

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Fall 2017

Mondays, 7:20-10:00 pm

Labor Education Center

(38:578:612:01)

Professor Dorothy Sue Cobble

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course offers a historical-comparative-global perspective on the changing nature of work, worker movements, and employment relations in the United States. We begin with the transition to capitalism and the rise of market economies. Next we consider slavery and other systems of coerced labor. The rest of the course explores various aspects of the labor question in modern capitalist economies. A central concern is understanding how and why the rewards to work and the treatment of workers have changed over time. Other course themes include changing conceptions of workplace fairness; the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers; the role of the state in the economy and the workplace; the rise and fall of collective bargaining and welfare capitalism; globalization, financialization, and the rise of global neo-liberal capitalism; and new movements around the world for social inclusion, human rights, and economic fairness.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course aims to enable students to:

- Appreciate the power of the past to shape the present;
- Understand how and why work and workplace policies have changed over time;
- Understand how U.S. labor and employment history compares with other regions;
- Understand how global forces shaped U.S. labor and employment history;
- Assess how the state, employers, and worker organizations affect societal living standards and well-being;
- Analyze the strengths and weakness of different labor and employment systems;
- Apply insights from the past to solving contemporary labor and employment problems;
- Identify and evaluate the main arguments in a text;
- Enhance written and public presentation skills;
- Develop group process and leadership skills;
- Expand their sense of personal and political possibility.

PLEASE NOTE: Cell phones and other electronic devices, including laptop computers, must be turned off and closed during class. Do not sign up for this class if you are unable to comply with this policy.

COURSE READINGS

1. **Articles.** All required articles are available electronically through the SAKAI website at <https://sakai.rutgers.edu>. You will not have access to electronic copies of the reading in class. In order to participate fully in class discussion, please bring a printed copy of the reading or substantial notes with you to class. For problems or questions with Sakai, email Dr. Merrill.

2. **Book.** The following book is **not** on sakai. You will need to secure your own copy.

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself* (Dover Thrift edition, 1995, reprint 1845).

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (Sept 11) INTRODUCTIONS

Week 2 (Sept 18) THE TRANSITION TO CAPITALISM

Reading:

*Michael Merrill, "The Anti-Capitalist Origins of the United States," *Review* XII 4 (Fall 1990): 465-97.

*David Brody, "Time and Work During Early American Industrialism," in *In Labor's Cause* (1993), 3-42.

*Jonathan Prude, "The Social System of Early New England Textile Mills: A Case Study, 1812-40," in *Working-Class America* (University of Illinois, 1983), 1-36.

Response Paper #1: What is capitalism? What are the most important differences between capitalism and the economic systems it replaced? What is capitalism's greatest strength? Its greatest weakness?

Week 3 (Sept 25) SLAVERY AND EMANCIPATION

Reading:

*Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Boston, 1845), 1-76.

*Eric Foner, "Emancipation and the Reconstruction of Southern Labor," excerpts from *A Short History of Reconstruction* (Harper & Row, 1990), reprinted in *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, 112-123.

Response Paper #2. What is freedom? How is it different from slavery? What effects did slavery have on slaves and slave owners? How did slave owners sustain the system of slavery? Would you describe the new systems of labor that replaced slavery after the Civil War as free labor systems? Why or why not?

Week 4 (Oct 2) NO CLASS MEETING/PARAGRAPH DUE ON SAKAI

Assignment: Please read about the final project on page 7 of the syllabus. This week we ask you to start thinking about the first part of the assignment. Please post on sakai a brief description of what you see as the most important problem facing the labor and employment system in the United States. You may change your choice as we go forward but we want you to be thinking about contemporary problems and the relevance of the past to solving those problems over the course of the semester.

Week 5 (Oct 9) CORPORATE CAPITALISM AND ORGANIZED LABOR

Reading:

*Andrew Carnegie, “The Gospel of Wealth” in *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays*, ed. Edward C. Kirkland (1886, reprinted 1962), 14-29.

*Samuel Gompers “What Does Labor Want?” A Paper Read before the International Labor Congress, September, 1893.

*David Montgomery, *Workers’ Control in America*, 9-31.

Response Paper #3. Compare and contrast the ideas of Carnegie and Gompers. Whose ideas do you find more persuasive and why? Why does Montgomery prefer workers’ control to Taylorism? Do you agree or not, and why?

Week 6 (Oct 16) IMMIGRATION AND CONTRACT LABOR

Reading:

*Gunther Peck, “Reinventing Free Labor: Immigrant Padrones and Contract Laborers in North America, 1885-1925,” *Journal of American History* (December 1996): 848-871.

*Doug Massey, et. al. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration In An Era of Economic Integration* (2002), chapters 3 & 7.

Response Paper #4. What problems did immigrant workers face as contract laborers and what strategies did they use to change their situation? Should labor be as mobile and as free from restrictions on its movement as capital or less? More? Why or why not?

Week 7 (Oct 23) SOCIALISM, SUFFRAGE, AND INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

Reading:

*James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925*, 1-26.

*Melvyn Dubovsky and Foster R. Dulles, “Thunder on the Left,” in *Labor In America*, 195-209.

*Annelise Orleck, “Coming of Age: The Shock of the Shops and the Dawning of Working Women’s Political Consciousness,” in *Women, Families, and Communities*, eds. Nancy Hewitt and Kirsten Delegard, second edition, (2008), 47-65.

IN-CLASS QUIZ

Week 8 (Oct 30) NEW DEAL REVOLUTIONS

Reading:

*Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "Fireside Chats" (**READ FOUR ONLY**: May 7, 1933; September 30, 1934; April 28, 1935; January 11, 1944), selected and formatted on Sakai or accessed July 15, 2010, at <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/FIRESI90.HTML>.

*Dorothy Sue Cobble, "The Intellectual Origins of an Institutional Revolution," *Journal of Labor and Employment Law* (2011): 201-212.

*Jack Metzgar, "Getting to 1959," *Striking Steel*, 17-59.

Response Paper #5 Was the New Deal primarily a capitalist or a socialist program? Why? What parts of the New Deal still in force should we get rid of? What forgotten parts of it should we restore?

Week 9 (Nov 6) SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, AMERICAN-STYLE

Reading:

*Cass Sunstein, "The Second Bill of Rights," (2004).

*Walter Reuther, "The Guaranteed Annual Wage" and "Mike Wallace Interview," in *Selected Papers* (1961).

*Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel*, 118-148.

Response Paper #6. Do you favor FDR's second bill of rights? Reuther's "guaranteed annual wage"? Why or why not? How does Metzgar explain the demise of the American steel industry? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Week 10 (Nov 13) OTHER LABOR MOVEMENTS

Reading:

*Michael Honey, "Martin Luther King and the Memphis Sanitation Strike," in Boris and Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, 420-431.

*Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Feminism Transforms Women Service Workers," in Boris and Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, 459-472.

*Ruth Milkman, "Immigrant Workers and the Future of American Labor," 2011.

Response Paper #7 Discuss and assess the main arguments in each of the readings.

Week 11 (Nov 20) THE GREAT REVERSAL AND RUNAWAY INEQUALITY

Reading:

Les Leopold, *Runaway Inequality*, chapters 1-3, 5-6.

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (2009), 1-45.

Response Paper #8. What is financialization? Why is it a problem for the American economy? For the American people? What can be done to fix the problem of runaway inequality?

Week 12 (Nov 27) CAPITALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Reading:

*Vaclav Smil, *Energy and Civilization: A History* (2017), pp. 351-367, 381-384, 430-441.

*US Global Change Research Program Climate Science Special Report (CSSR) (DRAFT: December 2016), Front Matter and Executive Summary, 1-31 ONLY.

Response Paper #9: How much bigger can the human population and its economy get before it is too big to sustain? What does (or can) prevent it from becoming too big? How do you rate our chances of survival?

Week 13 (Dec 4) DEBATING GLOBAL STRATEGIES

Reading:

*Ron Blackwell, "Building a Member-Based International Program," in Greg Mantsios, ed. *A New Labor Movement for the New Century* (1998), 320-328

*Jody Heymann and Alison Earle, *Raising the Global Floor* (2010), chapter 3.

*Michael Merrill, "From a National to a Global Economy," Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia presentation, 2000.

*Cobble and Merrill, "Labor Today," *Pennsylvania Legacies* (2014): 40-41.

Response Paper #10: Are we currently pursuing the best global strategies to enhance our nation's economic and social wellbeing? If so, what are they? If not, what should we be doing?

Week 14 (Dec 11) IN-CLASS QUIZ/STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1. **Class Attendance and Participation (10%)**
2. **Response Papers (60%)**
3. **Two Short In-Class Quizzes (20%)**
4. **Final Project (10%)**

1. CLASS PARTICIPATION (10%)

ATTENDANCE. Students are expected to attend each class. You should plan to arrive on time and stay the full class session. If you anticipate a problem with attendance or

timeliness, you should discuss the matter with us before signing up for the class. If work or other conflicts preclude your class attendance you should sign up for a class on a different night or for an on-line class.

CLASS DISCUSSION. Students are expected to participate actively in class discussion. You should read the assigned texts carefully prior to each class meeting and bring a copy of the readings with you to class. Students will be asked to offer their own understanding of the main claims in each text and their opinion of these claims. You will not be judged on whether or not you agree with the claims of the authors or with the opinions of the instructors but on whether your ideas are informed by the week's readings and/or substantiated by other evidence and examples. Students are also expected to help raise the level of class discussion by interacting with others to help clarify and extend their comments. Active, respectful listening is as important to class participation as talking.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES. Over the course of the semester, students will participate in small group activities and will be asked to serve as a small group discussion leader one or more times. Your goal as a discussion leader is to encourage participation from each member of the group; keep the group focused on the assignment; and help the group reach common or shared understandings of the material, if possible. Small group leaders should be prepared to summarize the group's conclusions and present them to the class. Small group leaders are not expected to be experts or to have all the answers.

2. RESPONSES PAPERS (60%)

Students should submit **FIVE** short papers responding to the questions posed by the instructors on the syllabus. Papers should be 2-3 pages, typed, double-spaced, and 12-point font. Please do not submit papers over 3 pages in length.

Papers should be posted on Sakai by 5 pm on Monday **BEFORE** the readings are discussed in class. No papers will be accepted after the deadline. At least **two** papers should be submitted before the first quiz and at least **two** after. Students may submit two additional papers, if they wish, which will be counted in their final point total.

Papers will receive a grade of 1 point, ½ point, or 0 points. Responses that show evidence of engagement with the readings, respond to the questions posed, and do not have major writing problems will receive full credit or one point. Responses that are incomplete or poorly written (do not show engagement with the readings or do not respond to the questions) will receive partial credit or ½ point. Points translate to grades as follows:

- 5 (or more)=A
- 4.5= B+
- 4=B
- 3.5=C+
- 3= C
- 2.5=D+

2=D

Below 2 =not a passing grade

4. TWO IN-CLASS QUIZZES (20)

There will be two short in-class quizzes. Each will be less than an hour and will ask you about significant concepts presented in the reading and discussed in class. The quizzes are designed to help you retain, integrate, and deepen your understanding of the material.

5. FINAL PROJECT: IN-CLASS PRESENTATION (10)

One of the learning objectives of this course is to apply insights from the past to solving contemporary labor and employment problems. During the last class, each student will be asked to make a brief presentation in which you are to: (1) identify what you think is the most important problem facing the current labor and employment system in the US; and then (2) discuss how a particular historical event, policy or person covered in the class offers a helpful perspective on, or a possible solution to, the problem you have chosen. Be prepared to justify both the problem on which you have chosen and the perspective or solution that you believe your historical example provides. Presentations should be under five minutes. Instructors will circulate further guidelines for the presentations during the course of the semester.

Academic Integrity. Work submitted for other classes or work cut and pasted from the Internet is not acceptable. In addition, using phrases from another person's writing without quotation marks or paraphrasing another person's ideas without crediting the source of the idea is plagiarism. Plagiarism or any form of cheating can result in course failure and disciplinary action through University channels.

Special Needs: Any student with a disability requiring accommodations should contact us as soon as possible.

Final Grades: Final course grades are available through regular university channels. If you need your final grade earlier, contact Amy Marchitto at lobelo@smlr.rutgers.edu

September 3, 2017