



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

37:575: 202:B1 – Summer Session 2018

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course explores the history of the labor movement in the U.S. from 1880, a time when unions were relatively weak, to the end of World War II in 1945, a point at which unions had gained significant economic and political power. 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 have been formed; and the on-going debate over the goals and purposes of unions.

Although not the exclusive focus of the course, we will closely study how labor unions have responded to changes in our economy, political system, and culture. *Who* labor unions represent, *what* they seek to accomplish in the short- and long-term, and *how* they attempt to reach their goals has evolved, even though the basic rationale for union organization – to defend and advance the interests of working people vis-à-vis powerful employers - has remained the same. In this course, we will look at how unions' ability to improve their members' living standards and working conditions has widely fluctuated.

In the late 19th and early 20th 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 political 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).
- Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments. (HST, Goal l).
- 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/WCd, 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. (WCr/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:

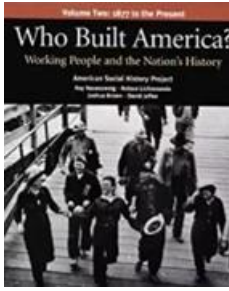
- Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry level professional. (Goal I).
- Demonstrate an understanding of relevant theories and apply them given the background context of a particular work situation. (Goal IV)

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.

COURSE READINGS:



Who Built America?: Working People and the Nation's History, Volume II: Since 1877, 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 **Sakai**.

OUTLINE OF CLASSES:

CLASS #1 – INTRODUCTION, KEY THEMES OF THE COURSE & REVIEW OF EARLY U.S. LABOR HISTORY

Wednesday, May 30

The first class will provide students with an introduction to the instructor and each other, an overview of the course topic, the schedule and assignments for the course, and some guidelines for improving one's writing.

CLASS #2: INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM IN THE GILDED AGE (1880 to 1900)

Monday, June 4

Assigned Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 1 - pp. 23-52, 64-71 (begin with "Extractive Industries and Exploited Workers").
- WBA? Chapter 3 – pp. 157-170.

CLASS #3: WORKING PEOPLE'S RESPONSES TO INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM (1880 to 1900)

Wednesday, June, 6

Assigned Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 2 – pp. 91-120. (begin with "Workingman's Hour")
- WBA? Chapter 3 – pp. 125 – 134; pp. 170 – 173. (begin with "Organized Labor in a Time of Recovery")

CLASS #4: THE PROGRESSIVE ERA & WORLD WAR I (1900 to 1918)

Monday, June 11

Assigned Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 4 – pp. 181-192.

- WBA? Chapter 5 – pp. 223 – 225; pp. 241 – 255 (begin with “The Garment Industry and Working Women’s Activism”).
- WBA? Chapter 6 – pp. 279 – 280; pp. 292 – 294 (begin with “The Expanding Wartime Economy”); pp. 307 – 312 (begin with “Militancy, Repression, and Nativism”)

→Writing Assignment: First Draft of Writing Assignment 1 (Submit paper to Sakai and bring two copies to class)

→Peer Edit and Review Assignment (in class)

CLASS #5: POSTWAR RADICALISM DEFEATED & THE LEAN YEARS OF THE 1920s (1919 to 1929)

Wednesday, June 13

Assigned Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 6 - pp. 320 – 329 (begin with “Postwar Strikes and Race Riots”)
- WBA? Chapter 7 – pp. 335 – 352.

→Writing Assignment: Final Version of Writing Assignment 1 – Due Friday, June 15 (Submit paper to Sakai)

CLASS #6: THE GREAT DEPRESSION, THE FIRST NEW DEAL & THE BEGINNING OF LABOR’S REVIVAL (1929 to 1934)

Monday, June 18

Assigned Readings:

- WBA? Ch. 8 (whole chapter)

CLASS #7: FDR’S SECOND NEW DEAL (1935 to 1939)

Wednesday, June 20

Assigned Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 9 – pp. 445 – 455; pp. 473 – 480 (begin with “The Culture of New Deal America”)

CLASS #8: INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM: LABOR DEMOCRATIZES AMERICA

Monday, June 25 (1935 to 1939)

Assigned Readings

- WBA? Chapter 9 – pp. 455 – 473 (begin with “The Challenge of Industrial Unionism”); pp. 480 – 491 (begin with “Backlash Against Labor and the New Deal”)

→ Writing Assignment: First Draft of Writing Assignment 2 (Submit paper to Sakai and bring two copies to class)

→ Peer Edit and Review Assignment (in class)

CLASS #9: WORLD WAR II & THE LABOR MOVEMENT (1939 to 1945)

Wednesday, June 27

Assigned Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 10 – pp. 517 – 536 (begin with “Mobilizing the Home Front”).

→ Writing Assignment: Final Version of Writing Assignment 2 – Due Friday, June 29 (Submit paper to Sakai)

CLASS #10: BALANCE SHEET: LABOR AFTER WORLD WAR II

Monday, July 2

- WBA? Chapter 10 – pp. 541 – 547 (begin with “Conversion to a Peacetime Economy”).
- 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).

→ Final Assignment/Writing Assignment 3 - Due Friday, July 6 (Submit paper to Sakai)

GRADING COMPONENTS

Grades are based on the following components:

Writing Assignments

Writing Assignment 1 – 10% of the grade

Writing Assignment 2 – 25% of the grade

Writing Assignment 3 – 25% of the grade

Total: **60% of the grade**

Peer Review/Edit of another Student's Writing Assignment (in class)

Peer Review/Edit of Writing Assignment 1 – 10% of the grade

Peer Review/Edit of Writing Assignment 2 - 10% of the grade

Total: **20% of the grade**

Participation and Attendance

In each class there will be opportunities for group and class discussion. It's essential that students participate fully in the class.

Total: **20% of the grade**

Please note:

Unless there is prior notification and/or a legitimate reason, all late papers will be downgraded ½ letter grade (e.g. B → C+)