

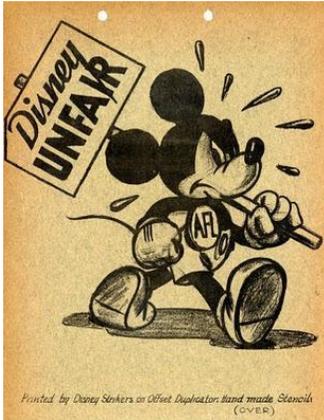
The Strike in Film : Syllabus 37:575:394:02

Fall, 2016, November 2nd – December 7th, 12:35-3:35 (no class Nov. 23rd)
LSER, School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers, the State University of NJ

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STRIKE - a concerted stopping of work or withdrawal of workers' services, as to compel an employer to accede to workers' demands or in protest against terms or conditions imposed by an employer.

The Strike has become a symbol in our culture of worker power or worker threat. Portrayals of labor union life in film and on television feature strikes as a major form of union activity, even though statistically few unions these days actually go out on strike. The Strike has become a vehicle through which major filmmakers dramatize their vision of working class life (Sayles, Kopple, Eisenstein), a plot device used by science fiction television to safely tell stories about class division (Battlestar Galactica, ST: Deep Space Nine, Babylon 5), and even a hook for singing

(The Simpsons) and dancing (Newsies, Pajama Game).

This brief course will give us an opportunity to view some of these films and television programs, analyze how they communicate their vision of The Strike and other worker actions, and discuss how our definitions of work, workers and unions are shaped by popular culture. We will also take a look at portrayals of workers' attempts to change the workplace outside of a union environment.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

Learn a framework with which to critically analyze films, television, and other visual media.

Acquire knowledge about the history of significant labor films and films about workers, and about the economic, social, racial, and gender issues that they explore.

Become aware of how working people, workplace environments and labor unions are portrayed in popular culture, and how media techniques can affect the ways we interpret these images.

Attendance and Grading

Attendance is critical. There are only 5 classes, so attendance is mandatory. If you miss a film screening, you will be responsible for viewing the film on your own, making up the work and getting class notes. You will only be excused for an illness, death in the family, or emergency (emergency is defined as “an unexpected and usually dangerous situation that calls for immediate action”); there is a limit of one excused absence. **Notify the instructor before class if you will be absent or late.**

Students who are late to class will lose attendance points. If you leave early without permission, you will be marked absent for the entire class. Phone calls should be made before or after class or during the break. Students will lose points if they spend excessive time out of class.

Grades will be based on Attendance, class participation, a writing assignment, and two quizzes. You must hand in the writing assignment in order to pass this course:

1. **Attendance & Attention. This includes arriving in class on time and staying for the full class period.** All Cell Phones turned off in class. No social media at any time. Students who are found using laptops, phones, or other devices for non-class purposes will lose points. This includes during film screenings. (20%)
2. **Contributions to class discussion & class work** (quantity AND quality). You will be expected to listen to and respond to other student comments and questions as well as articulate your own views. Assignments may be given in class. (20%)
3. **Writing Assignment.** Graded on content and writing quality. (30%). **REQUIRED.**
4. **Quizzes.** There will be 2 quizzes to test your comprehension of the readings and class lectures and discussions. (30%)
5. **Grade Review:** If you feel that your final grade should be changed, please submit this request by email with a detailed explanation as to why you think it should be changed. All requests will be viewed as Grade Reviews. Your work for the course will be reviewed and a decision made on whether your grade is appropriate.

Required Readings & Films

Readings will be available on Sakai or handed out in class. Readings will be taken from film studies and labor and gender studies literature. In some cases, you will be referred to a web site, to read an article online.

Films will be viewed in class. If you miss a class, you will be responsible for viewing the film on your own.

You may need to view a film or television series not seen in class for your Writing Assignment. **This may involve purchasing or streaming a film (or television title); most films cost far less than the cost of a textbook.**

Writing Assignment

You have a choice of 4 writing assignments, which are described at the end of the syllabus. Writing assignments are due the last day of class, at 11:00pm and **MUST** be submitted via Sakai.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is an act of fraud, defined as offering other's ideas as your own; it can also include offering your own ideas as new when they have been submitted in other courses. Acts of plagiarism include direct copying from another source without attribution, close paraphrasing from another source without attribution, and using a paper written for one course in another course. Incidents of plagiarism will have consequences, ranging from a failing grade to being reported to the dean.

- Tips on how to avoid plagiarism: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism
- Video explaining plagiarism: <http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModule/Plagiarism/>
- How to paraphrase without plagiarizing:
http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_paraphrase.html
- Rutgers Academic Integrity Principles and links to relevant documents:
<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/>



Class One – Nov. 2, 2016

Viewing Films & The Strike Animated: The Simpsons

How are workers and labor unions depicted in films?
Animated examples of workers at strike, now and then.
How to watch a film critically.

View In Class:

Black Fury trailer, 1935 (<http://bit.ly/1VHWHgh>)

Alice's Egg Plant (1925, Disney) YouTube or other online sources: <https://youtu.be/kXrniutJbyE>

Last Exit to Springfield, The Simpsons (1993, s.4 ep.17, <http://imdb.to/2brpEZH>)

Basic Shot Types: Little Film School, 2010 (<https://youtu.be/laU2MI6X48I>)

Assignments for Week 2:

1. Readings:

(a) Phillips, William H. *Film: An Introduction, 4th ed.* Bedford St. Martins, and 2009.

Chapter 1: Mise-en-Scène: pp. 11-37 & pp. 37-60, Settings and Subjects & Composition (Sakai)

Chapter 4, Sound, "Music", pp. 170 –183. (Sakai)

(b) Zaniello, *Introduction--Select Labor Film Categories*, pp. 8-17. (Sakai)

(c) Zaniello, *Salt of the Earth*, pp. 328-329 (Sakai)

(d) Optional: Rosenfelt, *Salt of the Earth: Commentary*, pp. 93-109, 117-135

2. **Select film or television title for Writing Assignment; email selection to instructor at**

donna.schulman@gmail.com. Use subject heading "Writing Assignment." **All titles must be approved.** If you write a paper without an approved title, it will affect your grade. (Writing Assignment description and list of suggested titles are at the end of this syllabus.)

Class Two – Nov. 9, 2016

The Strike as Fiction: Salt of the Earth

View in Class: ***Salt of the Earth***, directed by Herbert Biberman, 1954, 94 min. (This film can be downloaded from the Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/SaltOfTheEarth_735, from Snagfilms, http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/salt_of_the_earth, and other web sites.)

How to watch a film critically (continuation from class one, if needed)

History of *Salt of the Earth*, only film to be blacklisted in the United States

Assignments for Week 3:

1. Readings

(a) Zaniello, "Harlan County, U.S.A.", 175 – 176 (Sakai).

(b) Phillips, Ch. 9: Documentaries, pp. 364 – 373, 395-396 (Sakai).

(c) Pellet, Gail. The Making of Harlan County, U.S.A.: An Interview with Barbara Kopple. *Radical America*, March-April 1977, pp. 33-42. <http://library.brown.edu/pdfs/1125403552886481.pdf> (also Sakai)

(d) Optional: John Sayles on Harlan County U.S.A. interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eHVca5_s58 (6-1/2 minutes)

(e) Optional: Barbara Kopple Interview, DocTalk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnlusTcrV-g> (5 min.)

2. View film or television series for Writing Assignment.

3. Review notes and PowerPoint presentations from classes 1 & 2 for Quiz #1.

Class Three – Nov. 16, 2016

The Strike as Documentary: Harlan County, USA

Quiz #1

View in class: **Harlan County U.S.A.**, directed by Barbara Kopple, 1976, 103min.

What is a documentary?

Compare fictional and documentary portrayals of The Strike.

Assignments for Class Four:

1. Readings

(a) Chapter 5, "Style and Structure in Writing," from *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 9th ed. by Timothy Corrigan (Pearson, 2015), pp. 112-130.

2. Write Film or Television Analysis, due Dec. 7th via Sakai.

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 23rd, HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Class Four – November 30, 2016

The Non-Union Workplace: Office Space

View in class: **Office Space**, directed by Mike Judge, 1999, 89 minutes.

Assignments for Class Five:

1. Review notes and readings for Quiz #2.

2. Writing Assignment is due by 11pm. Submit via Sakai (Assignments Section). Document should be in Word format, NOT PDF.

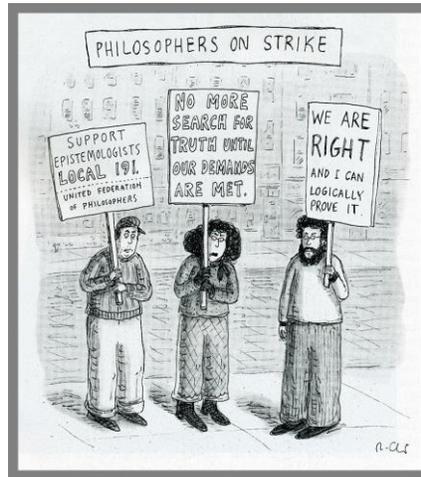
Class Five – December 7, 2016

Labor Today on Television & Putting It All Together

View in class: **Superstore**, S.1, Episode 11, "Labor"

Quiz #2

Extra Credit: Presentations of Film Review



Writing Assignment

Select **one** of these options. Inform instructor of your choice by Class Three.

Due last day of class by 11:00 pm. Assignments **MUST** be submitted through Sakai course site.

These are NOT research papers; I am interested in what you have to say. It is acceptable to read articles about the background and history of the film and filmmaker(s) or television series. Please do not read professional reviews. If you do use any articles, web sites, etc., they should be documented according to MLA or APA style sheets.

(1) Critical Film Review

View a film not shown in class and write a critical review; 2-4 pages long, double-spaced.

The review should include:

- (a) Film basics (year, director, major actors);
- (b) Plot summary **NO LONGER** than 1 paragraph.
- (c) A discussion of how the film succeeds (or does not succeed) in portraying the world of work, the labor movement, specific occupations/professions, the conflicts of the central characters and their organizations.

Questions to consider include: How do worker actions (strikes, lockouts, group or personal activities in a non-union environment) play a role in the film? Are characters portrayed as stereotypes or individuals? How realistic is the film's portrayal of the workplace? Points of discussion may include (but are not limited to) these film elements: setting, script, camera work, costumes and make-up, casting, acting.

It is highly recommended that you be specific in your review, and refer to at least one scene to illustrate your thesis.

- (d) Conclude your review with your personal, informed recommendation of whether or not you recommend this film and to what type of audience.

The film must center on a workplace or a person actively engaged in a job or occupation, and it should be a film well regarded by critics. See list of suggested films at end of syllabus. If you want to review a title not on the list, it must get instructor approval.

Recommended reading: Chapter 5, "Style and Structure in Writing," from *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 9th ed. by Timothy Corrigan (Pearson, 2015), pp. 112-130. (Sakai)

(2) Original Film--Write Your Own Film About the Workplace (just a summary!)

Write a Film Summary of a proposed film about the workplace or a group of workers, 2-4 pages long, double-spaced. The film can be mainstream or a genre film (scifi, romance, horror, etc.).

Your film should focus on a past or current workplace issue. Suggestions: Leadership style, family and work, making a living wage, changing careers, immigration, bridging cultural differences, work alienation, ambition at all costs, ethics, gender discrimination, racial discrimination, sexual orientation problems in the workplace, sexual harassment.

The Film Summary should include:

- (a) Title, major characters (names and 1-sentence descriptions), setting, time period;
- (b) A Logline—a 1-sentence summary of the film. Example: An uneducated textile mill worker helps an outsider organize the workers of the mill into a union, and in the process discovers leadership capabilities she never knew she had.
- (c) Plot summary in three parts; each act should be 1-2 paragraphs.
 - (i) Act I—Set Up--set scene, introduce characters, introduce main conflict;
 - (ii) Act II – Conflict--how the conflict leads to a crisis, or puts the character in a position where she must make a choice,
 - (iii) Act III—Resolution—crisis is resolved.

Note: The assignment is to write a summary, not a script, though you may include one or two lines of dialog to illustrate plot points.

Recommended reading: *How to Write a Treatment*, by Marilyn Horowitz,
<http://www.movieoutline.com/articles/how-to-write-a-treatment.html>

(3) Television Analysis

View **one season** of a television series and analyze how it portrays the workplace, 2-4 pages; double-spaced. Keep in mind that television works differently than film, and the story elements you will be examining will be spaced out over several episodes or even the whole season.

The Television Analysis should include:

- (a) Series basics—title, years on the air, season you will be examining, major actors, show runner (if any), television channel, anything else important.
- (b) One paragraph summarizing the series workplace location(s), business, and characters.

(c) Select one workplace issue (see below) and discuss how it is portrayed in the television series. Include in your discussion how realistic you think the portrayal is, and whether you think the story is reinforcing values of the past or creating new images for the future.

(d) It is highly recommended that you be specific in your review, and refer to at least specific episode to illustrate your thesis.

Issues: Unionization, strikes or collective action, leadership style, family and work, making a living wage, immigration, bridging cultural differences, work alienation, ambition at all costs, ethics, gender discrimination, racial discrimination, sexual orientation problems in the workplace, sexual harassment. (these are suggestions)

(d) Conclude your analysis with your personal, informed recommendation of whether or not you recommend this television series and to what type of audience.

Recommended Reading: Puette, William. "Television Dramas: Labor Snowed," in *Through Jaundiced Eyes: How Media View Organized Labor*, Cornell Univ. Press, 1992, pp. 46-58. (Sakai)

4. Critical Essay

Write a critical analysis (2-4 pages) comparing two films about workers; one of these titles can be a film we have viewed in class. There should be a logical basis for your choice, for example, comparing two documentaries on a strike (*Harlan County, USA* and *One Day Longer: The Frontier Strike*) or two films that take place in an office (*Office Space* and *Clerks*).

The comparison should be based on the films' portrayals of workers, labor unions, and workplaces. It is highly recommended that you illustrate your analysis with specific scenes and quotes from both films.

Recommended reading: Chapter 5, "Style and Structure in Writing," from *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 9th ed. by Timothy Corrigan (Pearson, 2015), pp. 112-130. (Sakai)

SUGGESTED FILMS FOR FILM ANALYSIS

These films focus on the workplace and workers (though not all feature strikes or unions). Many films are available through Netflix, Amazon, your local public library, and other film sources. Some can be viewed in the Carey Library, located in the Labor Education Center. If you have a film in mind not listed here, **you must get the instructor's approval.**

Films on workers and the labor movement are shown at film festivals, including the Workers Unite! Film Festival (NYC) and the Global Labor Film Festival. Looking at their websites might help you find a title; links and a labor film database can be found in the Resources section on Sakai.

American Dream 1990. Directed by Barbara Kopple, this Academy Award winning documentary chronicles the six-month strike at Hormel in Austin, Minnesota which pitted the local union against its national organization as well as its employer.) [Available for streaming, free, from Snagfilms, http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/american_dream]

American Standoff. 2002. Documentary, directed by Kristi Jacobson about the Teamster Overnight Transportation strike. Shown on HBO but so far not available through them.

At The River I Stand. 1993. Well-known documentary about the Memphis sanitation workers strike of 1968, a fight for a living wage and human dignity. It is also the story of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who came to Memphis to support the workers and was assassinated there.

Billy Elliot. 2000, Directed by Stephen Daldry, this story of a young working-class boy who wants to dance is set against the bitter miners' dispute of 1984-85 in northeast England.

Black Fury. 1935, Directed by Michael Curtiz, An immigrant coal miner finds himself in the middle of a bitter labor dispute between the workers and the mine owners.

Bread and Roses. 2000. Directed by Ken Loach, the fictional story of two Mexican sisters who become involved in a union organizing drive of janitors in L.A., based on the real-life Justice for Janitors campaign. Loach infuses the story with romance and humor.

Cesar Chavez. 2014. Directed by Diego Luna. Controversial film about United Farm Workers founder.

Clerks, 2004. Directed by Kevin Smith. A day in the life of two convenience store clerks and their acquaintances; this low-budget, independent film was an unexpected success and was praised for its authenticity (not surprising as Smith filmed it at locations where he himself had worked).

The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworker's Movement. 1997. Directed by Rick Tejada-Fores & Ray Telles. Well-reviewed documentary on the United Farm Workers Union, their famous grape boycott, and the life of leader Cesar Chavez. (available on YouTube, <https://youtu.be/HgMkX4eE3bs>).

F.I.S.T. 1978. Directed by Norman Jewison. Sylvester Stallone as an organizer for the Federation of Inter-State Truckers in this depiction of a fictional Teamsters union.

Glengarry Glen Ross. 1992. Written by David Mamet, starring Al Pacino, Alec Baldwin. A surprisingly gripping drama about what goes on in a Chicago real estate office. No unions, just frustrated, emotional white-collar workers. (non-union)

Gung Ho. 1986. Directed by Ron Howard, starring Michael Keaton. This comedy is based on the culture clash that takes place when a Japanese company takes over a U.S. automobile plant.

Harlan County War. 2000. Fictional treatment of Harlan County miners.

The Help. 2011, directed by Tate Taylor. Based on the best-selling novel, this film about a young writer who decides to write about the African-American maids in her hometown during the 1960's was both praised and

severely criticized. (non-union)

Hoffa. 1992. Starring Jack Nicholson, a “biopic” of Teamster president James Hoffa.

The Intern. 2015, directed & written by Nancy Meyers, starring Anne Hathaway and Robert de Niro. A retired executive becomes an intern to the founder and CEO of a successful but Internet business.

The Killing Floor. 1985. Two African-American men migrate from the rural south to Chicago during World War I and land jobs in a packinghouse, where they must deal with racism in the workplace and the union.

The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter. 1980. Excellent documentary about five women who worked in factories and the shipyard while the men were overseas during World War II.

Live Nude Girls Unite! 2000, Directed and written by Vicky Funari and Julia Query. Documentary about the dancers at the Lusty Lady organizing the first Exotic Dancers Union, from a very personal point of view.

Made in Dagenham. 2010, A dramatization of the 1968 strike at the Ford Dagenham car plant, where female workers walked out in protest against sexual discrimination.

Matewan. 1987, directed by John Sayles, starring Chris Cooper, Mary McDonnell, James Earl Jones. Sayles fictional depiction of the Matewan mine strike in West Virginia, 1920, intelligently examines class, race, and women’s place while telling its story; it is one of the best labor films ever made.

The Molly Maguires . 1970, directed by Martin Ritt, starring Sean Connery, based on the real-life Molly Maguires, a secret group of Irish miners in 1876 Pennsylvania.

Newsies. 1992. This Disney musical, also turned into a Broadway show, is based on an actual newsboy strike in 1899 in New York City.

Nine to Five. 1980. Stars Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, Dolly Parton. Comedy about women office workers that makes broad points about how to improve the corporate workplace. (not union)

Norma Rae. 1979. Directed by Martin Ritt, starring Sally Field, Southern mill worker Norma Rae meets union organizer Reuben from NYC and becomes a key organizer in the mill, radicalizing her life. Based on the real life story of Crystal Lee Sutton and the J.P. Stevens organizing drive.

North Country. 2005. Directed by Niki Caro, starring Charlize Theron, dramatic story of sexual harassment on the job in the mines, based on the landmark court case, Jenson vs. Eveleth Mines.

On the Waterfront. 1954. Directed by Elia Kazan, starring Marlon Brando. Classic film about an ex-prize fighter, now a longshoreman, who must either join or oppose the corruption of the Hoboken waterfront.

One Day Longer: The Frontier Strike, 2000. Directed by Amie Williams. Starting in 1991, 550 Frontier workers maintained a picket line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for 6 years and 4 months; this lively documentary (produced by HERE, the union) tells their story. Available online: <http://bit.ly/2bBD30y>

The Organizer. 1963, Directed by Mario Monicelli. Italian language film starring Marcello Mastroianni about organizing workers in a textile mill at the end of the 19th century.

Pride. 2014. Directed by Matthew Warchus. U.K. gay activists support a mining community during a lengthy strike in the summer of 1984; this well-reviewed film is based on a true story. (Do not confuse with other films entitled *Pride*.)

Strike. 2006. Directed by Volker Schlöndorff. Docudrama about a nearly illiterate woman who becomes one of the founders of Poland's Solidarity union. Polish language, subtitles.

The Take. 2004. Directed by Avi Lewis, written by Naomi Klein. In 2001, 30 unemployed auto-parts workers stage a protest against their bosses and economic globalization by occupying their closed factory and refusing to leave. (Don't be confused by other films with this title.)

10,000 Men Named George. 2002. Directed by Robert Townsend, stars Andre Braugher. A fictional portrayal of A. Philip Randolph's efforts to organize the sleeping car porter.

With Babies and Banners: The Story of the Women's Emergency Brigade. 1979, Directed by Lorraine Gray,. Documentary on the role of the Women's Emergency Brigade in the famous 1936 Flint sit-down strike.

Working Girl, 1988, directed by Mike Nichols. A modern fairy tale in which working class secretary (Melanie Griffith) from Staten Island finds career success and a man (Harrison Ford) in corporate Manhattan. Mostly by working behind the back of her evil, successful female boss (Sigourney Weaver). (non-union)

SUGGESTED TELEVISION SERIES FOR FILM ANALYSIS

Note: The television series should take place in a workplace that is realistic. I love scifi, fantasy, and comic book television series too, but a scientific lab devoted to developing super powers or a castle that employs knights and warriors are not appropriate for this assignment.

Being Mary Jane, 2013-present. One of BET's scripted series; focuses on the professional and personal life of Mary Jane Paul, a television journalist. Though Mary Jane's search for the right man is the main subject, there are plot threads dealing with her career.

Big Bang Theory, 2007-present. The characters' occupations are very important to their lives and interactions. If you select this title, look for a season that shows the characters in their work environments.

Cagney & Lacey (1981-1988) – Drama of two female police detectives working together, one a married working mother, the other single and career-oriented. Acclaimed as groundbreaking for its gritty portrayal of the main characters' professional and private lives.

The Good Wife (2009 - 2016) – Work in a high-powered law office; this series had an excellent episode on union organizing in season 4 (see below).

Mad Men (2007 – 2015) – Women working in the advertising world of the 1960's as secretaries, office manager, and, finally, a partner. Lots of choices are made by these women, between work and family.

The Mary Tyler Moore Show (1970-1977) – Associate news producer, Minneapolis station WJM. Although this series started with the intent of showing single woman Mary at home and in the office, it was the office world that soon became the dominant set and her extended family.

Masters of Sex (2013-current). Virginia Johnson's problems getting accepted, as a credible social scientist is one of the continuing themes of this series set in the 1950's and early 1960's.

Murphy Brown (1988-1998) – Television journalist in Washington, DC. Abrasive, successful, and ultimately, a single mother, Murphy Brown broke small screen boundaries.

The Office (U.S. version, 2005-2013) – Women as receptionists, and other assorted white-collar, office jobs at Dunder Mifflin, a paper supply company; told in "mockumentary" format.

Parks and Recreation (2009-2015). Amy Poehler stars in this ensemble comedy about small town government in Pawnee, Indiana.

Roseanne (seasons 1-2)—Roseanne was famously about a working class family headed by a down-to-earth working mother and a building contractor/mechanic father. Roseanne held several different jobs during the show's tenure, but only seasons 1 and 2 focused on her struggles with employment.

Ugly Betty (2006-2010) – There are a number of working women in this comedic series about a young Latina woman who goes to work for a high-fashion magazine—Betty herself; Wilhelmina, the editor-in-chief; Hilda, Betty's hair dresser sister.

TELEVISION EPISODES ON STRIKES

All in the Family, Season 5, Episodes 1-4, The Bunkers and Inflation, parts 1-4. These four episodes could also be titled "Archie Goes on Strike." They show the effects on the family when Archie's union goes on strike amidst an inflationary economy.

The Good Wife, Season A More Perfect Union. Season 4, Episode 21. A case involving at-will employees trying to unionize sparks an office insurrection amongst support staff at Lockhart Gardner. This episode has been called the most honest portrayal of union organizing ever portrayed on fictional television.

The Office (U.S.), Season 2, Episode 2: Sexual Harassment and Episode 15: Boys and Girls.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, Episode 88: Bar Association. Rom attempts to organize the workers at Quark's bar and calls a strike.

