

Course No. 37:575:202:02

## History of Labor and Work in the U.S. 1880 to 1945

Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations  
Fall 2019

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Sidorick  
Murray Hall 301  
Monday 6:10 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

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Office hours: Before and after class  
and by appointment

### Overview

History has often been presented as the story of how powerful people have changed human societies over the course of time, with presidents, generals, and the wealthy playing central roles. This course will turn the standard approach on its head and instead look at America and the changes it has undergone through the eyes of working people.

What was life like for machine operators, office workers, sharecroppers, housewives, coal miners, immigrants, teachers, and retail workers during the period of American industrial dominance, and how did their actions affect the course of history? This course will tackle these questions, looking at the development of the labor movement and other movements of "ordinary" people and the enormous changes they have wrought in American history. We will not ignore the important roles of the powerful, but we will examine them together with the actions and ideologies of working-class people and their organizations. And we will look at the world surrounding the labor movement and the social and cultural changes in each period.

We will also study the differing forms and ideologies of numerous workers' organizations to understand why some made a real difference and others had little lasting effect. The labor movement has changed dramatically from the early period of industrialization, when the United States was still primarily an agricultural country, through the explosive growth of mass production in the twentieth century. Our approach will highlight the fact that American history has not been a smooth narrative of progress, but rather that change has come about only after struggle over different views of what path the country should take.

This course satisfies several specific Rutgers learning objectives that are detailed below after the course schedule. Please contact me at [daniel.sidorick@rutgers.edu](mailto:daniel.sidorick@rutgers.edu) if you have any questions about the course.

*Statement on Disability:* 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>.

*Statement on Academic Honesty:* All work in this course must be your own. Be careful to always cite your sources. For direct quotes, include them within quotation marks and cite appropriately. Since none of us lived during the times we are studying, we must, of course, rely on the words and writings of others, but these must always be cited -- otherwise the use of those words is considered plagiarism. Any assignments containing the work of others and not cited properly will receive a grade of zero. *Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns on this point.*

## Student Requirements

1. *Class participation* (10% 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 on time and prepared by finishing all readings before class, and taking an active part in class discussions.
2. *Mid-Term Exam* (20% of grade). The mid-term exam will consist of essay questions and identification questions (people, events, concepts, etc.), and will be based on lectures, readings, films, and discussions.
3. *Final Exam* (20% of grade). The final exam will consist of essay questions and identification questions (people, events, concepts, etc.), and will be based on lectures, readings, films, and discussions, covering the entire course but concentrated on the second half of the semester.
4. *Major class paper 1* (20% of grade). For a paper on an assigned topic, you will submit a draft version and later a final version (the draft is required in order to submit a final version). The draft will be reviewed by the instructor.
5. *Major class paper 2* (20% of grade). For a paper on an assigned topic, you will submit a draft version and later a final version (the draft is required in order to submit a final version). The draft will be reviewed by another student using a Guided Peer Review.
6. *Online discussion forums* (10% of grade). Frequently throughout the course I will post questions or topics in Canvas. In the discussion forums you will post responses to these topics and to other students' postings by the deadlines listed, basing your comments on class readings and other materials. Often the forum topic will be used as a starting point for in-class discussions in the following class.

Note: All late assignments will be downgraded one letter grade (e.g. A to B) and will not be accepted more than one week after due date.

Cell phones are not permitted in class. Laptops are permitted for note-taking only.

The best way to attain a grade you are happy with is to come to class, pay attention, take notes (from lectures and readings), and participate in discussions!

## Required Text

The following required book is available for purchase or rental at the Rutgers University Bookstore or online:

Rosenzweig, et al., *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 following pages.)

The textbook is also available for free as a series of pdf files in Canvas. You may use these in place of purchasing the textbook, but if you are able, I recommend getting the actual textbook.

All other readings listed below will be available on the Canvas system or via the Web. In order to participate actively in discussions, you must complete the readings by the day that they are listed on the syllabus. Be sure to read the non-textbook readings as well as the textbook -- they give additional in-depth insights that may be missing in the textbook, and content from both textbook and supplemental readings will be included in exams and papers.

## Class Schedule

Changes may be made in the schedule and readings -- be sure to check Canvas and your email often.

## **GETTING STARTED**

Monday, Sep 9

Introduction and overview. What is the Labor Movement? Why 1880?

Studying history "from the bottom up." The U.S. and working people in 1880.

**THE "GREAT UPHEAVAL OF 1877";  
INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM IN THE GILDED AGE (1877 to 1893)**

Monday, Sep 16

Readings:

- Jeremy Brecher, "The Great Upheaval," pp. 138-148.
- WBA Ch. 1 - pp. 23-49, 70-71.

**WORKING PEOPLE'S RESPONSES TO INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM IN THE GILDED AGE**

Monday, Sep 23

Readings:

- WBA Ch. 2 – pp. 77-79, 91-120.
- Susan Levine, "Labor's True Woman"

**INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM AT HOME AND ABROAD (1893 to 1900)**

Monday, Sep 30

Readings:

- WBA Ch. 3 – pp. 124-157, 167-174.
- "Statement from the Pullman Strikers" [PS]
- Eugene Debs, "Interview from Jail" and "A Call to the People." [PS]

**THE PROGRESSIVE ERA (1900 TO 1918): REFORM AND EFFICIENCY**

Monday, Oct 7

Readings:

- WBA Ch. 4 - pp. 181-202, 216-217
- "Frederick Winslow Taylor Explains..." [PS]
- "Machinist Testifies on the Taylor System..." [PS]

Assignment – Submit 1st Draft of Writing Assignment 1

**THE PROGRESSIVE ERA (1900 TO 1918): RADICALS AND SOCIALISTS**

Monday, Oct 14

Readings:

- WBA Ch. 5 – pp. 223-225, 241-269
- Sidorick, "The 'Girl Army': The Philadelphia Shirtwaist Strike of 1909-1910"
- "Lawrence Textile Strike" [PS]

**MID-TERM EXAM**

Monday, Oct 21

Exam #1 (covering material from the first half of the course through 1918)

**THE FIRST RED SCARE AND THE "LEAN DECADE" FOR AMERICAN WORKERS (1918 to 1929)**

Monday, Oct 28

Readings:

- WBA Ch. 6 - pp. 279-280, 292-312, 320-329
- WBA Ch. 7 – pp. 335-339, 343-352, 375-384
- Sharon McConnell-Sidorick, "[Silk Stockings and Socialism](#)"

Assignment -- Final Version of Writing Assignment 1

**THE GREAT DEPRESSION & THE FIRST NEW DEAL (1929 to 1935)**

Monday, Nov 4

Reading:

- WBA Ch. 8
- Sidorick, "The Dorrance Dynasty" and "Camden in the Great Depression"

**LABOR UPSURGE: THE INDUSTRIAL UNION MOVEMENT (1935 to 1939)**

Monday, Nov 11

Readings:

- WBA Ch. 9, pp. 455-473
- "Dollinger Remembers the Flint Sit-down Strike," pp. 345-349. [PS]
- (Optional) "Flint Sit-down Strike Graphic Comic": <http://tinyurl.com/FlintSitDownComix>

Assignment: Submit 1st Draft of Writing Assignment 2  
In-Class Peer Review of Another Student's 1st Draft

**THE SECOND NEW DEAL (1935 to 1939)**

Monday, Nov 18

Readings:

- WBA Ch. 9, pp. 444-455, 473-491

**DIVISION AND UNITY IN AMERICAN WORKING-CLASS HISTORY**

Monday, Nov 25

Readings:

- James Barrett, "Unity and Fragmentation: Class, Race, and Ethnicity on Chicago's South Side, 1900-1922," *Journal of Social History* (1984)

Assignment: Final Version of Writing Assignment 2

In-class viewing of *Matewan* and discussion

**WORKING PEOPLE & WORLD WAR II (1939 to 1946)**

Monday, Dec 2

Readings:

- WBA Ch. 10, 497-505, 517-547.
- Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Lost and Found: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History* (December 1988)

**WORK AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN POST-WAR AMERICA**

Monday, Dec 9

Review of course and brief lecture on work and labor after 1946.

**FINAL EXAM**

Monday, Dec 16, 8 p.m.

Learning Objectives for This Course

***Core Curriculum: SCL, HST, WCr and WCd***

- Historical Analysis [HST]
  - k. Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time.
  - l. Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.
- Social Analysis [SCL]
  - m. Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
- Writing and Communication [WCR; WCD]
  - s. Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience, and respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, &/or supervisors through successive drafts & revision. [WCR]
  - t. Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights. [WCD]

***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).

***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)

***Additional course objective from the instructor:***

- Demonstrate the ability to think logically and critically about ideas and events in American history and to evaluate arguments from a variety of perspectives.