

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

37:575:202 (Section 82) – Spring 2022

Instructor: John Lavin

Meeting Time: Mondays 6:00 to 8:40 pm

Location: Mercer County Community College

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(Above Painting) "The Uprising" by Diego Rivera, 1931.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the basic human rights at task in North American labor relations for the period from the end of the Civil War & Reconstruction (1880) to the end of World War II (1945). Course themes include: an array of labor negotiation philosophies; changes in workplace technology; the founding of worker organizations; the impact of racial injustice; women's struggle for equality/equity in employment; rights for union membership; the connections between employment and civil rights.

We will witness how labor unions emerged in the Modern period and how workers' organizations struggled to evolve with economic, political, and cultural shifts. We will examine *who* labor unions represented, *what* they sought to accomplish, and *how* race and gender became bases for discrimination that denied justice and opportunity to millions of workers. In addition, how capitalism as a system and the corporation as a concept came to define labor and employment policy from the Age of Industrialism to the Present.

We will also examine how labor unions' 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 devastating conditions of the Great Depression of the 1930s, workers organized more powerful unions and became a central element of a new, progressive coalition which reshaped our economy and political system.

### **Course Structure**

This course will blend synchronous and asynchronous modes of instruction with in-person instruction. Some lectures will be recorded and posted to Canvas, where students will also conduct group discussions. However, our weekly meetings on Monday evenings at 6:00 to 8:40 p.m. are compulsory and will be crucial to conveying the essential concepts of our semester's deliberations of History. You are expected to be available for the full three hours every time this class is scheduled to meet. Note: We will most likely not meet the full three hours, but it is important that you be present.

### **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.

Our course includes peer review/editing and forum discussions involving a group of students, and several of our learning objectives concern the process of interaction between students.

- To demonstrate an ability to communicate clearly, authentically, and maintain a content-oriented focus in response to other students' work.
- To maintain a positive and respectful attitude when interacting with other students, especially those who have different views and opinions.

### **Cheating/plagiarism**

Students in this class and in all courses at Rutgers University are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Cheating, plagiarism in written work, receiving and providing unauthorized assistance, and sabotaging the work of others are among the behaviors that constitute violations of the Academic Integrity Policy. You are expected to be familiar with this policy. If you have questions about specific assignments, be sure to check with the instructor. The Academic Integrity Policy defines all forms of cheating and the procedures for dealing with violations. You should be familiar with this policy. The trust between the instructor and the class depends on your acceptance of this essential principle of behavior in the University. Do your own work and do not provide unauthorized assistance to others and you will find this course more rewarding.

**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>.

### **EVALUATION**

#### **Written assignments**

You will write two essays this semester, on topics to be announced. Each essay accounts for 20% of your final grade. You will write several drafts of each. All are mandatory, as is participation in peer review. There will also be two essay-based exams (a Mid-Term and a Final); each of these exams will be worth 20% of your grade (see rubric on page 15 of this syllabus). Please see the descriptions of your Essay Assignments and

Examinations at the end of this syllabus. In addition, your participation in our class counts for 20% of your grade, which will include your involvement in class discussions and activities such as your developing and posting weekly essay questions for our Midterm and Final Exams.

Grades	
Participation	20%
Essay #1 (on Reparations)	20%
Essay #2 (Biography)	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

### **Course Participation.**

Students are required to attend weekly meetings and to participate in discussions of films, readings, and other materials posted on the Course Canvas site and identified by the Syllabus as “required reading.”

Each week every student will be required to identify an “Exam Question” by participating in discussions of the topic for the week. All members of our class will participate by posting Exam Questions that the instructor will use to prompt short essays on both the Midterm and Final Exams (see the rubric for exam question in our course syllabus).

Students’ participation grade (20%) will be based upon the weekly submission of an Exam Question that reflects the topics raised in our course. The questions will be developed and shared on our Canvas Module page. Every student must submit an Exam Question to our Canvas site by Saturday of each week (see deadline dates on Assignments page). First Exam Question is due: January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Participation Grade Will Be Based Upon:**

Attendance and Contribution to Class Meetings (33 Points)

Exam Questions (33 Points)

Final Meeting/Correspondence with Instructor (34 Points)

At the conclusion of course (April/May), instructor will review class documents and assess students’ participation by interviewing each student about their experience composing questions for our Midterm & Final Exams and writing short essays to answer the Exam Questions as well as the longer Essays (**on Reparations** and **Biography**) that are required for our course.

## Lateness Policy

All late assignments will be marked down. One grade will be deducted for every 24-hour period (or portion thereof) your paper is late. That is, a B paper will turn into a C paper if it is up to 24 hours late, and into a D paper if it is up to 48 hours late. While the drafts are not assigned letter grades, failing to turn them or turning them in late will have the same effect on the final draft you hand in for a grade.

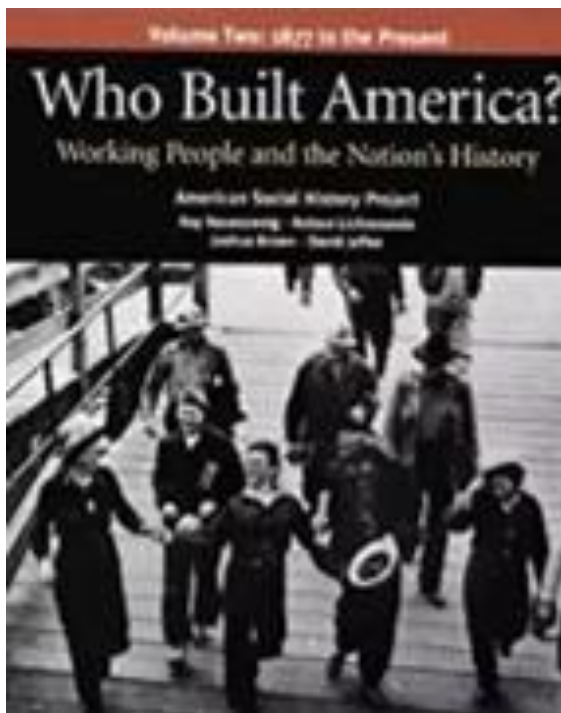
**You must complete all written assignments in order to receive credit for this course.**

We will turn back all assignments in a timely manner. If we do not turn back your assignment, it is your job to bring this to our attention. If you believe we have not recorded a grade for an assignment you have turned in, you must clear this up during the semester. After the semester is over, we will not be able to consider claims that you turned in an assignment if we have no record of it.

## COURSE READINGS:

1. ***Who Built America?: Working People and the Nation's History***, 3rd 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 online 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.



## Evaluation Breakdown

Attendance and participation: 20%

Essay #1: 20%

Essay #2: 20%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

### **Grading Criteria**

A 90-100%

B+ 85-90%

B 80-85%

C+ 75-80%

C 70-75%

D 60-69%

F 59% and below

### **Class attendance**

You are expected to attend each of our scheduled Monday evening Zoom Sessions, and to be on time. Be punctual and plan to stay for the entire class. Students who repeatedly arrive late and leave at break will have their grades lowered. If you need to leave early, see me before class; otherwise you are expected to remain until the class is over.

### **Statement on 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.

Please note that the syllabus may change during the semester as I deem necessary.

## Weekly Schedule



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL AFL-CIO, JANUARY 1961

<p><b><i>(Week One)</i></b>  <b><i>January 24<sup>TH</sup></i></b>  Introduction to Labor History, Civil Rights, and Social Justice.</p>	<p><b>Required Activities:</b>  Review of Syllabus, Assignments, Grading Process. Discussion of Films, Readings, and Topics in Labor History.</p> <p><b>Text: “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Address to AFL-CIO, December 11, 1961”</b>  <i>(See Module, Labor History Orientation/Canvas)</i></p>	<p><b><u>Due January 29<sup>th</sup></u></b>   Exam Question:  Civil Rights Movement and U.S. Labor History</p>
<p><b><i>(Week Two)</i></b>  <b><i>January 31<sup>st</sup></i></b>  Women’s Rights, Labor &amp; Education</p>	<p><b>Required Activities:</b>  Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules); Discussion of Midterm Exam.</p> <p><b><i>“The Women of Summer” Film</i></b>  <i>(Viewed &amp; Discussed in Class)</i></p>	<p><b><u>Due February 5<sup>th</sup></u></b>   Exam Question:  The Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers</p>
<p><b><i>(Week Three)</i></b>  <b><i>February 7<sup>th</sup></i></b>  Introduction to Labor History, Workers’ Rights</p>	<p><b>Required Activities:</b>  Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules);</p> <p><b><i>Films on Railway Strike of 1877</i></b>  <i>(Viewed &amp; Discussed in Class)</i></p>	<p><b><u>Due February 12<sup>th</sup></u></b>   Exam Question:  Labor &amp; Striking Workers’ Rights</p>
<p><b><i>(Week Four)</i></b>  <b><i>February 14<sup>th</sup></i></b>   Xenophobia &amp; Immigrant Workers’</p>	<p><b>Required:</b>  Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules);</p> <p><b><i>Essay, Irish Immigration/Labor History</i></b></p>	<p><b><u>Due February 19<sup>th</sup></u></b>   Exam Question:  On Criminalizing Immigrant Workers</p>

Rights	(Viewed & Discussed in Class)	
<b>(Week Five)</b> <b>February 21<sup>st</sup></b>  Sacco & Vanzetti Trial	<b>Required:</b> Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules);  <b><i>Sacco &amp; Vanzetti Trial: Film</i></b> <i>(Viewed &amp; Discussed in Class)</i>	<b><u>Due February 26<sup>th</sup></u></b> <b><i>Rough Draft Essay #1 Due.</i></b>  Exam Question: Sacco & Vanzetti Trial
<b>(Week Six)</b> <b>February 28<sup>th</sup></b>  Puerto Rican Perspectives	<b>Required:</b> Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules);  <b><u>Midterm Exam Sent Out: February 28th.</u></b>  <b><i>The Jones Act</i></b> <i>(Viewed &amp; Discussed in Class)</i>	<b><u>Due March 5<sup>th</sup></u></b> Exam Question: Puerto Rican Perspectives
<b>(Week Seven)</b> <b>March 7<sup>th</sup></b> Writing Worker Biography	<b>Required:</b> Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules);  <b><i>Biographical Accounts</i></b> <i>(Viewed &amp; Discussed in Class)</i>	<b><u>Due March 12<sup>th</sup></u></b> <b><i>Final Draft Essay #2</i></b>  Exam Question: The art of workers' life stories
<b>(Week Eight)</b> <b>March 21<sup>st</sup></b> A. Philip Randolph	<b>Required:</b> <b><i>Biography of A. Philip Randolph &amp; The National Labor Relations Act</i></b> Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules);  <i>(Viewed &amp; Discussed in Class)</i>	<b><u>Due March 26<sup>th</sup></u></b> Biography of A. Philip Randolph  <b><i>Midterm Exam Due (3/26/22)</i></b>
	Identify Subject for Biography: March 12 <sup>th</sup>	
<b>(Week Nine)</b> <b>March 28<sup>th</sup></b> Rosie the Riveter	<b>Required:</b> <b><i>Rosie, The Riveter (Documentary Film)</i></b> Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules);	<b><u>Due April 2<sup>nd</sup></u></b>  Exam Question: Rosie, The Riveter



	List of Biographical sources: March 26 <sup>th</sup>	
<b>(Week Ten)</b> <b>April 4<sup>th</sup></b> <i>On The Waterfront</i>	<b>Required:</b> Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules);  <i>On The Waterfront (Discussion in Class)</i>  <hr/> Develop Timeline for Biographical Essay: April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b><u>Due April 9<sup>th</sup></u></b> Exam Question: Taft Hartley Act
<b>(Week Eleven)</b> <b>April 11<sup>th</sup></b> Dolores Huerta	<b>Required:</b> Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules);  <b><i>Dolores Huerta (Documentary Film)</i></b> <i>(Viewed &amp; Discussed in Class)</i>	<b><u>Due April 16<sup>th</sup></u></b> <b><i>Rough Draft Essay #2</i></b>  Exam Question: Dolores Huerta
<b>(Week Twelve)</b> <b>April 18<sup>th</sup></b>  <i>Review of Course</i>	<b>Required:</b> Required Readings/Viewing (see Canvas Modules);  <b><i>Discussion of Essay #2</i></b> <i>(Viewed &amp; Discussed in Class)</i>	<b><u>Due April 23<sup>rd</sup></u></b> <b><i>Final Draft Essay #2</i></b>
<b>(Week Thirteen)</b> <b>April 25<sup>th</sup></b>  <i>Review of Course</i>	<b>Required:</b> <b><i>Discussion of Biography Assignment</i></b>	<b><u>Due April 30<sup>th</sup></u></b> Reflection on Course

<b><i>Finals Meeting</i></b> <b><i>Finals Week</i></b> <b><i>(May 2<sup>nd</sup>)</i></b>  <i>Review of Course</i>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Final Exam Sent Out: April 29<sup>th</sup></u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Discussion of Final Exam</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Final Examination Due: May 9<sup>th</sup></u></b></p>
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**Rough Draft of Essay #1 Due on February 26<sup>th</sup>. Final Draft Due on March 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**Essay Assignment**

**Speaking in 1961 to a national leadership conference of labor unions, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated,**

***“Less than a century ago the laborer had no rights, little or no respect, and led a life which was socially submerged and barren.”***

***You will compose an essay of five pages:***

- 1. Providing an historical example of Dr. King’s claim and explaining the struggle for “rights” of a particular group of workers in the United States in a specific industry, between 1861 and 1910. Examples might include railway workers, teachers, textile factory employees.***
- 2. Paying careful attention to marginalized populations such as immigrants in the context of exploitive industry practices, and women in the context of the movement for equality, and/or African Americans in the context of slavery, as well as others systematically oppressed in the workplace.***
- 3. Explaining how workers whose rights were violated advocated for change, and .....***
- 4. Recounting how the conflicts that populations endured did or did not resolve and, finally.....***
- 5. What lesson (regarding the example that you have chosen) can be learned from workers’ experience of promoting their rights, respect and a better life.***

**Rough Draft of Essay #2 Due on April 9th. Final Draft Due on April 16th.**

**“My Life Is My Message.”**

**–Mahatma Gandhi**

Biography is the account of a person’s life. As a narrative, it assumes the responsibility of explaining the period when a person lived as well as the places, the cultures, the organizations and the ideas that shaped an individual’s life. Furthermore, it examines how a person influenced family and community and, by contrast, how personal relationships influenced her or him or them. That person’s accomplishments as an actor or as a witness are important features of a biography.

The assignment for Essay #2 is that you write a short biography of a person who lived and worked in the United States between 1900 and 1940, explaining how and why the message of the person’s life that you have selected provides testimony witnessing the injustices confronting workers of his or her or their historical period. You may not select a famous leader but must describe a person who was a worker in a particular occupation, industry or social movement that gave meaning to work and workers’ destiny in the Twentieth Century.

Answering this question means looking beyond what a person has said or not said about their life. The challenge is to examine the message that you discern in actions, decisions, what the person experienced and/or what the person suffered and/or tried to change.

**Identify Subject for Biography: March 12<sup>th</sup>** (Paragraph explaining Choice. The paragraph must answer the question, “What is the message of this person’s life.”)

**List of Biographical sources: March 26<sup>th</sup>**

(At least five sources with a sentence explaining what each source reveals about the subject of the biography.)

**Outline of a life: April 2<sup>nd</sup>** (A chart showing the events, labor issues, movements and/or personalities that influenced the subject of your biography.)

**Biography: April 9<sup>th</sup>** (Rough Draft of your Biographical Essay.)

**Final Draft of Biographical Essay, Due: April 16<sup>th</sup>**

**Biographical Essay Requirements: The Five-Page Biographical Essay on the Life of a twentieth-century person (1900-1941) must include the following:**

**Statement of the Message of the subject’s Life & Reason Why You Chose the person.**

**Movements or Persons that Influenced your Subject.**

**Labor Issue(s) that affected your subject.**

Events that the subject witnessed.

Decisions or actions or ideas that best express the subject's Message.

Conclusion stating why your subject is relevant today.

At least three different sources providing your essay's Statement of Life's Message.

Primary Sources: Relevant texts produced (e.g. journal, letters or speeches) by or influential in the life of your subject; or, relevant objects (clothing, possessions like books, tools or medical records) as well as statements, technologies that existed at the time when your subject lived.

Secondary Sources: Full-length books such as biographies, films and other works of art such as portraits and sculpture, as well as research articles analyzing the twentieth-century person whom you have chosen as your subject. Secondary sources are usually created after the period in which your subject lived and intend to explain or assess historical significance.

### **Mid-Term and Final Examinations**

The examinations will each ask students to write short essays responding to questions of opinion that have emerged in our readings and discussions of the history of issues such as the human rights of workers, their families and communities. Attention will be paid to a series of themes related to concepts of accuracy, truth and justice in the course of our deliberations each week. Students will play a defining role in selecting questions that they wish to be asked on our mid-term and final exams.

Students will receive the Exam Questions for the Mid-Term Exam on 2/28/22  
And will Submit Examination Essay Answers on 3/12/22

Students will receive the Exam Questions for the Final Exam on 4/29/22  
And will Submit Examination Essay Answers on 5/9/22