



History of Labor and Work in the U.S.: 1880-1945 (on-line)

37:575: 202 (Section T2) – Summer 2023

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This on-line course explores the history of the labor movement in the U.S. from 1880 to 1945. Course themes include the sources and forms of conflict between workers and employers; changes in technology, production, and workplace organization in an evolving capitalist economy; the impact of racism and sexism on the labor movement; the different types of unions and worker organizations which were formed in this period; and the on-going debate over the goals and purposes of unions.

Although unions are not the exclusive focus of the course, we will closely study how labor unions were affected by changes in our economy, political system, and culture, as well as how working people and their unions impacted and shaped these systems. Through this process of mutual interaction, who labor unions represented, what they sought to accomplish in the short- and long-term, and how they attempted to reach their goals evolved. At the same time, the basic purpose of the labor movement - to defend and advance the interests of working people vis-à-vis powerful employers and a government which often supported employers - remained unchanged.

In this course, we will look at how the labor movement's ability to improve their members' living standards and working conditions widely fluctuated from 1880 to 1945. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries unions were relatively weak most of the time, almost marginal in their influence. However, in response to the crisis conditions of the Great Depression of the 1930s, workers organized powerful unions and became a central element of a new, progressive political coalition which reshaped our economy and political system.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Rutgers University and the School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR) 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-1).
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems and other forms of social organization. (SCL-1).
- 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).
- 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).

From the School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR):

- Knowledge of Theory, Practice and Application – including:
 - Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person’s experience of and perspectives on work
 - Analyze a contemporary global issue in their field from a multi-disciplinary and intersectional perspective
 - Analyze issues related to business strategies, organizational structures, and work systems
 - Analyze issues of social justice related to work across local and global contexts
- Professional Development – including:
 - Develop effective presentation skills appropriate for different settings and audiences
 - Develop career management skills to navigate one’s career
 - Develop capabilities to work and lead in a multicultural and diverse environment
 - Work productively in teams, in social networks, and on an individual basis
 - Develop cultural agility competencies
 - Demonstrate lifelong personal and professional development skills

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:

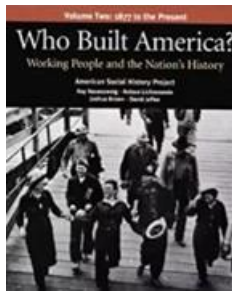
- Understand the critical role of the labor movement in our society.
- Recognize why and how workers have formed different types of labor organizations.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how workers and their organizations (including unions) have been shaped by the larger society of which they are a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

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>.

Resources for SMLR Students:

1. **Student resources** – Click on the following link if you are in need of help in the areas of (a) mental health, (b) academic coaching, or (c) financial assistance: <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/academic-programs/current-students>
2. **Scholarships** – For information on scholarships offered through SMLR, go to: <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/academic-programs/scholarships>

COURSE READINGS:



1. ***Who Built America?: Working People and the Nation's History, Volume II: Since 1877***, 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. The other readings are from two books.

- ***American Labor: A Documentary Collection (AL)***, edited by M. Dubofsky and J. McCartin, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- ***Major Problems in the History of American Workers (MPHAW)***, edited by E. Boris and N. Lichtenstein, 2nd ed., Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2003.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE, BRIEF REVIEW OF LABOR HISTORY FROM THE COLONIAL PERIOD TO 1877

Tuesday, May 30 to Sunday, June 4

Readings:

- Slott and Voos, "A Very Brief History of U.S. Labor until 1877," pp. 1-4.
- Brecher, "The Great Upheaval," pp. 138-148. [MPHAW]

→Assignments due by June 4:

- 1) Introduce yourself to other students by writing an on-line introduction.
- 2) Provide "Account Related Information" for the Canvas website.
- 3) Take the quiz, "Four Questions on Labor Unions."

Week 2: INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM IN THE GILDED AGE (1880 to 1893)

Monday, June 5 to Sunday, June 11

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 1 - pp. 23-49, 64-71 (begin on p. 64 with the section "Extractive Industries and Exploited Workers).

→Assignment due by June 11: Response Paper/Writing Assignment 1

Week 3: WORKING PEOPLE'S RESPONSES TO INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM (1880 to 1893)

Monday, June 12 to Sunday, June 18

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 2 - pp. 77-78, 91-120 (begin on p. 91 with the section "The Workingman's Hour").

Video Clip: "Homestead Strike of 1892"

→Assignment due by June 18: Forum Discussion

[Please note the initial submission to the forum discussion is due by Friday of this week.]

Sunday, June 18, at 2 pm: [Class Zoom Meeting \(Optional\)](#) - This is an opportunity for students to meet with the instructor to discuss course topics and ask questions about the course material or assignments.

Week 4: INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM TRIUMPHS (1893 to 1900)

Monday, June 19 to Sunday, June 25

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 3 – pp. 125-57; 167-74.

→ Assignment due by June 25: Exam #1 – Online, “open book” exam based on the “Check Your Understanding” questions for Weeks 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Week 5: THE TRANSFORMATION OF WORK AND HOME (1900 to 1914)

Monday, June 26 to Sunday, July 2

- WBA? Chapter 4 - pp. 180-202.

Video Clip: “The Beat of the System”

→ Assignment due by July 2: Forum Discussion
[Please note the initial submission to the forum discussion is due by Friday of this week.]

Week 6: REFORM AND RADICALISM IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA (1900 TO 1914)

Monday, July 3 to Sunday, July 9

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 5 – pp. 223-255.
- “Radical Alternatives” (pp. 134-137). [AL]

→ Assignment due by July 9: Writing Assignment 2 - Summary of an article on a current labor event, including a discussion of its relationship to the events discussed in the course.

Sunday, July 9, at 2 pm: Class Zoom Meeting (Optional) – This is an opportunity for students to meet with the instructor to discuss course topics and ask questions about the course material or assignments.

Week 7: THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I ON WORKERS; POST-WAR BACKLASH (1914 to 1920)

Monday, July 10 to Sunday, July 16

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 6 – pp. 279-294, 307-312, and 320-329.
- “Post-War Backlash” (pp. 149-154). [AL]

Video Clip: “The Seattle General Strike”

→Assignment due by July 16: Exam #2 - Online, “open book” exam based on the “Check Your Understanding” questions from Weeks 5, 6, and 7.

Week 8: THE “LEAN YEARS” FOR AMERICAN WORKERS (1920 to 1929)

Monday, July 17 to Sunday, July 23

Readings:

- WBA? Ch. 7 – pp. 335-352, 375-385.

→Assignment due by July 23: Group Forum Discussion
[Please note the initial submission to the forum discussion is due by Friday of this week.]

Week 9: THE GREAT DEPRESSION & THE FIRST NEW DEAL (1929 to 1934)

Monday, July 24 to Sunday, July 30

Reading:

- WBA? Chapter 8.
- “How to Write an Argumentative Essay”

Video Clips: “San Francisco General Strike.”

→Assignment due by July 30: First Draft of Writing Assignment 3

Week 10: THE SECOND NEW DEAL AND THE INDUSTRIAL UNION MOVEMENT (1935 to 1939)

Monday, July 31 to Sunday, August 6

Readings:

- WBA? Ch. 9.

→Assignment due by August 6: Peer Review and Edit of another student’s Writing Assignment 3

Sunday, August 6, at 2 pm: Class Zoom Meeting (Optional) – This is an opportunity for students to meet with the instructor to discuss course topics and ask questions about the course material or assignments.

Week 11: WORKING PEOPLE & WORLD WAR II (1939 to 1946)

Monday, August 7 to Sunday, August 13

Reading:

- WBA? Chapter 10 – pp. 497-505, 517-536, and 541-547.
- "World War II" (pp. 194-205). [AL]

Video Clips: "Manpower Needs in World War II" and "Rosie the Riveter: Real Women Workers in World War II."

→Assignment due by August 13: Final Version of Writing Assignment 3

Final Assignment – Exam #3

Tuesday, August 15 to Wednesday, August 16

The exam is available any time on Canvas on these two days. Students will take an online, "open book" exam based on the "Check Your Understanding" questions for Weeks 8, 9, 10, and 11. There will also be a short essay question.

GRADING CRITERIA AND COMPONENTS

Grading Criteria:

A	90-100%	900 to 1000 points
B+	85-90%	850 to 899 points
B	80-85%	800 to 849 points
C+	75-80%	750 to 799 points
C	70-75%	700 to 749 points
D	60-69%	600 to 699 points
F	59% and below	0 to 599 points

Grading Components:

#1 – Forum Discussions: Weeks 3, 5, & 8

Each forum discussion = 50 points. 3 x 50 = **150 points** – **15%** of the grade

#2 – Writing Assignments: Weeks 2, 6, 9, & 11

Week 2 - Response Paper/Writing Assignment 1 = 50 points

Week 6 – Summary of Current Labor Event/Writing Assignment 2 = 50 points

Week 9 - First Draft of Writing Assignment 3 = 50 points

Week 11 – Final Version of Writing Assignment 3 – 150 points

Total: = **300 points** = **30%** of the grade

#3 – Peer Review and Edit of another Student’s Writing Assignment: Week 10

50 points = **5%** of the grade

#5 – Exams

The three exams are “open book” and online. The questions are based on the “Check Your Understanding” questions for each week of the course.

Week 4, Exam #1 (Weeks 1, 2, 3, and 4) = 150 points

Week 7, Exam #2 (Weeks 5, 6, and 7) = 150 points

Final Assignment, Exam #3 (Weeks 8 through 11 + a short essay question) = 200 points

Total: = **500 points** = **50%** of the grade

Total Course Points = 1000 = 100% of the grade.

Please note: *Unless there is prior notification and a legitimate reason, all late papers will be downgraded ½ letter grade (e.g. A →B+)*