

Between Insecurity and Collective Action: The Politics of Precarious and Atypical Employment¹

Version: 03.12.2024

Winter semester 2024/25

Time: Wednesdays, 12-2 p.m. (c.t.)

Room: 25.13.U1.24

Lecture period: 09.10.2024 – 29.01.2025; no sessions on 25.12.2024 and 01.01.2025

Target group: Students of BA Sowi who have completed the basic modules as well as the methods and statistics module & PPE students with basic knowledge of political economy

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Content: The 21st century world of work in almost all Western countries is characterised by many new developments and challenges – one of which is precarious and atypical employment. The seminar will comprehensively analyse the foundations of precarious work and shed light on its various manifestations and causal factors. Among other things, we will look at the links between precarious employment, gender dynamics and migration patterns in order to develop a deeper understanding of how these factors interact and contribute to social inequality. Another key aspect will be the policy response to these developments. How do precarious workers behave and what political preferences do they have, for example regarding the welfare state? How do political parties react to the increase in precarious employment? What role do the trade unions play?

The aim of the seminar is to understand why precarious employment has become such a widespread phenomenon in Western countries, what different dimensions it has and what political reactions it has provoked.

¹ Credits: I would like to thank professor Achim Goerres (University of Duisburg-Essen) for sharing his syllabus for the seminar "Political Decision-making, Political Leadership and Governance: Political Psychology from a Comparative Perspective" (WS 2022/23), and for allowing me to use some of his ideas.

Proof of participation (BN)

In order to obtain the participation certificate for this seminar, all students are expected to...

1. ...attend each seminar session prepared (see note below).
2. ...prepare the texts to be read and actively participate in the discussion in the seminar.

Good text preparation means that you take notes on the text, make a note of possible questions and ambiguities and summarise the central points and arguments. Active participation means that you speak at least once in each session.

3. ...submit two thinkpieces (approx. 1,000 words each) on the texts of the respective session during the semester.

Final module examination (AP)

According to the requirements of your examination regulations either

1. a term paper of approx. 3,000-4,500 words (hard deadline: **31 March 2025, 23:59** (registration deadline corresponding to 31 January 2025; you are responsible for meeting these deadlines), submission by e-mail only, or
2. an oral exam based on the entire seminar content (~20 minutes)

Note on participation in the seminar

Successful completion of this seminar requires that you actively participate in each seminar session. The seminar is largely based on discussion of the texts to be read – it is a highly discursive and active seminar in which we can learn a lot from each other. For this reason, it is essential that you participate and contribute on site. **If you are unable to attend a session for any reason, you will usually be required to submit a replacement within 10 days, covering the content (and time commitment) of the missed session.** However, you have two “free shots”, i.e. you do not have to submit a replacement for two missed sessions. Whether and when you take these free shots is up to you. The exact work assignment and the respective deadline will be posted on ILIAS after the session. It is your responsibility to submit the substitute work on time and in full – I will not send you a reminder!

Workload

- Participation in all 15 face-to-face sessions = 22.5 hours = 0.75 CP
- Meeting preparation (~1.5 hours/week) = 18 hours = 0.6 CP
- Writing two thinkpieces (1,000 words each) = 19.5 hours = 0.65 CP

2 CP

Learning objectives

At the end of this seminar, students will be able to...

1. ...read English-language scientific texts, recognise their main message and critically evaluate the argumentation/results.
2. ...summarise, trace and compare the historical development and current challenges of precarious employment in different countries.
3. ...name different forms and dimensions of precarious or atypical employment, critically assess their measurement and establish links between different dimensions.
4. ...present and evaluate the arguments of a scientific text in their own text.
5. ...write an empirical term paper in the field of political economy.

Thinkpieces

- The aim of the thinkpieces is to develop your ability to **critically reflect on arguments** and to **write academic texts**.
- The two thinkpieces are to be written **for the compulsory readings** (see seminar schedule below) of two sessions. It is up to you which sessions, i.e. texts, you write the two thinkpieces for. However, the thinkpieces must not be on texts from the same seminar block (see vertical column in the session plan below).
- The **submission deadline for the thinkpieces ends 7 days after the session** for which the text was to be read. The submission takes place via upload on ILIAS.
Example: You would like to write a think piece on Vallas & Schor (2020). This text will be discussed in the session on 13 November; your thinkpiece would therefore be due on 20 November.
- In the thinkpiece, you should **present and critically evaluate the argumentation or main thesis**. The summary of the argument should not be longer than 500 words. In the evaluation, you can and should also express your own reasoned opinion. Do you agree with the argument/thesis? Why (not)? What convinces you (not)?
- For each thinkpiece, you must cite at least **5 additional academic sources** (usually journal articles or edited volumes) that support/deal with your evaluation or the argument of the text. To find these sources, I recommend that you use the Web of Science (only available in the university network or via VPN). Please also refer to my screenshot guide in the ILIAS course.
- **Structure of the thinkpiece:**
 - Introduction → Why is your think piece interesting? Why did you choose this topic/text? What is your central argument that you present below?
 - Main body → Summarise the argument/thesis of the text and your evaluation of this argument
 - Conclusion → What is the take-home message of your think piece? Summarise your core argument here.
 - Bibliography

➤ **Notes on academic writing** (not only related to the thinkpieces):

- (Scientific) writing is a craft that can be learnt and practised.
- The more scientific texts you read, the better your writing will be.
- Use subheadings and individual paragraphs. Each paragraph should only contain one argument and should be summarised in one sentence if possible.
- Start by collecting keywords, ideas and arguments and then sorting them.
- Write a first draft. Take a break before revising the text and do something completely different. Read the text (out loud). Revise the text into a second version.
- Ideally, have a second person read and comment on your text. Revise your text to a final version with the help of the feedback.

Meeting schedule

	09.10. Introduction
Definition & Development	16.10. Basics: Atypical and precarious employment ➤ Shin, Kwang-Yeong; Kalleberg, Arne L.; Hewison, Kevin (2023): Precarious work: A global perspective. <i>Sociology Compass</i> 17(12): 1-14.
	23.10. Development of atypical employment in Western countries ➤ Oesch, Daniel (2015): Occupational structure and labour market change in Western Europe since 1990. In: Beramendi, Pablo et al. (eds.): The Politics of Advanced Capitalism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 112-132.
Forms & Measurement	30.10. Forms and measurement of atypical employment ➤ Padrosa, Eva et al. (2021): Comparing Precarious Employment Across Countries: Measurement Invariance of the Employment Precariousness Scale for Europe (EPRES-E). <i>Social Indicators Research</i> 154: 893-915.
	06.11. US Presidential Election Special: Precarious work in the US
	13.11. Precarious employment in the 21st century: The gig economy ➤ Vallas, Steven; Schor, Juliet B. (2020): What Do Platforms Do: Understanding the Gig Economy. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 46: 273-294.

Dimensions of precarious employment	<p>20.11. Precarious employment and gender</p> <p>➤ Mhlana, Siviwe (2023): Precarious Work and the Gendered Individualisation of Risk in the South African Manufacturing Sector. <i>Global Labour Journal</i> 14(2): 165-184.</p> <p>27.11. – Session cancellation –</p> <p>04.12. Precarious employment and age</p> <p>➤ Kalleberg, Arne L. (2020): Labour Market Uncertainties and Youth Labor Force Experiences: Lessons Learned. <i>The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i> 688(1): 258-270.</p> <p>11.12. Term Paper Input</p> <p>➤ Please bring all your questions regarding term papers.</p> <p>18.12. Precarious employment and social class & Precarious employment and migration</p> <p>➤ Wright, Erik O. (2016): Is the Precariat a Class? <i>Global Labour Journal</i> 7(2): 123-135.</p> <p>➤ Ryabov, Igor (2024): Employment, Precarious Employment, and Unemployment Among Female Immigrant Youth in the United States. <i>Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies</i>. Epub ahead of print: 1-15.</p>
Collective Action	<p>08.01. Collective action: Trade unions</p> <p>➤ Lewchuk, Wayne (2021): Collective bargaining in Canada in the age of precarious employment. <i>Labour & Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work</i> 31(3): 189-203.</p> <p>15.01. Collective action: Parties</p> <p>➤ Plenter, Johanna I. (2024): The Gig Economy in Party Manifestos: Analysing Salience Across Europe. <i>Working Paper</i>.</p>
The politics of precarious employment	<p>22.01. Is precarious employment a problem for democracy?</p> <p>➤ Azzollini, Leo; Macmillan, Ross (2023): Are "bad" jobs bad for democracy? Precarious work and electoral participation in Europe. <i>Frontiers in Political Science</i> 5: 1-17.</p> <p>29.01. Policy preferences of precarious workers & Closing session Q&A</p> <p>➤ Marx, Paul (2014): Labour market risks and political preferences: The case of temporary employment. <i>European Journal of Political Research</i> 53(1): 136-159.</p>

Are you missing something?

→ If possible, I am happy to adjust my seminar schedule according to your wishes and preferences!