaining platforms and the exercise of paritarianism, collective agreements and referral rights, employee representative bodies, and their day-to-day functions.

Meeting with trade union representatives from both company-based and public-sector union sections.

4. Individual Trade Union Rights and the Resolution of Individual Workplace Disputes

Principles of union membership and representation, dispute resolution and individual procedures, union support and assistance, mediation mechanisms and available resources, labour courts and other judicial bodies.

Meeting with a judge from the Labour Court (*Conseil de Prud'hommes*).

5. Effective Use of Negotiation

Organization of negotiations at company, sectoral, and confederation levels. Composition and work of trade union delegations. Methodologies for developing a union agenda. Drafting bargaining platforms, including principles of prioritization and concessions. Practical conduct of negotiations, management of bargaining rounds, commitments to signing agreements, ratification by union members, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, the role of experts and mediators, and the legal framework governing negotiations.

6. Meeting with Trade Union Actors: What Are Today's Main Areas of Mobilization?

Traditional priorities:

- Wages
- Working conditions
- Job retention and employment protection

Contemporary challenges:

- Foreign competition and trade liberalization
- Pensions, healthcare, and taxation
- Automation, artificial intelligence, and job precarity

Roundtable discussion with trade union representatives.

7. Company-Level Negotiation Simulation

Simulation of a company-level collective bargaining session, including role allocation, distribution of background materials, and a professional approach to the different stages of the negotiation process.

8. Public-Sector Joint Committee Simulation

Simulation of a public-service joint committee meeting, including role allocation, distribution of contextual materials, and a professional approach to committee proceedings and decision-making.

9. Student Unionism: Missions, Resources, and Perspectives

Roundtable discussion with student union representatives and university specialists on the role, resources, challenges, and future prospects of student trade unionism.