

History of Labor and Work in the U.S. 1880-1945
Labor Studies and Employment Relations
School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University
Fall 2025

Course Number: 37:575:202:07
Day and Time: Mondays and Thursdays, 12:10pm – 1:30pm
Location: Tillett Hall Room 207

Professor: Carmen Martino
Office Location: Labor Education Center, 50 Labor Center Way,
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Contact Info: carmenm@smlr.rutgers.edu
Cell: 609-513-3504

Office Hours: By appointment

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will introduce the important developments and themes of the U.S. labor movement from the end of Reconstruction (1877) through World War II. We will take a close look at how American workers built and organized their unions and communities to defend their interests through wars, depressions and intense conflicts with increasingly powerful owners of wealth and capital. Through examination of these struggles we will gain a deeper understanding of the important historical role played by workers and their trade unions as well as learning about how U.S. citizens responded more broadly to the nature of the workplace in political, social and cultural terms.

II. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

This course meets the writing with revision requirement for the School of Arts and Sciences. In addition to developing your own writing skills through writing successive drafts, you will learn to provide constructive feedback to other students' writing. As part of the writing component, the class instructor(s) will facilitate writing instruction, coordinate peer review sessions on designated days, and assess final writing projects. At the conclusion of the course, students should be able demonstrate an increase in their knowledge and skills in writing/revising academic essays.

Specifically, students should be able to:

- Enter into a dialogue with specialists in a particular field of study;
- Read essays and extract and explain key points and terms;
- Organize a paper from thesis, to topic sentence, to conclusion;
- Interact with texts by using meaningful citations in their papers;
- Use a range of sentence structures; and
- Write meaningful, clear, and organized papers that incorporate thesis development, logic/organization, tone, vocabulary, and spelling.

III. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The following learning objectives of the course are based on Rutgers University's "Permanent Core Curriculum Learning Outcome Goals" (May 2008) and relate to the overall objective of a liberal arts education. A Rutgers student will be able to:

Core Curriculum: SCL, HST, WCr and WCd

- Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time. (HST-1)
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization. (SCL-1)
- 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)
- 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)

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- Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations (Goal 1); and
- Make an argument using contemporary or historical evidence (Goal 4).

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- Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry level professional (Goal I); and
- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation (Goal IV). ☐

IV. EXPECTATIONS

Preparation

We will be covering a lot of ground in a very short time so please do your reading assignments, pay attention to the (Questions to Consider) and come to class ready to discuss what you have learned from the readings and viewings.

Communication

I will communicate with you via email on a weekly basis. Most of the time I will be providing you with updates, reminders, adjustments and/or reworking of the syllabus so please check your Rutgers email account regularly. Feel free to contact me via email with questions or concerns about the course. I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours.

When emailing always include **"History of Labor and Work"** in the subject line of your email.

V. EVALUATION

Final grades will be based on the following:

Attendance/Participation	112	<i>28 classes x 4pts per class = 112</i>
Essay 1 Peer Review	14	<i>You must attend class to complete the peer review and get the points</i>
Essay 1 Draft 2	125	<i>Prof will comment and provide advice for improving final draft</i>
Essay 1 Final	125	<i>Prof will compare final version with Draft 2</i>
Essay 2 Peer Review	14	<i>You must attend class to complete the peer review and get the points</i>
Essay 2 Final	250	
Final Exam (Part A)	250	<i>Comprehensive Take Home Exam</i>
Final Exam (Part B)	110	<i>Zoom Oral Exam (Based on Essay II)</i>
Total	1,000	

Attendance/Participation (28 classes @ 4pts per class = 112pts)

For each class you will have an opportunity to earn a total of **4 pts for Attendance and Participation**. You get points for coming to class and signing the Attendance sheet. So, it is vitally important that you come to every class. Failure to sign the sign-in sheet will result in a loss of attendance and participation points. You can only be excused for an illness, death in the family or other real emergencies. It's important to note that being excused means that you will have an opportunity to make up the class by answering the **“Questions to Consider”** (*see below for more info on Questions to Consider*) for the class you missed. For other excused absences you will need to see me, and we can figure out how best to provide you with an opportunity to earn missed attendance/participation points. And just to clarify, in order to qualify for an excused absence, you need to send me an email prior to the class, or in the case of an emergency, no more than 24 hours after the class.

You earn more points per class based on your contribution to the class discussion. There will be two opportunities to participate—the first opportunity will be in your small group discussions and the second during full class discussions. **In order to get full credit for participation you will need to participate in both the small group and full class discussions.** I will ask for volunteers to keep track of student participation for each class. For purposes of clarity, if you come to class and only participate in small group discussions, you will earn 3.4 out of 4 points. If you come to class and participate in both the small group and full class discussion you will get more points and closer to a perfect score for the day (e.g., a 3.6 or higher).

Peer Review Essay Drafts (2 @ 14pts per draft = 28pts)

Your first drafts of Essays I and II will undergo *in-class peer reviews* where you will read, comment, and make suggested edits to fellow classmates first drafts. The goal is to help each other to improve your essays and improve your own editing skills. Peer review drafts of both

papers are required. You will receive 14 points for conducting the Peer Reviews but to get the points, you have to come to class and review at least 2 papers for each session.

Essay I (Draft 2 @ 125pts + Final Version @ 125pts = 250pts)

Essay I, Draft 2, and the final version, are worth 125pts each for a total of 250pts)

For the first Essay you will submit your 2nd draft (the draft that would follow your peer reviews) for grading, and it will count for 125 points and then a final version for another 125 points.

(**Note:** The 2nd draft is required in order to submit the 3rd and final version!)

One-On-One Writing Conferences

For Essay I, between Draft 2 and the final version of your Essay, you will also have a personal consultation with me. These meetings will be scheduled for Week 8. I will provide details as we get closer to Week 8.

Essay II (250 pts)

For Essay II, you will be required to write a first draft for *Peer Review* (as described above) but will not be required to submit a second draft for grading. The final version of Essay II will count for 250 points.

The Final Exam (Written Take Home @ 250pts + Oral Exam @ 110pts = 360pts)

Part I: The Written Take Home Portion of the Final Exam (Part I - worth 250pts)

The written take home final exam will be comprehensive, and it will cover all course readings, lectures, discussion questions, films, group exercises, etc. You will have one week to complete the final exam. It usually encompasses two prompts, one covering the first half of the course and the other, the second half of the course.

Part II: The Oral Portion of the Final Exam (Part II Based on the Essay II Prompt worth 110pts)

The oral exam will be based on the prompt for Essay 2 and some discussion of the course in general. I will have more to say about it as we progress through the semester. When all is said and done, I want the oral exam to be an opportunity for me to have a final meeting with each of you.

The “Questions to Consider”

In each course module on Canvas, you will find “*Questions to Consider*” and they are posted with each weekly reading assignment. We will use them as the basis for all class discussions (and my “riffs”—*planned and unplanned mini lectures*). You will find the Questions to Consider very useful for helping you know what to look for in the readings. They will help you develop your essays, as well as the take home and oral parts of the final exam.

It is strongly suggested/encouraged that before you do the readings each week (and here I would add that **you must do the readings before the start of each week of class**), you should review the Questions to Consider and try to answer them while you are doing the readings. It will make you a more active reader! In other words, if you answer the questions before the start of each week of class you will be ready to engage the class discussion and that is important because it impacts your “participation” grade for the course. In other words, if you know the answers to

the Questions to Consider, you won't have any problem writing good essays or getting a good grade for class participation!

VI. RU Academic Integrity

(<https://policies.rutgers.edu/B.aspx?BookId=11914&PageId=459231>)

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational, research, and clinical missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community.

The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- make sure that all work submitted in a course, academic research, or other activity is the student's own and created without the aid of impermissible technologies, materials, or collaborations.
- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, images, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with the student's interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students ethically, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This principle requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the ethical standards and professional code of conduct in the field for which the student is preparing.

Use of AI is Prohibited

Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, GPT-4, DALL·E and other AI-based content creation platforms, are strictly prohibited in writing essays and/or completing take-home exams. This prohibition does not extend to AI-powered tools commonly used for proofreading, grammar correction, accessibility checks, Microsoft Word's grammar correction tool, Grammarly, TurnItIn Draft Coach, and Google. Violations of this policy will be treated as academic dishonesty, in accordance with the Rutgers' Academic Integrity Policy on plagiarism and cheating. Please consult with me before using any form of technology that could raise concerns about academic integrity.

VII. DISABILITY STATEMENT

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>.

VIII. STATEMENT OF 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, civic forum.

IX. COURSE READINGS

All materials for this course will be available on the course Canvas website.

X. SYLLABUS

Intros: Are You a Commodity?

Thursday, September 4th

Introductions, course overview, and “*Are You a Commodity?*”

Week 1: Slavery and Free Labor

September 8th – 11th

Readings:

The Wages of Whiteness, Chapter 3, Neither a Servant nor a Master Am I: Key Words in the Language of White Labor Republicanism, pp. 43-64

Who Built America? Prologue—From the Civil War to the Great Uprising of Labor: Reconstructing the Nation, 1865-1877, pp. 3-21

Brecher, Strike! Chapter 1: The Great Upheaval, pp. 13-37

Documentary: The Grand Army of Starvation

Week 2: Labor Republicans, the Knights of Labor and the AFL

September 15th – 18th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 1, pp. 23-49, 70-71

Egerton, Douglas, Gabriel's Rebellion, Chapter 2, An Upright Man, pp. 18-33

Chang, Gordon H., Ghosts of Gold Mountain, Chapter 7, The Strike, pp.138-164

❖ Assign Essay I and explain the Peer Review Worksheet

Review the Rubric

How to write the essay

What does an “A” essay look like?

How we will manage Peer Reviews

Week 3: Labor Republicans, the Knights of Labor and the AFL
September 22th – 25th

Readings:

Gourevitch, Alex, From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the 19th Century, Chapter 2: Independent Laborers by Voluntary Contract, pp. 47-66, and Chapter 3: The Sword of Want, pp. 67-96.

The Monied Metropolis, Chapter 6, pp. 172-195

Week 4: The Triumph of Industrial Capitalism at Home and Abroad (1893-1900)
September 29th – October 2nd

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 2, pp. 77-79, 91-120

The Monied Metropolis, Chapter 9, pp. 279-285

Gourevitch, Alex, From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the 19th Century, Chapter 4: Labor Republicanism and the Cooperative Commonwealth, pp. 97-137.

Documentary: PBS Frontline—COVID-19's Hidden Toll (*What would Labor Republicans have to say about COVID-19 "Essential Workers?"*)

❖ **First Drafts of Essay I due in class for Peer Review Session (Thurs., Oct. 2nd)**

Week 5: Taylorism
October 6th – 9th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 3, pp. 124-157, 167-174

Wilentz, Sean, The Politicians and the Egalitarians, Chapter 9: The Steel Town and the Gilded Age, pp. 233-249

David Montgomery, Workers Control

Andrew Carnegie, Wealth, 1889 (read in class)

"Statement from the Pullman Strikers," pp. 234-236

Documentary: The River Ran Red (The Homestead Strike)

❖ **Draft 2 of Essay I due October 9th @ 11:59PM (125pts)**

Week 6: Taylorism
October 13th – 16th

Readings: (Note: These are required readings for Essay II)

Who Built America? Chapter 4, pp. 181-217;

“Frederick Winslow Taylor Explains,” pp. 205-209

[Braverman H., Labor and Monopoly Capital, Chapter 4: Scientific Management; Chapter 5: The Primary Effects of Scientific Management, pp. 59-95.](#)

“Machinist Testifies on the Taylor System,” pp. 83-85

Adam Smith “Wealth of Nations”

Documentary: A Job at Ford’s

❖ **Assign Prompt for Essay II**

Week 7: Digital Taylorism
October 20th – 23rd

Readings: (Note: These are required readings for Essay II)

Adam Smith [“Wealth of Nations”](#) (Education)

[Rosenthal, Caitlin, Accounting for Slavery, Chapter 3: Slavery’s Scientific Management, pp. 85-120, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, London England, 2019](#)

Brown, Lauder, Ashton, [The Global Auction](#), Chapter 2: The False Promise, pp. 15-28; Chapter 5: Digital Taylorism, pp. 65-82.

Guendelsberger, Emily, [On the Clock](#), Three Weeks to Christmas pp. 58-89

Week 8: Reform and Radicalism in the Progressive Era (Writing Conferences...No Classes)
October 27th – 30th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 5, pp. 223-225, 241-255

What Does the IWW Want?

Gompers, Samuel, What Workers Want

[Gompers / Hillquit Debate](#)

Documentary: The Wobblies

Week 9: World War One and the Lean Years for American Workers (1914-1929)
November 3rd – 6th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 6, pp. 279-280, 292-312, 320-329;

Two anti-war speeches by Eugene V. Debs, pp. 294-298

Joe Hill “The Preacher and the Slave” pp. 117-118

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn Justifies Sabotage pp. 148-150

“O’Connor on the Seattle General Strike,” pp. 151-156

“Steel Mill Worker in 1921,” pp. 132-135

❖ **Final Version of Essay I Due November 7th @ 11:59PM (125pts)**

Week 10: The Great Depression and the New Deal (Part I)
November 10th – 13th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 7, pp. 335-339, 343-352, 375-384
Chapter 8, pp. 391-439

Documentary: The Crash of 1929 and The Road to Rock Bottom

Week 11: The Great Depression and the New Deal (Part II)
November 17th – 20th

Readings:

Brecher, Strike!, Chapter 5: Depression Decade pp. 159-192

Documentaries: The Uprising of 1934

❖ **First Drafts of Essay II due in class for Peer Review Sessions (Wed., Nov. 17th)**

❖ **Sign Ups for Oral Exams**

Week 12: The Great Depression and the New Deal (Part III)
November 24th – 25th (Note: Thursday class held on Tuesday Nov 25th)

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 9, pp. 445-491

“Adamic on the sit-down strike” and “Dollinger Remembers the Flint Sit-down Strike,” pp. 345-349

Jeremy Brecher, Strike!, Chapter 5 Depression Decade pp. 193-235

Documentary: With Babies and Banners

❖ **Final Version of Essay II due Friday, November 28th (250pts)**

❖ **Sign Ups for Oral Exams**

Week 13: Working People and World War II (Raising Expectations)
December 1st – December 4th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 10, pp. 497-547

[Evelyn Gotzision Recalls Factory Work during World War II, pages 139-141](#)

[Marie Baker: Women’s Work in a California Warplane Factory, 1941-’45, pages 334-337](#)

Documentary: Rosie the Riveter

❖ **Sign Ups for Oral Exams**

❖ **Begin Oral Exams (Via Zoom/Tuesday, December 2nd)**

Week 14: Work and Wages: From 1877 to the Present (Including You and Me!)
December 8th - Last Class

Readings:

Sherna Berger Gluck, Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War and Social Change, Interview with Marie Baker (1987)

Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, Opportunities Lost and Found: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement,” Journal of American History, 75 (December 1988)

❖ **Continue Oral Exams**

December 11th – 23rd

❖ **Take Home Final Exam due date to be determined (250pts)**

❖ **Continue/Complete Oral Exams**