

Course No. 37:575:407:01
Worker Movements in New Jersey

Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations
Spring 2013

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Labor Education Center – Room 130/131

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Sat 1:00-3:55 p.m.

Overview

In this course, we explore the history of trade unions and other worker movements in New Jersey, from the first demands voiced by the Hibernia iron workers in the 1770s to the changing political role of the New Jersey AFL-CIO, the growth of public sector unions, and the challenges faced by the union movement in New Jersey today.

We examine the craft unionism of the New Jersey Federation of Labor and its dominant building trades unions, the "one big union" philosophies of the Knights of Labor and the IWW, the revolutionary goals of Paterson's Italian anarchists and the Passaic textile strike's Communists, the industrial unionism of the CIO, the rise of public sector unionism, and new methods of organizing in the late twentieth century such as workers' centers.

We place New Jersey worker movements in historic context with contemporaneous labor movements elsewhere in the United States and in other countries, and we examine the impact of political ideology, culture, ethnicity, race and gender issues on the development of New Jersey worker movements.

Classes are held on Saturdays from 1 p.m. to 3:55 p.m. in Room 130/131 of the Labor Education Center. The course includes three trips to sites of importance in New Jersey labor history, during regular class hours: the site of the 1913 Silk Strike in Paterson; the industrial village of Roebbling in Burlington County; and a workers' center in New Brunswick.

An important goal of the course is for students to learn to think logically and critically about ideas and events in history and to evaluate arguments from a variety of perspectives. The course will consist of group discussion, lectures, field trips, and films.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at sidorick@temple.edu if you have any questions about the course.

Student Requirements

1. *Class participation* (25% of your grade). Your active participation in class is essential for the success of the class. This part of your grade is based on attendance, coming to class prepared by finishing all readings on time, and taking an active part in class discussions.
2. *Class blog* (25% of grade). All class members will participate in the Worker Movements in New Jersey class blog, contributing comments on readings, films and site visits (more information below).

3. *Mid-term exam* (25% of grade). The mid-term exam will consist primarily of essay questions, with a small number of identification questions (people, events, concepts, etc.), and will be based on lectures, readings, films, and site visits.
4. *"Discovering New Jersey Worker History" Project*. Your choice of an independent research project or oral history project (25% of grade). Research projects focus on a topic of interest and include research in archives, libraries, and/or online or other sources. Students pursuing an oral history project will interview someone about his or her work or about activity in labor-oriented organizations and connect the interview to topics studied in class. Further details will be provided. Another option will be a *final comprehensive exam* (those completing a project will not be required to take the exam).

Required Text

Workers in New Jersey History by Joseph Gowaskie, available from Classics Bookstore in Trenton (email book_cellar@mindspring.com).

All other readings listed below will be available on the Sakai system or via the Web. Some readings are indicated as "optional"; while you are encouraged to read these to get a fuller understanding of the week's topic, they are not required. In order for everyone to participate actively in discussions, please complete the readings by the day that they are listed on the syllabus.

Class Blog

All members of the class will participate in the class discussion blog. Blog topics will be assigned on class readings, films, items in the news, etc., and you are also encouraged to use the blog to discuss any topics relevant to the course. Further details will be provided in class on using the blog.

Class Schedule

Changes may be made in the schedule, readings, and films.

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| <i>Jan 26</i> | Introduction and overview. New Jersey labor--organized and unorganized--in the context of the history of work and workers in the U.S. and the world. Workers in colonial New Jersey.
Film: "Now You're Set For Life" |
| <i>Feb 2</i> | Nineteenth Century Labor Movements: Craft Unionism, Ethnicity and Culture
Readings: Bensman, <i>The Practice of Solidarity</i> , chapters 4 and 11;
Gowaskie, <i>Workers in New Jersey History</i> , chapter 1.
Film: "New Jersey Legacy" series film on transportation and the coming of the industrial revolution in New Jersey |
| <i>Feb 9</i> | Clash of Philosophies: The Knights of Labor vs. the N.J. Federation of Labor
Readings: Excerpt from Troy, <i>Organized Labor in New Jersey</i> (optional);
Gowaskie, <i>Workers in New Jersey History</i> , chapter 2;
short articles: "The Situation in New Jersey" and "The Strike on the Jersey Central," 1877
NYT; Green, ed., "Child Labor (1884)" and "Conditions at Oxford Furnace (1892)." |

- Feb 16* **The IWW and the Paterson Silk Strike of 1913**
 Film: "New Jersey Legacy" film on labor activism in Paterson, and "The Wobblies," excerpt.
 Reading: Excerpt from "The Fragile Bridge" by Steve Golin;
 Gowaskie, *Workers in New Jersey History*, chapter 3.
"Discovering New Jersey Worker History" Project topic due.
- Feb 23* **Paterson Tour: Paterson Museum, walking tour of Paterson Silk Mill Historic District,**
 and tour, film and talk at the Botto House (American Labor Museum) in North Haledon. Meet
 at the Paterson Museum at 1 p.m., dismissal from Botto House at 4 p.m..
- Mar 2* **Labor and the Left: The Red Scare of 1919 and the Passaic Silk Strike of 1926**
 Film: "The Passaic Strike" (1926).
 Readings: Howard Green, "The Red Scare" (New Jersey Heritage magazine);
 Vera Buch Weisbord, *A Radical Life*, chapter on "Passaic."
Preliminary outline and sources for project due.
- Mar 9* **Immigrants and Social Control: The Roeblings and Their Workers**
 Tour and talks in Roebling industrial village in Burlington County, 1 to 4 p.m.
 Readings: Cumber, *A Social History of Economic Decline: Business, Politics and Work in*
Trenton, chapters 2-3;
 Gowaskie, *Workers in New Jersey History*, chapter 4.
- Mar 16* **Spring Break – No Class!**
Mar 23 **Spring Break – No Class!**
- Mar 30* **Industrial Unionism: The Great Depression, the New Deal, and the Rise of the CIO**
 Readings: Sidorick, *Condensed Capitalism*, chapters 1 and 2 (excerpts);
 Cowie, *Capital Moves*, chapter 1 (optional);
 "The Army of Unoccupation, 1936," <http://www.capitalcentury.com/1936.html>
- Apr 6* **Mid-term Exam.**
- Apr 13* **World War II, McCarthyism, and the AFL-CIO Merger**
 Readings: Sidorick, *Condensed Capitalism*, chapter 4;
 Gowaskie, *Workers in New Jersey History*, chapter 5.
- Apr 20* **The Rise of Public Sector Unionism**
 Guest speaker: Hetty Rosenstein, NJ Director, CWA
 Readings: Early, "Building a New Public Employee Union" (1982);
 "CWA Grass Roots Organizing Drive Proves Popular with New Jersey Workers" (1981).
First draft of "Discovering New Jersey Worker History" Project report due.
- Apr 27* **Deindustrialization and the Decline of the Industrial Unions**
 Readings: Sidorick, *Condensed Capitalism*, chapter 8;
 Gillette, "The Wages of Disinvestment: How Money and Politics Aided the Decline of
 Camden, New Jersey," Cowie and Heathcott, eds., *Beyond the Ruins*.
- May 4* **New Jersey Worker Movements in the Twenty-first Century. Course Review.**
 Visit to New Labor worker center (or guest speaker from New Labor).
 Readings: "Laborers Join with Worker Centers," <http://labornotes.org/2009/12/laborers-join-worker-centers-aiming-organize-residential-construction>
Final draft of project report due.