

## 575:201:09 Labor and Work in the US before 1877

Professor: Dr. John Lavin

Class meetings: Tuesdays, 6:40 – 9:30 pm

Office hours: By Appointment, Zoom

Contact: [JL2600@Rutgers.edu](mailto:JL2600@Rutgers.edu)

Cell: 610-724-1404 (talk or text)



*(above, Photo of Jason Taylor's underwater sculpture, "Vicissitudes," which has become a memorial of African people massacred in the Transatlantic Slave Trade)*

### **Course Description:**

This class will explore the history of work in the Americas from the initial contact between Africans, Native Americans, and Europeans to the period after the U.S. Civil War.

Our themes focus upon systems of economic and social injustice:

- The Slaving Industry transporting Africans and employing military and legal systems to extract generations of unpaid labor from them;
- Genocidal eviction of Native Americans off their land;
- The enshrining of gender roles in which women were expected to labor without compensation and without rights;
- Immigration systems that used concepts of debt and feudal loyalty to motivate workers.

The purpose of our learning, within this nightmarish list of scenes, is to discern how people across time worked together, against difficult odds, to create a more just society. Throughout our course, students will

be encouraged to relate past matters of social injustice to the social crises of the present. We will study the role played by dissenters who challenged corporations, governments, and political institutions such as churches and hate groups. Thus, students will develop opinions, as problem solvers in 2021, based upon our understanding of past practices. For example, we will inquire into the values at task in technological innovation with the rise and impact of industrialization that exploited new technologies in the 1800s to advance the profits of the elite wealthy rulers. And, on a parallel timeline, we will examine the early labor rights movements, including: How emerging unions advocated workers' rights for decent wages and job safety; How abolitionists fought to end slavery; and How suffragists promoted democracy and women's rights to vote in political elections and to participate in the public square.

The study of workers' conflicts promotes critical thinking, including:

- essay-writing that examines how disputing viewpoints might find common ground;
- research that seeks potential agreement even in cases of interests that are diametrically opposed;
- dialogue that empathetically respects differences in the cause of deliberation;
- appreciative inquiry that suspends prejudice and values others' perspectives through active listening.

To that end, while we will read deeply in the sweeping history of the period covered by our analysis, we will focus each week upon a select series of cases taken from an array of contexts that (among others) include:

The Zong Massacre: How Courts Failed to Address Genocide;

Potosi: Bolivian Silver Mining & Human Rights Violations 1546 A.D. to the present;

Bacon's Rebellion and Suppression of Democracy;

Harriet Jacobs' *Journal of Injustice*;

*Ancestral Recall*: aTunde Adjuah's Jazz Composition of African Diaspora;

Lemuel Shaw (1781 – 1861), the First Judicial Activist?

Our readings elicit a range of students' thinking skills such as theorizing policies appropriate to social change; imagining unique conceptions found in poets and musicians' expressions of history's tragic and the comic scenes; as well as computing and communicating trends in the history of disease and disability. See the list of meetings and readings for the full account of our course activities and challenges.

Throughout our work, we will encourage, as crucial to our course, the examination of systemic racism's inequities in the present that have historically marginalized indigenous populations, as well as African Americans and Asian Americans. Equally important will be gender policies and practices silencing women and LGBTQ workers and their communities from having a voice at work and in society at large.

### **Course Structure**

This course will blend synchronous and asynchronous modes of instruction. Lectures will be recorded and posted to Canvas, where students will also conduct group discussions. However, a significant portion of the class meetings will be conducted synchronously, meaning we all meet together at 6:40

pm on Tuesdays to have discussions and get on the same page about important topics and themes in the course. We will have meetings most Tuesdays, so you are expected to be available for the full three hours every time this class is scheduled to meet. Note: We will most likely not meet the full three hours, but it is important that you be available during those times.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

Rutgers University, the School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR), and the Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department have established the following learning objectives for this course:

#### **From the Rutgers University Core Curriculum: HST, SCL, WCr and WCd**

- Explain the development of some aspect of society or culture over time. (HST, Goal k).
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems and other forms of social organization. (SCL, Goal m).
- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience, and respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, and/or supervisors through successive drafts and revision. (WCr, Goal s).
- Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; Evaluate and critically assess sources and the use of conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights. (WCd, Goal t).

#### **From the Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department:**

- Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations. (Goal 1).
- Make an argument using contemporary or historical evidence. (Goal 4).

#### **From the School of Management and Labor Relations:**

- Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry level professional. (Goal I).
- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation. (Goal IV)

#### **Instructor's Learning Objectives:**

In addition to the learning objectives listed above, the following learning objectives are based on the specific topics and issues covered in the course:

- Understand the critical role of the labor movement in our society.
- Recognize why and how workers have formed different types of labor organizations.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how workers and their organizations (including unions) have been shaped by the larger society of which they are a part but have also contributed to changing the larger society.

Since this is an on-line course which includes peer review/editing and forum discussions involving a group of students, several learning objectives concern the process of interaction between students.

- Demonstrate an ability to communicate clearly, authentically, and maintain a content-oriented focus in response to other students' work.

- Maintain a positive and respectful attitude when interacting with other students, especially those who have different views and opinions.

### **Cheating/plagiarism**

There are serious consequences, including expulsion, for both cheating and taking someone else's work without attribution. The university has clear, strict policies on these matters. I will report all violations. If you have not done so already, please familiarize yourself with the university's academic integrity policy by visiting [academicintegrity.rutgers.edu](https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu). The relevant parts are brief and straightforward. If you have any questions, please see me.

**STATEMENT ON DISABILITIES:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

### **EVALUATION**

#### **Written assignments**

You will write two papers this semester, on topics to be announced. Each accounts for 20% of your final grade. You will write several drafts of each. All are mandatory, as is participation in peer review. If you miss a peer review session, it is your responsibility to make it up, or you will receive no credit for it. There will be two essay-based exams (a Mid-Term and a Final); each of these exams will be worth 20% of your grade. Please see the descriptions of your Essay Assignments and Examinations at the end of this syllabus. Additionally, participation in our class counts for 20% of your grade, which will include your involvement in class discussions and activities such as threaded discussions and presentations.

#### **Lateness Policy**

All late assignments will be marked down. One grade will be deducted for every 24-hour period (or portion thereof) your paper is late. That is, a B paper will turn into a C paper if it is up to 24 hours late, and into a D paper if it is up to 48 hours late. While the drafts are not assigned letter grades, failing to turn them or turning them in late will have the same effect on the final draft you hand in for a grade.

**You must complete all written assignments in order to receive credit for this course.** We will turn back all assignments in a timely manner. If we do not turn back your assignment, it is your job to bring this to our attention. If you believe we have not recorded a grade for an assignment you have turned in, you must clear this up during the semester. After the semester is over, we will not be able to consider claims that you turned in an assignment if we have no record of it.

## Discussion Forums

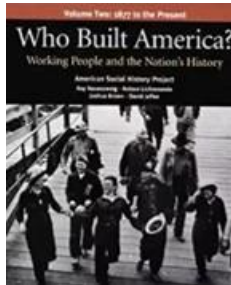
For most classes, you will have discussion posts due on Canvas. I will post primary sources and several questions for you to answer about each. You are also required to respond to at least one of your discussion group members, for each discussion topic, which helps to make what you are doing actual discussions, one day later. Please indicate which questions you are answering and separate each into its own paragraph. Your initial answers and responses should both be substantive contributions, every time. A single-sentence answer and “I agree!” as a response will not earn credit. Please put some time into these, as they are not box-checking exercises to take up your time. I don’t expect multiple-paragraph answers (though if you are really feeling it, go for it!), but these discussions are a prime method of learning, and the more work you put into them, the better off we all are.

All discussions are mandatory, and any that you do not complete will result in a lower grade.

### COURSE READINGS:

1. ***Who Built America?: Working People and the Nation’s History***, 3rd ed., Bedford / St. Martin’s Press, 2008. (Referred to as WBA? in the following pages of the syllabus.) This is the textbook for the course. All assigned readings from the textbook are available on **Canvas**.

2. ***Other Required Readings***: In addition to the textbook, the other required readings are also available online with the course. Most of the online readings are primary sources and will be noted in the syllabus – i.e. they are from the time period discussed in the text. Other readings are secondary sources; they are interpretations and evaluations of the events or developments.



### Evaluation Breakdown

Attendance and participation: 20%

Paper 1: 20%

Paper 2: 20%

Midterm: 20%

Final: 20%

### Course Participation Guidelines

#### Class attendance

You are expected to attend each class session, and to be on time.

Be punctual and plan to stay for the entire class. Students who repeatedly arrive late and leave at break will have their grades lowered. If you need to leave early, see me before class; otherwise you are expected to remain until the class is over.

## Participation

This class will utilize a variety of formats, with weekly discussion sessions one of the more important of these. You are expected to have completed the readings assigned before coming to class each week and be ready to take an active role in these discussions. Class participation includes active, respectful listening as well as talking.

## Statement on Academic Freedom

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. This class will introduce an array of sometimes conflicting ideas and interpretations of U.S. history, and all who partake in the course should feel encouraged to express their views in an open, civic forum. Please note that the syllabus may change during the semester as I deem necessary.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Weekly Schedule Date and Topic	Content
<b>Week One: 1/19</b> <b>Indigenous Peoples' Rights, Labor Rights and Human Rights</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Review of Syllabus</i></p> <p><b>Course Introduction:</b> Focusing Issues of Human and Labor Rights within Developing Laws and Policies from perspective of workers, their families and communities.</p> <p><b>See Films:</b> Undermined: Bolivia's Child Workers; Children Miners of Potosi, Slavery to Mass Incarceration (Canvas Module: Week One).</p>
<b>Week Two: 1/26</b> <b>Zong Massacre: Case Study</b>	<p><b>Read/Watch before you come to class (<i>Canvas Modules</i>):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Zong Massacre (Case Study);</li><li>• Zong Massacre: Video;</li><li>• Taino, Native &amp; African American Rebellion;</li><li>• Reparation</li></ul>
<b>Week Three: 2/2</b> <b>History of Race Relations &amp; Labor Exploitation in the Americas</b>	<p><b>Read/Watch before you come to class (<i>Canvas Modules</i>):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Video Interview Lorene Cary &amp; Erica Armstrong Dunbar; Slave Trade, Felicity's Narrative;</li><li>• Bacon's Rebellion: "Tim Wise &amp; The Pathology of White Privilege";</li><li>• History of African Music in the Americas; Essay #1 Standards (Canvas Module: Week Three).</li></ul>
<b>Week Four: 2/9</b> <b>Caribbean Perspectives</b>	<p><b>Read/Watch before you come to class (<i>Canvas Modules</i>):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Please Don't Get Married on a Plantation;</li><li>• East Indian Immigration to Guyana;</li><li>• Baldwin, Joyce and the Nightmare of History;</li><li>• Hamilton: Lin Manuel Miranda;</li><li>• Hamilton: Opposed by Ishmael Reed.</li></ul>

<p><b>Week Five: 2/16 Human Rights &amp; Revolutionary Spirit</b></p>	<p><b>Read/Watch before you come to class (<i>Canvas Modules</i>):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Rights Narratives, Harriet Jacobs &amp; African American Narratives;</li> <li>• Haiti, Revolutionary Heritage &amp; African Presence.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Rough Draft Essay #1 Due</b></p>
<p><b>Week Six: 2/23 Stono River Rebellion: Case Study</b></p>	<p><b>Read/Watch before you come to class (<i>Canvas Modules</i>):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revolt at Stono River, (Canvas Module: Week Six).</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Final Draft of Essay #1: Due</u></b></p>	
<p><b>Week Seven: 3/2 Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas</b></p>	<p><b>Read/Watch before you come to class (<i>Canvas Modules</i>):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mirabal Sisters;</li> <li>• Harriet Jacobs.PDF;</li> <li>• Slave Petitions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Students Receive Mid-Term Examination</b></p>
<p><b>Week Eight: 3/9 Massachusetts State Supreme Court &amp; Activist Judge/ Lemuel Shaw</b></p>	<p><b>Read/Watch before you come to class (<i>Canvas Modules</i>):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lemuel Shaw &amp; Workers’ Rights in the Case of Hunt V. Massachusetts;</li> <li>• Thomas Paine: African Slavery in America.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Week Nine: 3/23 Biography and Labor History</b></p>	<p><b>Read/Watch before you come to class (<i>Canvas Modules</i>):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John George Brown’s “The Longshoremen’s Noon”; Walt Whitman’s “The Wound Dresser.”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Students Submit Mid-Term Examination</b></p>
<p><b>Week Ten: 3/30 Paterson Strike of 1835 &amp; Women Workers’ Rights.</b></p>	<p><b>Read/Watch before you come to class (<i>Canvas Modules</i>):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paterson Strike of 1835,</li> <li>• Mother Jones,</li> <li>• Workers’ Rights in a Pandemic.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Week Eleven: 4/6 Ida B. Wells and History as an Act of Negotiation</b></p>	<p><b>Read/Watch before you come to class (<i>Canvas Modules</i>):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frederick Douglass and Working-Class Racism;</li> <li>• Ida B. Wells;</li> <li>• History as an Act of Negotiation</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Rough Draft Essay #2 Due</u></b></p>	

<p><b>Week Twelve: 4/13 John Brown's Final Speech</b></p>	<p><b>Read before you come to class: Text &amp; Videos on John Brown's Trial and Final Speech , (Canvas Module: Week Thirteen).</b></p>	
<p><b>Week Thirteen: 4/20 Henry David Thoreau &amp; Henry David Hwang</b></p>	<p><b>Read before you come to class: Henry David Thoreau, Dissenter; Chinese Railway Workers' Strike , (Canvas Module: Week Eleven).</b></p>	<p><b>Final Draft of Essay #2: Due</b></p>
<p><b>Week Fourteen: 4/27 Martin Delany's Advice to Former Slaves</b></p>	<p><b>Read before you come to class: Advice to Former Slaves; Luria Freeman on Susan B. Anthony.</b></p> <p><b>Review of Course and Final Examination.</b></p> <p><b>Students Receive Final Examination.</b></p> <p><b>Final Examination Due on May 10<sup>th</sup>.</b></p>	



**Essay Assignment #1**  
**Rough Draft/Due 2/16/21**  
**Final Draft/Due 2/23/21**

The beginning of European settlement of the Americas from 1492 was marked by an extensive demand for labor. That need was met, over the first two-hundred years of colonialism by:

- Imprisoning, transporting and subjugating African peoples to a system of slavery that imposed torture and confinement on them while guaranteeing white landowners free labor;
- Evicting Native Americans from their ancestral lands and extracting resources from them including unpaid labor;
- Indenturing poverty-stricken European immigrants to their employers in a form of servitude that indebted poor whites to the wealthy and expected their loyalty to Europe's aristocracy.

In the late 1600s, the class structures of the Americas became more restrictive and formalized according to a racist hierarchy that violated human rights in pursuit of profits for white landowners.

How and why did this transformation occur? Bryan Stevenson's film, ***Slavery to Mass Incarceration***, contends that reparations should be paid to individuals, families, and communities who were traumatized and exploited by the labor codes and practices established in the period after 1492. Write a five-page paper that addresses the question of whether reparations will, finally, serve justice. Be specific about the particular losses that must be compensated and the form those reparations should take. Include references to specific events in the past and deadlines for reconciliation in the present and future. In your response, be sure to base your claims on materials read in the assigned readings (you do not need to read additional sources for this assignment).

All papers should follow standard grammar, punctuation and citation methods in conformance with APA Guidelines.

**Essay Question #2.**  
**Rough Draft Due 4/6/21**  
**Final Draft Due 4/20/21**

**"My Life Is My Message."     –Mahatma Gandhi**

Biography is the account of a person's life. As a narrative, it assumes the responsibility of explaining the period when a person lived as well as the places, the cultures, the organizations and the ideas that shaped an individual's life. Furthermore, it examines how a person influenced family and community and, by contrast, how personal relationships influenced her or him or them. That person's accomplishments as an actor or as a witness are important features of a biography.

The assignment for Essay #2 is that you write a short biography of a person who lived and worked in the United States between 1618 and 1865, explaining how and why the message of the person's life that you have selected provides testimony witnessing the injustices confronting workers of his or her or their historical period.

You may not select a famous leader but must describe a person who was a worker in a particular occupation, industry or social movement that gave meaning to work and workers' destiny in history. Answering this question means looking beyond what a person has said or not said about their life. The challenge is to examine the message that you discern in actions, decisions, what the person experienced and/or what the person suffered and/or tried to change.

However, in the framework of this question, the person selected has to come out being big. More important – and more within reach – is that the student find some charming meaning in the figure. The student may be asked, more flexibly, to consider that person's struggle. For example: what forces did the selected person have to contend with, and how did this person then figure out what to do, for good or ill?

**Step One: Due March 2nd**

Identify Subject for Biography: October 30th

Write a paragraph explaining your Choice. Explain the person that you have chosen for the biographical essay. "What dilemma does your chosen figure present to your mind?" This step asks the student to: (1) Identify someone; (2) identify a person in a difficult position in history, and (3) say what the student thinks the predicament is. Then, how does the student think the selected person could be good for us to study, so we may think about workers in such a position?

**Step Two: Due March 9th**

List of Biographical sources:

Select and list three-to-five sources that you think speak to your figure's predicament. Each source selected should clarify, or offer a new way of thinking about, your figure's struggle. Don't just use a source to confirm what you already think. For each source you choose, write a statement of exactly 35 words saying how this source stands to help you understand the chosen figure's struggle.

**Step Three: Due March 23rd**

Develop an Outline of a life: This will be a chart or timeline showing the events, labor issues, movements and/or personalities that influenced the subject of your biography.

**Essay Question #2 (Cont'd.)**

**Step Four: Due March 30th**

Submit the Rough Draft of your Biographical Essay.

**Step Five: Due April 6th**

**Submit the Final Draft of Biographical Essay.**

**Biographical Essay Requirements\*:** The Five-Page Biographical Essay on the Life of a person who lived in the period from 1618 to 1865 must include the following:

- **Statement of the Message of the subject's Life & Reason Why You Chose the person.**
  - **Movements or Persons that Influenced your Subject.**
    - **Labor Issue(s) that affected your subject.**
    - **Events that the subject witnessed.**
  - **Decisions or actions or ideas that best express the subject's Message.**
    - **Conclusion stating why your subject is relevant today.**
- **At least three different sources grounding your subject in the history of their time.**
  - **Works Cited.**

**\*Differentiate Sources:**

**Primary sources are journals, letters or speeches, or actual artifacts such as period clothing, tools or medical records.**

**Secondary sources are full-length biographies, critical commentaries, films and other works of art such as films or sculptures. Secondary sources usually appear after the appearance of primary sources.**

## Mid-Term and Final Examinations

The examinations will each ask students to write short essays responding to questions of opinion that have emerged in our readings and discussions of the history of issues such as the human rights of workers, their families and communities. Attention will be paid to a series of themes related to concepts of accuracy, truth and justice in the course of our deliberations each week. Students will play a defining role in selecting questions that they wish to be asked on our mid-term and final exams.

Students will receive the Exam Questions for the Mid-Term Exam on 3/2/21  
And will Submit Examination Essay Answers on 3/23/21.

Students will receive the Exam Questions for the Final Exam on 4/27/21  
And will Submit Examination Essay Answers on 5/10/21.

Rubric Mid-Term and Final Exam: Short Essays			
Criteria	Ratings		Pts
<p><b>Supporting Evidence/Proof</b> Student must provide historical evidence supporting the opinion stated in the essay. Evidence needs to align with or prove the opinion in a manner that reflects an understanding of the workers</p>	<b>5.0 pts Full Marks</b>	<b>0.0 pts No Marks</b>	5.0 pts
<p><b>Statement of Opinion</b> Student must express an opinion regarding the essay question. This opinion should be contained in a carefully worded sentence (or possibly two sentences).</p>	<b>5.0 pts Full Marks</b>	<b>0.0 pts No Marks</b>	5.0 pts
<p><b>Writing</b> Writing on the short-essay exam answers should reflect careful reasoning, and good word choices that demonstrate good thoughts.</p>	<b>5.0 pts Full Marks</b>	<b>0.0 pts No Marks</b>	5.0 pts
<p><b>Relevance</b> Short essay also must explain how problems of workers of the past are relevant to the struggles of workers in the present.</p>	<b>5.0 pts Full Marks</b>	<b>0.0 pts No Marks</b>	5.0 pts
<b>Total Points: 20.0</b>			