

Women and Work
Department of Labor Studies and Employment Relations
Rutgers University
Spring 2025
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Instructor

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Course Description

This course is a deep exploration of intersecting and systemic inequalities that have impacted the lives of women workers historically and today. We will also examine how women have resisted labor exploitation. The first part of the course is an introduction to racial, class, and gender disparities in labor and how women have organized to challenge these disparities. In the second part of the course, we will trace historical roots of systemic inequalities into the present by analyzing their contemporary impact on women's working lives and how women are organizing today.

*The syllabus is subject to *slight* changes during the semester.

Office Hours

Zoom appointments on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 1:00-2:30pm, or by appointment in person.

Course Rationale: This special topic course takes an intersectional and historical approach to examine women's work experiences from the past until the present. Students who take this course must be prepared to deepen their writing, thinking, and reading of written and media source materials. Students must also demonstrate effective writing and communication skills. Women have and continue to engage in worker resistance in visual, media, and written forms. Thus, every student must have access to the internet and streaming services such as YouTube and Netflix. Some of the required materials for this course will require a low-cost subscription that can be canceled at any time after viewing the content.

Required Reading Materials

*All required reading and visuals materials are listed on Canvas.

*Some visual materials require purchase of a low-cost subscription to a streaming service. You can always cancel the subscription after viewing the films/documentaries.

Course Requirements:

Ice Breaker Assignment- 5%

Quizzes- 10%

Remix assignment(s)-10%

Weekly Facilitations- 25%

Paper 1- 25%

Paper 2– 25%

Goals and Outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of the social injustices that have impacted women workers since the nineteenth century.
- Analyze how the current pandemic has impacted the health, family lives, and labor experiences of women workers
- Examine how intersecting racial, class, and gender inequalities have shaped the labor experiences of women historically
- Trace the ways in which racial, class, and gender disparities shape women workers' lives today.
- Explore women workers' organized resistance to labor exploitation historically and today.

Required Assignments

1& 2- Class Discussions and Facilitations:

All students are expected to begin each week of class prepared to share their interpretation, analysis and synthesis of assigned readings and media materials. Each week, everyone is responsible for co-facilitating class discussion with your own discussion questions and analysis of the assigned texts.

Everyone was randomly divided into small groups named after labor leaders to create small spaces where you can engage in deeper discussions about the readings than you can in a large lecture size class. You are a member of one of these groups: Nannie Helen Burroughs, A. Philip Randolph, and Founders of Quakertown and Black Wall Street. Facilitation commentaries and questions are due by **Mondays at 11:59pm**. Responses are due by **Wednesdays at 11:59pm**. Reflections from facilitators are due by **Fridays at 11:59pm**.

Check the “Discussion Groups” file in Modules in Canvas to determine to which writing group you have been assigned.

Carefully read the guidelines and examples for the weekly facilitation assignment in the Modules section on Canvas before writing your first facilitation commentary, questions, responses, and reflections. The examples will provide you with the quality of work that is expected for each type of assignment and that adheres to the assignment rubrics.

The facilitation rubric will be used to grade each weekly discussion board assignment. You can view the rubrics for all course assignments in the rubrics and Modules sections in Canvas.

Remix Assignments

At times, we will convene online as an entire class to discuss materials related to Black workers. We will do this to provide opportunities for everyone to engage with people outside of your respective discussion group members and explore Black worker experiences in different ways.

Paper #1

Students will complete a mid-term assignment to demonstrate and apply their knowledge of the information covered during the first half of the course.

Paper #2

Students will complete a final assignment that builds upon the mid-term project to demonstrate and apply comprehensive knowledge of the information covered throughout the entire course.

Technical Assistance

This course will be conducted asynchronously via Canvas (occurring at different times rather than at the same place and time). Canvas can be accessed through <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/>. You can mark this URL as a bookmark in your computer system. Canvas is a course delivery system that provides private space on the web server that is used for members of this course. No one has access to the “space” except for those who are registered for the class. The space that is set aside for our course includes places to post comments and questions, access course grades, send email messages to your colleagues and me, view links to outside resources, and submit assignments.

To access the Canvas system, you'll need a Rutgers user ID and password. If you have any difficulty accessing Canvas or course materials, contact Rutgers Canvas Help.

Support Website: <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/canvas-help/>

Email: help@oit.rutgers.edu Call: 833-648-4357

Access to Internet and Word Processing Software

You will need regular internet access to participate in this course. Although you do not need extensive experience with computers or the Internet, you need to have a basic familiarity with web browsing, personal computers, and the internet. You will need to make sure that your internet service provider and web browser will work together with Canvas. If you wish to participate in Canvas courses from your place of employment, this may be difficult if there are firewalls at your workplace. You also will need to use Microsoft Word to prepare and submit your written assignments. I am not responsible for grading assignments that I cannot open.

Email

Make sure that the email address listed for you in Canvas is the email address that you use and check regularly. You are responsible for checking the announcements board and your Canvas email regularly to stay in tune with the latest course developments. All emails sent to me must be sent through Canvas.

Rules of Engagement

Internet-based courses have unique opportunities and challenges. Our interactions in Canvas will be text-based and will be asynchronous (occurring at different times rather than at the same place and time). Since our written contributions in Canvas will be posted electronically and accessible to all participants, each of us have the opportunity to contribute to this course and respond to each other's contributions in more thoughtful and carefully considered ways than we might in face-to-face classroom sessions. We will also have the opportunity to refer back to what we have written in earlier weeks to build on our ideas throughout the semester.

We will *not* be able to make use of body language and other cues to help us interpret each other's words in Canvas. Therefore, responses that we post must be carefully written, thoughtful, and respectful. We'll need to pay attention to both what we say and how we say it. Your postings should be well-written with few or no typographical or grammatical errors.

Language and symbols commonly used in texting should not be used when posting in the Discussion Board forums. Before making any postings to the Discussion Board, you should read and follow the guidelines about "netiquette" (rules of online communication) found here:

<https://rlc.rutgers.edu/node/443>. This site also includes helpful tips for success in online courses.

Attendance Policy

Consistent and attentive participation multiple times a month is vital to academic success and expected of everyone in the course. Grades are determined by academic performance and the level and quality of participation. If you cannot participate in class discussions for more than one week because of a personal emergency, it is your responsibility to inform me. Three or more weeks of non-participation will likely result in a failing grade.

An incomplete may be granted if you have already completed 80 percent of the course assignments. Incomplete grades are not issued in this course unless you are unable to finish the course due to dire and extreme circumstances. Finally, you must provide strong evidence as to why you cannot register for the course when it is offered again. See Rutgers policy regarding incomplete grades here:

https://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/sph_current/pg34.html

Referrals

If you experience emotional distress during the semester, do not hesitate to contact medical and counseling services: <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

Disability Services: 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 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/getting-registered>.

Academic Integrity Policy: All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to behave in an ethical and moral fashion, respecting the human dignity of all members of the community and resisting behavior that may cause danger or harm to others through violence, theft, or bigotry. All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to adhere to the civil and criminal laws of the local community, state, and nation, and to regulations promulgated by the University.

All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to observe established standards of scholarship and academic freedom by respecting the intellectual property of others and by honoring the right of all students to pursue their education in an environment free from harassment and intimidation. Please see <https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/> for details regarding the Academic Integrity Policy. Students are expected to refrain from cheating, fabricating information, plagiarizing, inappropriately denying others access to material, and facilitating others in academic dishonesty. Avoid plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity! Your written questions will be submitted to "Turnitin.com" to ensure that your answers are yours alone – not answers from another student, from the web, or another

source. Be careful not to “copy” phrases or sentences excessively from the readings. The goal is to put the ideas into your own words. Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review via Turnitin in Canvas.

Reading Schedule

Introduction: Dominant Narrative and Counternarratives

Week of January 20th:

- Review syllabus and online course content carefully
- Read texts for “February 1st”
- Complete Syllabus Quiz (Deadline: Friday, January 24th by 11:59pm)
- **View:** Kimberlé Crenshaw’s “On Intersectionality,” Keynote speech, <https://youtu.be/-DW4HLgYPIA>
- Complete Ice Breaker Activity (Deadline: Friday, January 24th by 11:59pm)

Frameworks and Histories of Disparities in Labor and Quality of Life

Week of January 27th:

Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Issue 1, Article 8, 138-167.

Complete Syllabus Quiz

Week of February 3rd: Black Women, Migrations, and Labor Post-Slavery

Tera Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997. (**Prologue and Chapters 2 and 4**)

View: Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Reconstruction: America After the Civil War” PBS Documentary, 2019, (Part 2, Hour 1)

After clicking on link below, click on red button that says “Watch Now.” Type Rutgers University Libraries into the box under “Log in via your academic institution.” Press enter. Lastly, log in using your Rutgers username and password to view the entire documentary.

https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7C5067720?account_id=13626&usage_group_id=98189

Week of February 10th: Whiteness, Blackness, Indigeneity & Working Women

Margaret Jacobs, “Diverted Mothering Among American Indian Domestic Servants,” 179-192. In *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, Carol Williams, ed. Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

View: Visual History of Indigenous Domestic Workers, *National Domestic Workers Alliance Project*.

***Begin reading from the link below. The section is entitled “The Outing System.”**

Continue reading by clicking the right arrow and reading the following sections: “Menial Labor as Civilization,” “Colonial Maternalism,” “Inventing the Crime of Dancing,” “Working in the City,” “Motherhood Denied,” and “Rebellion in the Outing Program.”

<https://www.dwherstories.com/timeline/the-outing-system?prev=/timeline>

*Of course, you are welcome and encouraged to explore the entire site. We will discuss the above-mentioned sections in our class discussion.

Week of February 17th: (Remixing Class) Whiteness & Blackness in Irish Diaspora

Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, “Slaving” Irish Ladies and Black “Towers of Strength in the Labor World”: Race and Women’s Resistance in Domestic Service,” *Women’s History Review*, Special Issue: “Women, Work, and The State,” (2020): 190-207.

Bronwen Walter, “Whiteness & Diasporic Irishness: Nation, Gender and Class,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 37, 9 (November 2011): 1295-1312.

Week of February 24th—Remixing Class Again: Diasporic Organizing Against Labor Disparities

Sheilena M. Downey, “Precursor to Women of Color Feminism: The International Council of Women of the Darker Races of the World and Their Internationalist Orientation,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*. 19, 2 (October 2020): 271-277.

Constitution: The International Council of Women of the Darker Races of the World, *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs*.

Read all 9 pages of the constitution at this link: https://www.loc.gov/resource/mss42549.mss42549-014_00689_00697/?st=gallery

Emily Balch, ed. “Occupied Haiti: Being the report of a committee of six disinterested Americans representing organizations exclusively American...” New York: The Writers Publishing Company, Inc., 1927.

Read pages 1-15; 82-86; 113-122; and 149-163 of the report.

Week of March 3rd: Diasporic Organizing Against Labor Disparities

Revisiting Mexican(a) Labor History through Feminismo Transfronterista: From Tampico to Texas and Beyond, 1910–1940 Author(s): Sonia Hernández Source: *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Special Issue: Transnational Feminisms (2015), pp. 107-136.

View: “Emma Tenayuca and the 1938 Pecan Shellers Strike,” Documentary, 2020.

<https://vimeo.com/480621468>

Week of March 10th: No class/Submit paper #1 via Canvas

Week of March 17th: No class; Spring Break

Connecting The Dots: Historical Labor Disparities in the Present

Week of March 24th: Intersectionality: The Framework for Understanding Contemporary Workers

Sheri Davis-Faulkner, “Labor Tales of Critical Race Theory: Disrupting Normative in Search of the Transformative.” In *A Racial Reckoning In Industrial Relations: Storytelling As Revolution from Within*. Labor and Employment Research Association Series, 2022.

Tamara Lee and Maite Tapia, “Confronting Race and other Social Identity Erasures: The Case for Critical Industrial Relations Theory,” T. Lee, S. Davis-Faulkner, N. Williams, M. Tapia, eds. *A Racial Reckoning in Industrial Relations: Storytelling As Revolution from Within*. Labor and Employment Research Association Series, 2022.

Week of March 31st: Intersectionality in Contemporary Labor Research

Michelle Holder, “The ‘Double Gap’ and The Bottom Line: African American Women’s Wage Gap And Corporate Profits,” *Roosevelt Institute*. March 2020.

Week of April 7th: Race, Gender, & The Double Gap in Low-Wage Work

Jocelyn Frye, “On the Frontlines at Work and at Home: The Disproportionate Economic Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Women of Color”

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/04/23/483846/frontlines-work-home/>, April 23, 2020.

Center for Women and Work, “COVID-19 & The Gender Wage Gap in New Jersey,” chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Centers/CWW/COVIDWageGap_FactSheet_March2022.pdf, March 2022.

Week of April 14th: Teachers Strikes and Working Conditions

Wegner, Brown, Davis, Leyva, Puente. “Students walk out of schools across Nashville, demand gun reform in Covenant’s wake,” *Nashville Tennessean*. April 3, 2023.

[*Read article and view videos and photographs embedded in it.](#)

<https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/2023/04/03/covenant-school-protests-week-after-the-deadly-nashville-school-shooting/70076073007/>

Emily Wender and Alicia DeMille, “Becoming a Teacher in an Era of School Shootings,” *Issues in Teacher Education*. Fall 2019.

Rhiannon Maton, “Lessons from the Rutgers Strike: Reflecting Six Months Later,” *Spectre*. January 12, 2024.
<https://spectrejournal.com/lessons-from-the-rutgers-strike/>

Week of April 21st: Migration and Poultry Plant Workers in the US & Abroad

“Injustice On Our Plates: Immigrant Women Working in the U.S. Food Industry,” *Southern Poverty Law Center Research Study*, 2010.

<https://www.splcenter.org/20101107/injustice-our-plates>

“Julie Su, Advocate for Immigrant Workers, is Biden’s Pick for Labor Secretary,”

<https://www.npr.org/2023/02/28/1160104766/biden-labor-secretary-nominate-julie-su>

Freshour, Carrie. “Cheap Meat, Cheap Work in the US Poultry Industry: Race, Gender, and Immigration in Corporate Strategies to Shape Labor,” in Elizabeth Ransom and Bill Winders eds., *Global Meat: Social and Environmental Consequences of the Expanding Meat Industry*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019.

View Documentary: “Farm Workers & The Struggle for Immigration Reform.”

Week of April 28th: Work on Paper #2; Discuss paper ideas with Dr. Phillips-Cunningham

May 5th: Submit paper 2 on Canvas by May 5th at 11:59pm