Labor and Employment History
Rutgers University - 38:578:612:01 - Tentative – Subject to Change
Spring 2016

Classroom: Room 137, Labor Education Center (LEC 137), Cook/Douglass Campus, 50 Labor Center Way, New Brunswick NJ 08901
Course schedule: Thursday, 4:30-7:10 pm

Instructor: Prof. William Brucher, PhD
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Office: Room 153, Labor Education Center (LEC 153)
Office hours: Thursday 2:30-3:30 pm or by appointment

Course Description

This course will cover topics in labor and employment history, including the changing nature of work, worker movements, and employment relations in the United States. The course will begin with the industrial revolution and changing market economy of the late 18th and early 19th century, followed by a unit on slavery and freedom in the time period surrounding the Civil War and Reconstruction. We will then turn our attention to the “labor question” of how the promises of democracy and independence in America have measured against realities of wage labor in the changing workplaces and economic arrangements of the late 19th century to the present. We will explore the attitudes, ideologies, cultures, and politics of workers, labor leaders, and employers. This course will also examine how workers of different national, ethnic, racial, and gender backgrounds have experienced work and contributed to the development of unions and worker movements. Other important themes including the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers, the role of the state in the economy and the workplace, the rise and decline of collective bargaining and the New Deal order, globalization and neoliberalism, and the current problems facing workers and the emergence of new worker movements.

Course Objectives

This course aims to enable students to:
- Understand how the past shapes the present
- Understand how and why work and workplaces have changed over time
- Understand how social, cultural, and economic forces have shaped U.S. labor history
- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of different labor systems
- Assess how the state, employees, and worker organizations affect working conditions and living standards
- Apply insights from the past to contemporary labor problems
- Identify and evaluate the main arguments and supporting evidence in a text
- Enhance writing, communication, and leadership skills
- Expand their sense of personal and political possibility

Course Requirements and Grading

1. Class Attendance and Participation (25%)
2. Response papers (50%)
3. Final project (25%)
Course Readings: Course readings include scholarly and popular book excerpts, articles, and primary source documents. These readings will be available in the resources folder on the course Sakai site. To log on, enter your Rutgers ID and password in the upper right hand corner. Click on the tab 38:578:612:01 and then click on modules on the menu on the left hand side of the page. Course announcements, assignments, the syllabus, and other important information will also be added to the site throughout the semester.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend each class. You should plan to arrive on time and stay for the full class session. I will begin lowering your attendance and participation grade after two unexcused absences. Leaving early or arriving late will also lower your grade. Exceptions will be made for religious holidays, medical and family emergencies, or other major documented reasons.

Please inform me if you are going to be absent from class. You can use https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. If you are going to miss a class, keep up with readings and assignments. Also check with a classmate, with me during office hours, and/or on Sakai for material that you may have missed.

Participation: Students should complete all reading and writing assignments prior to each class meeting and come to class prepared to actively participate in class discussion. I will call on students to offer their own understanding and opinions of the main arguments, evidence, and themes for each reading. I will not judge you on whether or not you agree with the authors we read but whether your ideas are informed by the readings and/or other evidence and examples. Students are expected to contribute their own informed responses to the reading and by interacting with each other. Active, respectful listening is as important to class participation as talking. Please don’t monopolize the discussion or dismiss the views of others.

Throughout the semester, I will break students into small groups for activities and discussions. Each student will have at least one opportunity to act as a small group facilitator. Facilitators are not expected to have all of the answers, but will keep their group focused on the activity or discussion, help the group reach common or shared understandings, and report back the group’s conclusions and present them to the class.

Response Papers: Students are required to submit five 2-page response papers responding to questions on the required readings. There is a choice of papers to submit: either week 2 or 3, week 4 or 5, week 6, or 7, week 8 or 9, and week 10 or 11. Response papers should be typed and double-spaced. Response paper topics and questions will be handed out the week before they are due and posted on Sakai. Students must submit their papers on Sakai by 4:00 pm on the day the class is meeting. Please tell me which paper you plan to submit in advance.

Final Papers and Presentations: Students will develop a paper proposal mid-semester and complete a final paper in the last weeks of the course. Students will have the option of writing a research paper on an aspect of labor and employment relations that interests them, a book and/or film review essay, or a paper on a contemporary work-related social movement or public policy proposal that is backed by historical research. Students may also work with Prof. Brucher to develop a project of their own choosing. Final papers should be approximately 8 to 10 pages long, typed and double-spaced. Students will also develop a short presentation for their classmates on their papers.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity requires that all academic work be the product of an identified individual or individuals. Ethical conduct is the obligation of every member of the university community, and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses. Students must assume responsibility for maintaining honesty in all work submitted for credit and in any other work designated by the instructor of this course. Students are also expected to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the instructor or dean.
of the instructional unit. For more information on the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, see http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_2013.pdf

The instructor for this course holds the copyright to the course teaching materials, including presentation slides, discussion questions, and assignments. Students may not copy or distribute this material without the permission of the instructor. Unauthorized distributions of course materials are serious offenses. For more information on the Rutgers University Copyright Policy, see http://policies.rutgers.edu/sites/policies/files/50.3.7-current.pdf

Disability Statement: This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirement for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of disability should refer to the Rutgers Office of Disability Services and then contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible.

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, civil forum.

Week 1, January 21: Introductions and Course Requirements
- Review syllabus and discuss course expectations, assignments, and goals.

Week 2, January 28: The Industrial Revolution and the Rise of Market Capitalism
Readings:
- David Brody, “Time and Work During Early American Industrialism,” in In Labor’s Cause
- Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “Bourgeois and Proletarians” in The Manifesto of the Communist Party

Week 3, February 4: Slavery and Freedom
Readings:
- Excerpts from Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
- W.E.B. DuBois, “The Black Worker” and “The White Worker” in Black Reconstruction in America

Week 4, February 11: Immigration and Labor
Readings:

Week 5, February 18: Corporate Capitalism and Labor Wars
Film: *Matewan* (dir. John Sayles, 1987)

Readings:

**Week 6, February 25: Scientific Management and Welfare Capitalism**

Information session on scholarly research by Julie Peters, Director, James B. Carey Library, SMLR

Work on final paper proposal first draft (due next week)

Readings:
- Excerpts from Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911)
- David Montgomery, “The Manager’s Brain under the Foreman’s Cap” in *The Fall of the House of Labor*
- David Brody, “The Rise and Decline of Welfare Capitalism” in *Workers in Industrial America*

**Week 7, March 3: The New Deal and the Rise of Collective Bargaining**

Turn in final paper proposal first draft (final draft due week 9, after break).

Readings:
- Bruce Nelson, “Radical Years: Working-Class Consciousness on the Waterfront in the 1930s,” in *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*

**Week 8, March 10: The CIO and Industrial Unionism**

Film: *With Babies and Banners: Story of the Women’s Emergency Brigade* (dir. Lorain Gray, 1979)

Readings:
- Excerpts from Nelson Lichtenstein, *Walter Reuther: The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*
- Excerpts from Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel*

**No class on March 17 – Spring Break!**

**Week 9, March 24: Labor and Social Movements**

Readings:
- Michael Honey, “Martin Luther King and the Memphis Sanitation Strike,” in *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*
- Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Other America” speech, March 14, 1968
- Dorothy Sue Cobble, “When Feminism Had Class” in *What’s Class Got to Do With It?*
- Excerpts from Susan Eisenberg, *We’ll Call You if We Need You: Experiences of Women Working in Construction*

**Week 10, March 31: Public Sector Unionism**

Readings:
- Excerpts from Francis Ryan, *AFSCME’s Philadelphia Story*
• Robert Shaffer, “Public Employee Unionism: A Neglected Social Movement of the 1960s,” The History Teacher 44 (2011)
• Selected news articles and opinion pieces on the 2016 U.S. Supreme Court case Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association

Week 11, April 7: Rank and File Rebellions
Film excerpts: Finally Got the News (1970) and Harlan County, USA (1976)
Readings:
• Dan La Botz, “The Tumultuous Teamsters of the 1970s,” in Rebel Rank and File
• Frank Bardacke, “The United Farm Workers from the Ground Up,” in Rebel Rank and File

Week 12, April 14: Neoliberalism and the Decline of Collective Bargaining
Readings:
• David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism, introduction and chapter 1
• Excerpts from Kim Moody, An Injury to All

Week 13, April 21: New Economy, New Movements
Film: Worker’s Republic (dir., Andrew Freund, 2009)
Reminder: Final Papers and Presentations due Next Week!
Readings:
• Janice Fine, “Worker Centers: Organizing Communities at the Edge of the Dream,” Briefing Paper, Economic Policy Institute, December 13, 2005
• “David Bensman, “Port Truck Drivers on Strike! A Dispatch from Two of the Nation’s Largest Ports,” Dissent blog, November 22, 2014
• Harold Meyerson, “If Labor Dies, What Next?,” The American Prospect

Week 14, April 28: Final Paper Presentations
Final Papers Due!
Brief student presentations in class