

Reading Tips and Study Questions

CLASS 20

Required reading

1. **Paul Osterman**, *Good Jobs America: Making Work Better for Everyone* (New York: Russell Sage, 2011). Pp.1-8, 15-17, chapter 4, pp.81-88, 101-104, and chapters 7 and 8.

Session overview

As we've seen, much economic policy and planning in America, including the field of local economic development, has focused on the number of jobs created by particular policies or projects—without much attention to the quality of jobs. In this session, with help from our colleague and guest, **Professor Paul Osterman**, we'll take a much closer look at the pervasive problem of low job quality and what can be done about it.

Discussion questions

1. Why, according to Osterman, do higher job standards not—or not necessarily—produce the commonly assumed outcomes, such as non-competitive firms or less hiring overall?
2. Considering chapter 4, how should we think about the role of employers when it comes to job quality? Are they villains, or are they trapped by circumstances? How do we distinguish among different categories of employers? And how do we work effectively with them?
3. Why are efforts to upgrade job quality in particular sectors or firms vulnerable? Identify specific factors in the text and any other challenges you would like to raise in class. How promising do community benefit agreements (CBAs) seem to be, so far, as tools for generating good job opportunities?
4. Stimulus act “green jobs” as a cautionary tale: Why did federal Recovery Act investments not lead to higher-wage building trades jobs in certain programs, according to Osterman, i.e., for work not traditionally covered by federal Davis-Bacon provisions?

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

11.401 Introduction to Housing, Community, and Economic Development
Fall 2015

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.