

# Bringing Human Dignity to Work and Workplace through the Study of Work



B. S in Work and Professional Studies  
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# Human Dignity Work

Studs Terkel: Introduction to *WORKING*, 1972

*This book, being about work, is, by its very nature, about violence – violence to the spirit as well as to the body”.*

From the Introduction to Studs Terkel, *WORKING: People Talk about What They Do All Day and How They Feel about It*. p. xi

Pope John Paul II  
Encyclical LABORUM EXERCENS  
(1981)

ON WORK: Because fresh questions and problems are always arising, there are always fresh hopes, but also fresh fears and threats, connected with this basic dimension of human existence: man's life is built up every day from work, from work it derives its specific dignity, but at the same time work contains the unceasing measure of human toil and suffering, and also of the harm and injustice which penetrate deeply into social life within individual nations and on the international level.

# Recent Comment from an Friend

A month ago, I had a court reporter, in her early 20's, who'd just graduated from - good - and expensive - private liberal arts school. We had lunch together. *She asked me what I thought about the minimum wage - saying, first, that her friends didn't support it because "those people" who do the minimum wage jobs don't deserve anything more!* I was shocked. I told her, first, that she needed to get new friends. Second, I told her that when the parental and grandparental welfare ran out for them, and they were in their '40's, and doing those jobs, then they might know why the minimum wage should be raised. I wonder what they taught those students at St. John's and I'm sure its no different anywhere else. What hateful stuff!!!

# Why do Universities not Provide opportunities to study “work”?

- Social Class Bias of academia
- Association of work with socialism and communism
- Lack of attention to work in media
- Separation of “business” and “work”
  - many media “Business’s channels, no ‘Work’ channels
- Disciplinary silos of academic structures prevent topical study identification

Implicit denial of human dignity of work and humiliation of ‘the worker’ as a social class

# BS Degree Program in Work and Professional Studies Old Dominion University

A Collaborative Effort to Remedy Problem  
Involving:

- Interdisciplinary Studies
- Experiential Learning
- College of Arts and Letters
- College of Business
- College of Health Sciences
- College of Education

# Central Mission of WPS

The following sentiments from one of Studs Terkel's interviewees summarizes the WPS's central mission:

*Just to train people, to educate them, to inspire them, to help them figure out how can do this with their lives, it's a whole process of transformation. And it's what makes it so exciting. Because you see people actually transforming themselves as individuals, which then lets them transform the whole character of their workplace.*

*(Roberta Lynch, Illinois AFSCME deputy director, quoted in Studs Terkel, HOPE DIES LAST, NY: The New Press, 2003, p. 122)*

# BS in Interdisciplinary Studies: Emphasis in Work and Professional Studies (WPS)

The goals of the WPS program:

- To place the worker and their work at the center of faculty teaching, exploration and understanding and at the center of student learning.
- To validate the human dignity of our working lives in ways beyond a calculation of the monetary value of labor's contribution to a 'bottom line'.
- To developing more humane, involved, rewarding and productive work, workers and workplaces through educational, outreach and action research activities

# Structure of WPS Curriculum

## Total 30 credit Hours

**COMMON CORE: (6 hours)**

**IDS 300 W – Interdisciplinary Studies: Theory and Concepts**  
Understanding and learning to navigate university silos of knowledge through study of work

**ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SENIOR INTEGRATIVE EXPERIENCES**  
under the direction of faculty member. :

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- Internship
- E- Portfolio
- Interdisciplinary Senior Project

# Structured Electives (24 hours)

## UNDERSTANDINGS (9 hrs min)

### Examples)

- Philosophy of Work
- Perspectives on Work in Literature
- Sociology of Work, Family and Children
- US History 1945-1991
- Technology and Society
- Labor Management Relations
- Marxism
- Computer Ethics

## APPLICATIONS (9 hrs min)

### Examples

- Communication and Conflict Management
- Public Relations
- Management Writing
- Writing in the Electronic Field
- Principles of Occupational Safety and Health
- Occupational Safety Standards, Laws and Regulations
- Employee Benefit Planning
- Career Development and Appraisal