



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

37:575: 202 (Section 08) – Spring 2020

Instructor: Mike Slott  
Phone #: 973-979-0703 (cell)  
Email: ptslott@smlr.rutgers.edu

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This 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 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 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)

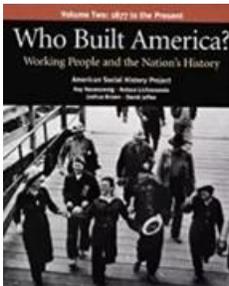
### **Instructor's Learning Objectives:**

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.

**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***, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. Most of the readings are **primary sources and will be noted** in the syllabus – i.e. they are from the time period discussed in the text. Other readings are secondary sources; they are interpretations and evaluations of the events or developments.

The primary sources are from the following books:

- ***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, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2003.
- ***Voices of a People's History of the United States (VPHUS)***, edited by H. Zinn and A. Arnove, Seven Stories Press, 2004.
- ***Voices of Freedom: Documentary History, volume 2 (VOF)***, edited by Eric Foner, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., W.W. Norton & Co., 2014.
- ***The Voice of the People (VOP)***, edited by J. Rees and J. Pollack, Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2004.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### **Class #1: INTRODUCTION & KEY THEMES OF THE COURSE**

Jan. 21

Readings:

- Course Syllabus & Calendar
- Class Hand-outs

### **Class #2: REVIEW OF EARLY U.S. LABOR HISTORY & THE RAILROAD STRIKES OF THE 1870s**

Jan. 28

Readings:

- Slott and Voos, "A Very Brief History of U.S. Labor until 1877," pp. 1-4.
- Gutman, "Trouble on the Railroads in 1873-1874: Prelude to the 1877 Crisis?" in *The Labor History Reader*, pp. 132-152 (1985).
- Brecher, "The Great Upheaval," pp. 138-148. [Primary Source - MPHAW]

**→Assignment due Jan. 28: Response Paper/Writing Assignment 1 – Submit to Canvas and bring two copies of the paper to class for the Peer Review and Edit assignment.**

### **Class #3: INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM IN THE GILDED AGE (1880 to 1893)**

Feb. 4

Readings:

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

In-class small group discussion project – Social Darwinism

**→Assignment due Feb. 4: Submit the Peer Review and Edit of another student's Response Paper/Writing Assignment 1 to Canvas.**

**→Assignment due Friday, Feb. 7: Each group's responses to questions on Social Darwinism are submitted to Canvas by one the group's members.**

### **Class #4: WORKING PEOPLE'S RESPONSES TO INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM (1880 to 1893)**

Feb. 11

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 2

In-class small group discussion project – The video, *The River Ran Red*

**→Assignment due Friday, Feb. 14: Each group's responses to questions on *The River Ran Red* are submitted to Canvas by one the group's members.**

**Class #5: INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM TRIUMPHS (1893 to 1900)**

Feb. 18

- WBA? Chapter 3
- "Statement from the Pullman Strikers" (1894), pp. 234-236. [Primary Source - VPHUS]
- "The Populist Platform" (1892), pp. 48-53. [Primary Source - VOF]

**→ Assignment due Feb. 18: First Draft of Writing Assignment 2. Submit to Canvas and bring two copies to class for the Peer Review and Edit 2 assignment.**

**Class #6: THE TRANSFORMATION OF WORK AND HOME (1900 to 1914)**

Feb. 25

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 4 - pp. 180-202.
- "Machinist Orrin Cheney Testifies to Congress on the Taylor System of Shop Management" (1911), pp. 83-85. [Primary Source - VOP]

In-class small group discussion project – Scientific management/Taylorism

**→Assignment due Feb. 25: Submit Peer Review and Edit of another student's Writing Assignment 2 to Canvas.**

**→Assignment due Friday, Feb. 28: Each group's responses to questions on Scientific Management/Taylorism are submitted to Canvas by one the group's members.**

**Class #7: REFORM AND RADICALISM IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA (1900 TO 1914)**

March 3

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 5
- “Radical Alternatives,” pp. 134-137. [Primary Source - AL]
- “The Industrial Workers of the World and the Free Speech Fights” (1909), pp. 83-87. [Primary Source - VOF]
- “Proclamation of the Striking Textile Workers of Lawrence” (1912), pp. 272-275. [Primary Source - VOPH]

In-class small group discussion project – The video, *The Triangle Fire*

→Assignment due March 3: Final Version of Writing Assignment 2. Submit to Canvas.

→Assignment due Friday, March 6: Each group’s responses to questions on *The Triangle Fire* are submitted to Canvas by one the group’s members.

**Class #8: THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I ON LABOR; POST-WAR BACKLASH (1914 to 1920)**

March 10

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 6
- “Post-War Backlash,” pp. 149-154. [Primary Source - AL]
- Harvey O’Connor Remembers the Seattle General Strike” (1919), pp. 151-156. [Primary Source - VOP]

**Assignment on March 10: Students will take an “open book” 1<sup>st</sup> mid-term exam based on questions from “Check Your Understanding” for Class #1 through Class #8.**

**SPRING BREAK – March 14 to March 22**  
**No class on March 17**

**Class #9: THE “LEAN YEARS” FOR AMERICAN WORKERS (1920 to 1929)**

March 24

Readings:

- WBA? Ch. 7

In-class small group discussion project – The video, *Matewan*

→Assignment due Friday, March 27: Each group's responses to questions on *Matewan* are submitted to Canvas by one the group's members.

**Class #10: THE GREAT DEPRESSION & THE FIRST NEW DEAL (1929 to 1934)**  
March 31

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 8
- "Depression," pp. 176-186. [Primary Source - AL]
- "Rose Chernin on Organizing the Unemployed in the Bronx in the 1930s" (1949), pp. 340-344. [Primary Source - VOPH]

In-class small group discussion project – Do we need a new Civilian Conservation Corps.?

→Assignment due Friday, April 3: Each group's responses to questions on the need for a new CCC are submitted to Canvas by one the group's members.

**Class #11: LABOR UPSURGE: FDR'S SECOND NEW DEAL (1935 to 1939)**  
April 7

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 9

In-class small group discussion project – From Social Security to Medicare for All?

→Assignment due Friday, April 10: Each group's responses to questions on the need for Medicare for All are submitted to Canvas by one the group's members.

**Class #12: LABOR UPSURGE: THE INDUSTRIAL UNION MOVEMENT (1935 to 1939)**  
April 14

Readings:

- "Industrial Union Upsurge," pp. 187-193). [Primary Source - AL]
- "For UAW Shop Stewards: 'How to Win for the Union'" (1941), pp. 298-301. [Primary Source - MPHAW]
- "Steelworkers Organizing Committee, a New Declaration of Independence" (1936), pp. 163-166. [Primary Source - VOF]

→Assignment due April 14: First Draft of Writing Assignment 3. Submit to Canvas and bring two copies to class for the Peer Review and Edit assignment of another student's Writing Assignment 3.

### Class #13: WORKING PEOPLE & WORLD WAR II (1939 to 1946)

April 21

Reading:

- WBA? Chapter 10 – pp. 491 – 541.
- "World War II" (pp. 194-205). [Primary Source - AL]
- "Race and Gender during World War II" (1941-1945), pp. 329-337. [Primary Source - MPHAW]

In-class small group discussion project – The video, *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*

→Assignment due April 21: Submit Peer Review and Edit of another student's Writing Assignment 3 to Canvas.

→Assignment due Friday, April 24: Each group's responses to questions on *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* are submitted to Canvas by one the group's members.

### Class #14: THE STATUS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR II

April 28

Reading:

- WBA? Chapter 10 - pp. 541-547.
- Lichtenstein, "From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining," in a *Contest of Ideas: Capital, Politics, and Labor*, pp. 79-99, (2013). Originally published in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, (1989).

→Assignment due April 28: Final Version of Writing Assignment 3. Submit to Canvas

### Final Assignment - Exam

May 7 to May 8

Assignment is available on Canvas on Thursday, May 7 and Friday, May 8. Students will take an "open book" 2<sup>nd</sup> mid-term exam based on questions from "Check Your Understanding" for Class #9 through Class #14.

## 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:

Grades are based on the following components:

#### #1 – Small Group Discussion Projects

During the semester, small groups will discuss four labor history videos as well as several topics in class. Responses to questions on the video or topic will be submitted by one student in each group. Each group response = 25 points.  $8 \times 25 = 200$  points = **20%** of the grade

#### #2 – Peer Review/Edit of another Student's Writing Assignment:

Each peer review = 50 points.  $3 \times 50 = 150$  points = **15%** of the grade

#### #3 – Writing Assignments:

Response Paper/Writing Assignment 1 = 50 points  
First Draft of Writing Assignment 2 = 50 points  
Final Version of Writing Assignment 2 = 100 points  
First Draft of Writing Assignment 3 = 50 points  
Final Version of Writing Assignment 3 = 100 points  
Total = **350** points = **35%** of the grade

***Please note: Unless there is prior notification and a legitimate reason, all late writing assignments will be downgraded  $\frac{1}{2}$  a letter grade (e.g. A  $\rightarrow$  B+)***

#### #4 – Mid-term Exams:

Each mid-term exam will be based on the questions listed in "Check Your Understanding" for each class. The exams will be "open book." Each exam = 150 points.  $2 \times 150 = 300$  points = **30%** of the grade.

**Total Course Points = 1000 = 100% of the grade**  
**Attendance and Lateness Policy:**

Students are expected to attend each class and be on time. If a student provides notification to the instructor prior to the class and has a valid reason that she/he will be late or absent (work, family, or personal issues), the absence or lateness will be excused. However, if no notification is not provided, each absence or lateness will be counted toward the following deduction in points:

Total of 3 to 5 unexcused lateness or absences: - 50 points

Total of 6 or more unexcused lateness or absences - 100 points