



# LA3A6 Labour Law In Context

Dr Serena Natile [Serena.Natile@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Serena.Natile@warwick.ac.uk)



# WHY LABOUR LAW IN CONTEXT?

- Work is the principal source of **income/subsistence** for most people
- Work has economic, social, political, besides legal, **significance**
- Work is embedded in **structural inequalities and asymmetrical power relations**
- Social categories such as gender, race, class, age, disability, and migration status are **structurally linked** to different forms of work, working conditions, and economic security
- The distribution of **work** (paid, unpaid, low-skilled, high-skilled, unfree, etc.) and of the **profits** deriving from it reveals inequality and the (mal)distribution of wealth in society, both nationally and globally
- If regulated fairly work can be a **powerful tool** for justice
- **Employment Rights Act 2025**



# LEGAL CONTEXTS

## NATIONAL LAW (UK)

- Contract
- Statutes – primary and secondary legislation
- Common law

## EU LAW

- Treaty provisions
- Directives
- Regulations

## INTERNATIONAL LAW

- Treaties/Conventions
- Soft law
- Areas: IHR, IEL, international labour law (ILO), migration, transnational modern slavery

## PRIVATE

- Contract
- Company
- Tort
- Obligations

## PUBLIC:

- Constitutional law
- Human Rights
- Anti-discrimination
- Social security
- Immigration

## TRADE UNIONS

## NON-STATE ACTORS: TNCs, NGOs, Civil Society Organisations

- Codes of conduct
- Transnational agreements

## CRIMINAL

- Criminal sanctions

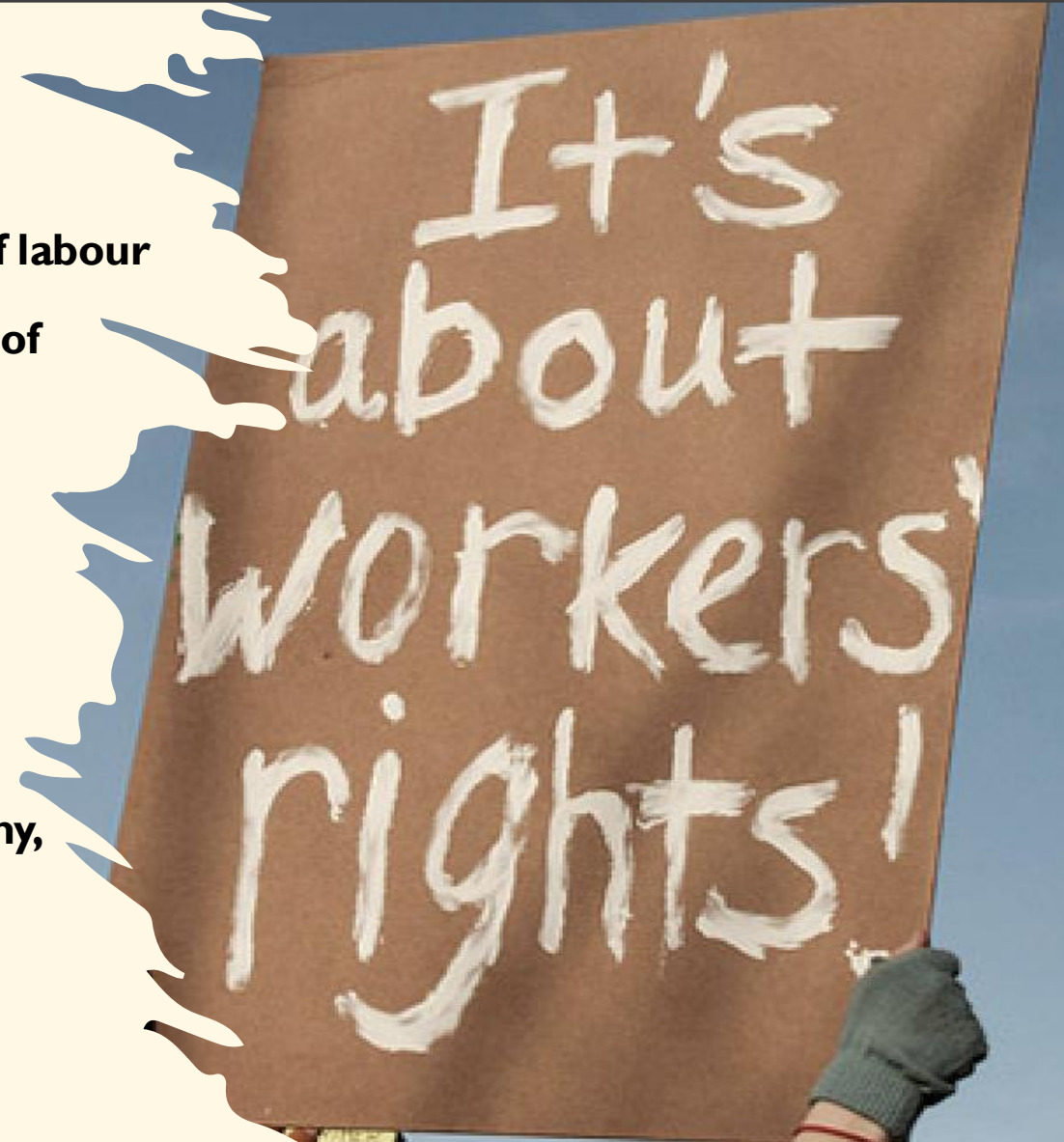
A hand-drawn world map with continents colored in watercolor: North America in grey, South America in purple, Africa in yellow, Europe in blue, and Asia in green. Numerous curved arrows in various colors (black, blue, purple, red, yellow) connect different parts of the world, symbolizing global interactions. A dark blue rectangular box with a white border is positioned on the right side of the map, containing the title text. Below the box, a list of bullet points is displayed.

## BEYOND LEGAL CONTEXTS: NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL, TRANSNATIONAL

- Colonialism
- Migration
- Globalisation
- Digitalisation
- Social context: gender, race, class, disability, age, migration status...
- Economic context: neoliberal policies, *laissez-faire* ideology market-centred, privatisation, commercialisation and flexibilization of work, reduced government spending
- Political context: employment at the centre of political programmes
- **What is the purpose of labour law?** Protecting job security, or income security or employability, or rights, dignity and justice for all workers?

# OUTLINE OF TOPICS

1. The law and governance of labour relations: sources, institutions, approaches
2. The legal boundaries and socio-economic relations of labour
3. The contract of employment and the legal definition of 'worker'
4. Minimum wage, working time, dismissals
5. Non-discrimination, equality, and labour justice
6. Trade unions and collective actions
7. ILO, labour standards, and decent work
8. Case studies: informal, migrant, domestic, gig economy, supply chains and illegal settlements workers
9. Bringing the strands together: [Session at the Modern Records Centre archives](#)



# ASSESSMENT

- **Summative assessments:**

- 1,000-word group policy brief (20% final mark), deadline week 10, term 1 (view the policy briefs exhibition for May Day [here](#))
- 2,500-word research essay (80% final mark), deadline week 1, term 2

- **Formative support:**

- **Policy brief:**

- In week 2 lecture 1 will introduce policy writing with instructions to guide you through the process
- The topics for the policy brief will be discussed and agreed in small groups within seminars and each group will have 2 feedback sessions to support the completion of the policy brief

- **Research essay:**

- In week 6 I will publish the essay questions and organise a workshop to provide guidance and tips to write a good research essay
- You will have the opportunity to submit an outline by the end of week 9, term 1 and receive individual feedback

# A NOTE ON PEDAGOGY

- **Readings:** a mix of textbook, articles and primary and other secondary sources to provide legal knowledge and tools for critical analysis
- **Collaborative work:** policy brief and seminar discussions
- **Develop critical, contextual, imaginative thinking:**
  - **Policy brief:** identify practical issues in labour law, understand the actual impact of the regulation of work and how policy analysis can be instrumental to legal change
  - **Research essay:** adopting a contextual approach to the analysis of legal issues to evaluate not only labour law's effectiveness in regulating work, but also the asymmetries of power embedded in this regulation both nationally and globally.