

**History of Labor & Work in the U.S. 1880-1945**  
**Rutgers University 37:575:202:05**  
**Spring 2025**  
**FRI 12:10-3:10 – LEC 137**

Professor Naomi R Williams  
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Office hours: Friday 11-12 pm – LEC 156A

Course Description: This discussion-based course will explore the history of working people in the United States from the end of Reconstruction until the end of World War II.

This course meets the writing distribution 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. At the conclusion of the course, students should demonstrate an increase in their knowledge and skills in writing and 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.

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.

**Core Curriculum:**

*In the history and social science areas of the core (HST and SCL), students will be able 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 be able to:*

- 1:** Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry-level professional.
- 4:** 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 be able 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.

Required Readings: Textbook: *Who Built America? Vol. 2: 1877 to the Present*, OER version: [Textbook website](#)

Other primary and secondary sources will also be available on Canvas.

**Course Format and Requirements:** This course is a discussion-based seminar on working-class history from the Civil War to World War II. It includes short lectures, film viewings, writing workshops, weekly discussions, and opportunities to pursue ideas related to students' interests.

This course uses the Rutgers Canvas course management system, <https://tlt.rutgers.edu/canvas>. To log on, enter your Rutgers NetID and password. Click on the 37:575:202:05 course and then use the menu on the left-hand side. Course announcements, assignments, resources (including all required readings), the syllabus, and other important information will be added to the site throughout the semester.

Active participation is a key to success in this course. Do the readings, participate in the conversations and group discussions (the reading questions help prepare you for your essay assignments), and work to improve aspects of your critical writing skills.

**Basic Needs Security:** Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the [Dean of Students](#) for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. I will help you find resources. Other family/close relation emergencies may occur. Mental health is a key component to a sustainable life. It is sometimes necessary to miss class for physical or mental health reasons. Let me know in advance or as soon as possible if you are missing assignments for any health or quality of life reasons. If you need assistance, please communicate early and often.

**Understand course and university requirements:** Read the syllabus carefully and be sure you understand all the requirements.

**Discussion –** Success in the course requires active engagement during discussions. This is where we will learn from each other, test the authors' theories, and formulate and test our own.

Students' success on written assignments will depend on their active engagement, including involvement in discussion.

**Writing assignments:** Students will write two 5-page essays related to course themes. See class schedule for related due dates. All written assignments for this class should be typed, double-spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font, and one-inch margins. They should be carefully edited and free of grammatical, spelling, or typographical errors. All essays need a purposeful title. Essays should directly answer the prompt question. When you can distill your answer down to one sentence, this is your thesis statement (argument). The body of your essay proves (or defends) your answer. This should be your analysis (defined as your thoughts/opinions plus reasoning/evidence), not a summary of readings or class discussion. No outside sources. All source material should come from class readings, discussion, and/or films. Use parenthetical citations (*WBA2*, [chapter #], [Subheading]). For example (*WBA2*, 2, Neighborhood Cultures). Email if your essay will be late and we can make arrangements.

**Academic Integrity:** 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 see the Rutgers University [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as [Rutgers University policy](#). As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Similarly, these copyright protections extend to original papers you produce for this course. If I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your written consent to do so. Finally, as the instructor for this course, I have the responsibility to protect students' right to privacy. Classroom recordings of students will therefore be treated as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the U.S. federal law that governs access to educational information and records. Instructors and students must provide notification if any sessions are to be recorded, and such recordings cannot be circulated outside the course.

**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>.

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirement for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of disability should refer to the Rutgers Office of Disability Services and then contact me privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible.

Turnitin Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site. Students who do not agree should contact me immediately.

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.

Communication/Email/Electronic Devices: Feel free to email me with questions, concerns, ideas, and/or issues that may arise during the semester. Remember to check the syllabus or Canvas resources for general questions before contacting me. I will reply to most emails within 24 hours. Students are responsible for looking for announcements or updates on Canvas.

Course evaluation:

Check-in survey	8
Attendance	60
Discussion/participation	240
Paper 1 first draft	100
Peer review	25
Paper 1 revision	100
In-class writing	50
Paper 2	<u>100</u>
<b>Total possible points</b>	<b>683</b>

Class Schedule (Subject to change):

**Week 1: 24 Jan – Introductions & What is History?**

Reading: Syllabus (review Canvas website, *WBA2* “Coda: ‘To Continue the Work of our Foreparents’”  
Welcome/check-in survey

**Week 2: 31 Jan – Reconstructing the Nation & Industrial Capitalism in the Gilded Age**

Read *WBA2* part 1 & chapter 1  
SMLR Librarian Julie Peter’s in-class presentation “Information Literacy”

**Week 3: 07 Feb – Working People Respond to Industrial Capitalism**

*WBA2* chapter 2  
Writing Workshop

**Week 4: 14 Feb – The Triumph of Industrial Capitalism**

*WBA2* chapter 3

**Week 5: 21 Feb – Paper 1 Prep**

Paper 1 first draft due  
Schedule a consultation appointment in Canvas

**Week 6: 28 Feb – Writing Consultation Week – (Individual meetings with professor)**

Peer review due  
Mandatory writing consultation appointment (sign up on Canvas)

**Week 7: 07 Mar – Change and Continuity in Daily Life**

*WBA2* chapter 4  
Final draft due

**Week 8: 14 Mar – Radicals and Reformers in the Progressive Era**

*WBA2* chapter 5

**Week 9: 21 Mar – Spring Break!**

**Week 10: 28 Mar – Wars for Democracy**

*WBA2* part II & chapter 6

**Week 11: 04 Apr – A New Era, 1920-1929 – NO CLASS (online discussion)**

*WBA2* chapter 7

**Week 12: 11 Apr – Great Depression & the First New Deal**

*WBA2* chapter 8

**Week 13: 18 Apr – Labor Democratizes America**

*WBA2* chapter 9

**Weeks 14: 25 Apr – A Nation Transformed: WWII**

*WBA2* chapter 10 & watch “Exiled to Motown” YouTube video on Canvas  
Writing Workshop 2  
Paper 2 introduction and outline (in-class)

**Weeks 15: 02 May – Working People in the United States**

Paper 2 due