



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

37:575: 202 (Section T1) – Summer 2020

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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 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, politics, 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, there was no change in the basic rationale for unions: to defend and advance the interests of working people vis-à-vis powerful employers and a government which often supported employers.

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, 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.

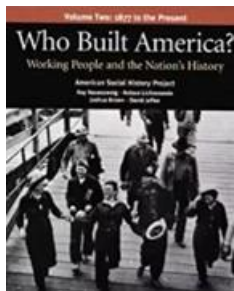
Since this is an **on-line course** which includes peer review/editing and forum discussions involving a group of students, several learning objectives concern the process of interaction between students.

- 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.

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>.

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 which provide **primary sources**– i.e. they are from the time period discussed in the text.

- ***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 26 to Sunday, May 31

Readings:

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

→Assignments due by May 31:

- 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 on U.S. labor history based on "A Very Brief History of U.S. Labor until 1877"

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

Monday, June 1 to Sunday, June 7

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 1 - pp. 23-52, 64-71 (begin on p. 64 with the section "Extractive Industries and Exploited Workers).

→Assignment due by June 7: Response Paper/Writing Assignment 1

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

Monday, June 8 to Sunday, June 14

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 2.

Video Clip: "Homestead Strike of 1892"

→Assignment due by June 14: Forum Discussion

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

Week 4: INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM TRIUMPHS (1893 to 1900)

Monday, June 15 to Sunday, June 21

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 3 – pp. 125-57; 167-74.
- "How to Write an Argumentative Essay"

Video Clip: "Video on Writing Assignment 2"

→Assignment due by June 21: First Draft of Writing Assignment 2

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

Monday, June 22 to Sunday, June 28

- WBA? Chapter 4.

Video Clip: "The Beat of the System"

→Assignment due by June 28: Peer Review and Edit of another student's Writing Assignment 2

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

Monday, June 29 to Sunday, July 5

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 5.
- "Radical Alternatives" (pp. 134-137). [Primary Source - AL]

→Assignment due by July 5: Final Version of Writing Assignment 2

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

Monday, July 6 to Sunday, July 12

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 6.
- "Post-War Backlash" (pp. 149-154). [Primary Source - AL]

Video Clip: "The Seattle General Strike"

→Assignment due by July 12: Group Forum Discussion
[Please note the initial submission to the forum discussion is due by Friday of this week.]

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

Monday, July 13 to Sunday, July 19

Readings:

- WBA? Ch. 7.

→Assignment due by July 19: 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 20 to Sunday, July 26

Reading:

- WBA? Chapter 8.
- "Depression" (pp. 176-186). [Primary Source - AL]

Video Clips: "1929 Stock Market Crash" and "San Francisco General Strike."

→Assignment due by July 26: First Draft of Writing Assignment 3

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

Monday, July 27 to Sunday, August 2

Readings:

- WBA? Ch. 9.

→Assignment due by August 2: Peer Review and Edit of another student's Writing Assignment 3

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

Monday, August 3 to Sunday, August 9

Reading:

- WBA? Chapter 10.
- "World War II" (pp. 194-205). [Primary Source - AL]

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

→ Assignment due by August 9: Final Version of Writing Assignment 3

Final Exam

Tuesday, August 11 to Wednesday, August 12

The exam is available any time on Canvas on these two days. Students will take an online, "open book" exam based on questions from "Check Your Understanding" for Weeks 1 through 11.

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 – Quiz: Week 1

50 points = 5% of the grade

[Note: Students will get the full 50 points by completing the exam.]

#2 – Forum Discussions: Weeks 3, 7, & 8

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

#3 – Peer Review and Edit of another Student’s Writing Assignment: Weeks 5 & 10

Each peer review = 50 points. 2 x 50 = 100 points = 10% of the grade

#4 – Writing Assignments: Weeks 2, 4, 6, 9, & 11

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

Week 4 - First Draft of Writing Assignment 2 = 50 points

Week 6 – Final Version of Writing Assignment 2 = 100 points

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

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

Total: = 400 points = 40% of the grade

#5 – Final Exam

Open book. Questions are based on the “Check Your Understanding” questions for each week of the course.

300 points = 30% 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+)*