

## History of Labor and Work in the United States, 1880 to 1945

Rutgers University 37:575:202:06 *Tentative – Subject to Change*  
Spring 2022

“If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will...”

- Frederick Douglass (1855) *From My Bondage and My Freedom*

“The past is never dead. It's not even past.”

- William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951)

“Anyone reading history should understand from the start that there is no such thing as impartial history. All written history is partial in two senses. It is partial in that it is only a tiny part of what really happened. That is a limitation that can never be overcome. And it is partial in that it inevitably takes sides, by what it includes or omits, what it emphasizes or deemphasizes. It may do this openly or deceptively, consciously or subconsciously.”

- Howard Zinn, *Declarations of Independence* (1990)

...They will come to understand that consciousness is not changed by lessons, lectures and eloquent sermons, but by the action of human beings on the world. Consciousness does not arbitrarily create reality.”

- Paulo Freire, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation*

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## Overview

**Course schedule:** Mondays, 5:40- 8:40 pm, January 24 – May 2, 2022. Remote class meetings held on Zoom and in-person class meetings held Scott Hall 101. Discussion forums, paper assignments and exams on Canvas unless indicated otherwise by instructor.

**Instructor:** Prof. Joe Catania

**Email:** [jc2912@smlr.rutgers.edu](mailto:jc2912@smlr.rutgers.edu) (Preference is to message instructor through Canvas)

*Virtual office hours by appointment on Zoom or after in person class.*

**Course format:** Remote to start and then in person. This course uses the Rutgers Canvas course management system, accessible at <https://canvas.rutgers.edu>. Click “NetID Login” on the right side of the main Canvas site. Once you log in, you can access the course site by clicking the “Courses” tab. The course site features the syllabus and weekly modules with the reading, viewing, and writing assignments. You must submit all assignments in Canvas unless indicated otherwise by instructor.

## Course Description:

This course will explore the history of working people in the United States from the end of Reconstruction through the end of World War II. Through looking at labor history, we will learn about social and political history in this pivotal period in the lives of the ordinary people of the United States.

This course is aimed primarily at students who have little or no experience with college-level history and assumes no prior knowledge of the historical developments we will cover.

We will examine and discuss how American workers built labor unions, civil rights organizations, and social movements to defend their interests during wars, depressions, and periods of conflict with those who controlled wealth and capital. You will learn about the origins and purpose of labor unions and worker organizing; the political agenda and goals of labor unions; the impact of labor unions and worker organizing on politics, the economy and culture; and finally, you will learn about the strategies and tactics of labor unions and workers. By focusing on the struggles of ordinary people, we will learn about some of the people, ideas, and institutions that shaped the labor movement, while also exploring the workplace and the economy in political, social, and cultural terms. Importantly, this course will challenge some of the assumptions you may have U.S. society and will require you to step outside of your comfort zone in thinking about the relationship between historical and contemporary social problems and possible solutions and alternatives.

This course will take a "bottom-up" approach to history. We will not prioritize stories and interpretations from the perspective of the powerful, although those will be part of the course. We will focus on the stories of the "grassroots," the working people of the United States. In doing so, the course will focus on race, class and gender with a particular emphasis on the conflicts between labor and capital. We will emphasize the fundamental conflicts and the social movements that have shaped the country's social, political and economic life, making the country better through collective action and organizing for social justice.

A basic assumption of the course is that one cannot understand the United States today without an understanding of our treatment of Native Americans, the role of slavery and the construction of race, whiteness and structural racism. The United States as we live in it today was not inevitable. It is the result of choices, great effort and the exercise of power, and it was and is full of intense struggle and conflict. As you study, I will ask you to apply an intersectional lens (race, class, gender) to all course materials, readings and discussions. I will ask you to trace connections of the current moment to episodes, decisions and forces between 1880-1945. While telling the stories about the impact of the powerful, we will also privilege the agency of the powerless in society during the time-period of this course— 1880-1945 - studying how working people, the oppressed and less privileged people of the United States shaped and wrote their own histories.

Many students tend to think of studying history as memorizing names and dates. Facts are certainly important, and I expect you will know more information about the history of working people and trade unions at the end of the course than in the beginning. *But new information is*

*only part of historical study.* The first step is to learn to ask questions of the past: What happened? Why did it happen? Does it matter? Why does it matter? How does our point of view shape the answers? Seeking new information and evaluating its reliability are probably the next steps, followed by tentative answers, and then perhaps by new questions. Dedicated historians never run out of questions, but eventually we must pause and formulate some answers both orally and in writing. Learning to pursue the question-and-answer part of history will be our fundamental goal in this class.

**The course takes up the themes through these central historical questions:**

1. What is the story of workers in the United States?
2. How do people create positive social change?
3. Can democracy and capitalism co-exist? Can capitalism exist without inequality (based on race, class or gender)?

What are/will be your questions about this history?

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**Required Readings:** Many of the reading assignments will be chapters from the following textbook, which has been digitized and is available for you on the course Canvas site. You may purchase a copy of the third edition of the textbook if you prefer a hard copy.

Rosenzweig, Roy and Lichtenstein, Nelson eds. *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's History Volume Two: Since 1877*. Third Edition. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin Press, 2008.

In addition to the textbook, there are other required materials, including primary sources, videos, podcasts, etc. that I will assign either in class meetings or on Canvas in the modules. I will post readings other than the required text as PDF files, video files or web links in the Canvas modules. Some of the additional readings are primary source documents written in the past that provide perspectives and insight on historical developments and events. Other additional readings are secondary source commentaries and historical analyses written after the events have taken place.

The course content is organized by **Modules** in Canvas. Each module will be aligned with chapter(s) readings in the assigned text or a specific topic.

**Modules:** Your work in the modules includes:

- Independent reading from assigned text that will provide the foundation for the topics we discuss.
- Discussion (Based on readings with specific prompts) in groups.
- Slide presentations, podcasts or videos intended to provide a historical overview of the topic and to expose you to different perspectives than in the text.

- Interesting online primary and secondary source documents (visual images, speeches, interviews, and videos) for your analysis and interpretation.
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## Skills development:

This course meets the writing distribution requirement for the School of Arts and Sciences. In addition to developing writing skills through writing successive drafts, students will learn to provide constructive feedback to their peers. The instructor will meet with students for one-on-one conferences, provide feedback on draft papers and assess final papers. At the conclusion of the course, students will demonstrate an increase in their knowledge and skills in writing and revising academic essays.

### **Specifically, students should be able to:**

- Enter 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.

## Learning Objectives:

This course covers several School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR), and Labor Studies and Employment Relations (LSER) Department learning objectives.

### **School of Arts and Sciences:**

*Students will learn to:*

*HST-1:* Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time.

*SCL-1:* Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.

*WCR:* 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.

*WCD:* 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.

### **School of Management and Labor Relations:**

*Students will learn to:*

*I:* Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry-level professional.

IV: Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation.

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department:

*Students will learn to:*

1: Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations.

4: Make an argument using contemporary or historical evidence.

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## Course Requirements:

Read the entire syllabus and make sure you understand it. Be prepared for class. Always complete any reading, discussion and writing assignments by their due dates. Check Canvas regularly for class announcements. At the beginning of the course, we will have synchronous (live) class meetings on Zoom and then in-person class meetings when we are allowed to return to campus. In addition, we will have discussion forums or other assignments that you will during the week. You should participate fully in these forums and assignments.

## Evaluation

**Attendance and Participation** (includes in class and online discussion forums): 20%

**Paper 1** (draft, peer review and final version): 20%

**Midterm Exam**: 20%

**Paper 2** (draft, peer review and final version): 20%

**Final Exam**: 20%

## Attendance

I expect you to attend all classes; however, I know that we are in an unusual time and that sometimes life requires you to be absent from class. However, your grade for attendance and participation will decline each time you are absent, late, or leave early without communicating this advance to me through a Canvas message. If you are late or leave early, you will be charged with one half of a class absence. If you have a legitimate reason for your absence, lateness or need to leave early, it must be provided to us in writing in advance or immediately after the occurrence using the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

## Writing Assignments

The course is designed to help you learn the history of working people AND become a better writer. Writing requires practice, revision and editing. The writing workshop or peer review—in which students respond to their peers' works-in-progress—is a very important part of the course. My expectation is that you will respond to each other's work seriously and critically and approach each essay with sensitivity, insight and imagination.

For both major writing assignments, we will have an in-class workshop/peer review after you have submitted first versions. The peer editing form will guide you through the process. There will also be individual conferences where I will provide feedback on your drafts before you write the final version of your paper.

All paper drafts, peer reviews and writing conferences must be completed for full credit on the assignment. You will submit all drafts of your papers electronically on Canvas and they will be checked using Turnitin. You will write two papers this semester, on topics to be announced. Each accounts for 20% of your final grade. You will write a drafts and a final version of each. All are mandatory, as is participation in peer review. If you miss a peer review session, it is your responsibility to make it up, or you will receive no credit for it. Missing your writing conference, or coming unprepared, will earn you a significant reduction on your paper grade. Each part of the process counts toward your final assignment grade. I expect an honest attempt at a full paper for all drafts. It is your responsibility to make sure you turn in each draft and your peer editing form. Declining to make substantial changes to your drafts (unless otherwise advised) will result in a failing grade. Turning in no final paper, or turning in only a final paper, or turning in the same paper multiple times, will result in a failing grade.

**Late assignments:** All late paper assignments will be marked down 10 points for every 24-hour period they are late. All drafts, peer reviews, and writing conferences have point values. If you have a severe personal emergency that makes it impossible for you to meet the deadlines, please contact me through a Canvas message.

### Policy on Electronic Devices in the Classroom

- 1) All students in our classroom community have an equal right to a distraction-free educational environment that is most conducive to presence, focus and learning. I do encourage the use of laptops to access course materials posted on Canvas and to complete assignments in class. There are also times when I may ask you to use your smart phone. However, the unnecessary or unapproved use of electronic devices in the classroom ("multitasking") is distracting and unfair to other students and to me.
- 2) You may use your laptop computers to access online readings or assignments. Otherwise, your laptop computers and other electronic devices must be closed. Computers may not be used during full-class discussions or during documentary film showings or presentations.
- 3) You must put your cell phones away and on silent or vibrate. If you need to use your phone in any way, please step out of the classroom or wait for a break.

### Communication

- I will always leave time in class for a “check-in” on how you are doing and if you have any general questions re: the course or assignments.
- If your question is *specific to your situation*, then you should send me a message through Canvas to get the quickest response. I am happy to meet with you by

appointment. I will have a very brief time after class to schedule appointments or answer a quick question, but generally I want you to send me a message so we can schedule to meet by zoom or in person and I can ensure I give you sufficient time and attention.

- Be sure to include the full "COURSE ID" [202] in the subject of all messages.
- You can generally expect a response within 24 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. If you do not hear back within 24 hours, please resend your message.

### Student communication

I encourage students in the course to organize themselves and communicate directly with each other. Please consider creating your own communication channel using an app of your choice. Prior to posting a question or comment, always check the syllabus, announcements and with fellow students before reaching out to me.

### Reporting Absences

If you have a legitimate reason for not being able to participate in course activities (due to COVID-19, serious illness, or another major reason), report it in writing in advance or as soon as possible using the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>. Not all absences will be excused. The participation grade will be based on discussion forums, but I will deduct points for unexcused absences from class meetings.

Absences due to illness. If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or any other transmissible disease (cold, flu, etc.), or have been told to quarantine, you must remain at home and not attend in-person class meetings. Please report absences in writing in advance or as soon as possible using the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>. Medical documentation is not required for reporting absences. Students with excused absences will be able to make up missed course work.

Mask requirement. To protect the health and well-being of all members of the University community, masks must be worn by all persons on campus when in the presence of others (within six feet) and in buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, workstations, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). Masks must be worn during in-person class meetings. Any student not wearing a mask will be asked to leave.

Masks should conform to CDC guidelines and should completely cover the nose and mouth:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Each day before you arrive on campus or leave your residence hall, you must complete the brief survey on the My Campus Pass symptom checker self-screening app.

### Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

Academic integrity requires that all academic work be the product of an identified individual or individuals. Joint efforts are legitimate only when the assistance of others is explicitly acknowledged and permitted by the assignment. Ethical conduct is the obligation of every

member of the university community, and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses. Students must assume responsibility for maintaining honesty in all work submitted for credit and in any other work designated by the instructor of this course. Students are also expected to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the instructor or dean of the instructional unit. For more information on the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, see <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy>

**Disability Statement:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all 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: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

**Statement on Academic Freedom:** Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. This course 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.

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The syllabus, schedule, and assignments are subject to change as the course evolves.

Weekly Class Schedule:

[Week 1: Introduction and First Discussion Assignment](#)

[Week 2: The Knights of Labor](#)

[Week 3: Industrial Capitalism and Workers in the Gilded Age](#)

[Week 4: The IWW, The UMWA, and Mother Jones; Paper 1 Drafts 1 and 2 and Peer Review](#)

[Week 5: Race, Immigration, and Exclusion](#)

[Week 6: Writing Conferences](#)

[Week 7: The Uprising of the 20,000 and the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire](#)

[Week 8: World War I and The Red Scare; Midterm Exam](#)

[Week 9: Work in the Roaring Twenties](#)

[Week 10: The Great Depression and the First New Deal](#)

[Week 11: The Rise of the CIO and the Second New Deal; Paper 2 Drafts 1 and 2 and Peer Review](#)

[Week 12: Working in the Arsenal of Democracy](#)

[Week 13: Writing Conferences](#)

[Week 14: Paper 2 Final Draft; Final Exam Review](#)

Final Exam tentatively scheduled for May 4 – 10



### Rutgers COVID-19 Information

For up-to-date information about Rutgers and COVID-19, visit <https://coronavirus.rutgers.edu>.

### Additional Help with Writing

[The Rutgers Learning Centers](#) offers remote writing coaching services to students enrolled in this course. Visit <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/services/writing-coaching> for more information.

### Student Affairs

[The Office of the Dean of Students](#) provides support to students who may be facing exceptional difficulties that could jeopardize their education. Visit their website to learn more about the type of support they offer and/or to schedule an appointment.

### Health & Wellness

[Student Health & Wellness Services](#) provides health services to students on its various campuses through Student Health Centers.

### Technical Support

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem with Canvas:

Visit the [Canvas Video Guide](#)

Contact [Rutgers IT Help Desk](#) (<https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support>, call 833-OIT-HELP)

Visit the [Getting Started in Canvas page](#)