LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT HISTORY
Fall 2017
Mondays, 7:20-10:00 pm
Labor Education Center
(38:578:612:01)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course offers a historical-comparative-global perspective on the changing nature of work, worker movements, and employment relations in the United States. We begin with the transition to capitalism and the rise of market economies. Next we consider slavery and other systems of coerced labor. The rest of the course explores various aspects of the labor question in modern capitalist economies. A central concern is understanding how and why the rewards to work and the treatment of workers have changed over time. Other course themes include changing conceptions of workplace fairness; the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers; the role of the state in the economy and the workplace; the rise and fall of collective bargaining and welfare capitalism; globalization, financialization, and the rise of global neo-liberal capitalism; and new movements around the world for social inclusion, human rights, and economic fairness.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course aims to enable students to:

- Appreciate the power of the past to shape the present;
- Understand how and why work and workplace policies have changed over time;
- Understand how U.S. labor and employment history compares with other regions;
- Understand how global forces shaped U.S. labor and employment history;
- Assess how the state, employers, and worker organizations affect societal living standards and well-being;
- Analyze the strengths and weakness of different labor and employment systems;
- Apply insights from the past to solving contemporary labor and employment problems;
- Identify and evaluate the main arguments in a text;
- Enhance written and public presentation skills;
- Develop group process and leadership skills;
- Expand their sense of personal and political possibility.

PLEASE NOTE: Cell phones and other electronic devices, including laptop computers, must be turned off and closed during class. Do not sign up for this class if you are unable to comply with this policy.
COURSE READINGS

1. **Articles.** All required articles are available electronically through the SAKAI website at [https://sakai.rutgers.edu](https://sakai.rutgers.edu). You will not have access to electronic copies of the reading in class. In order to participate fully in class discussion, please bring a printed copy of the reading or substantial notes with you to class. For problems or questions with Sakai, email Dr. Merrill.

2. **Book.** The following book is not on sakai. You will need to secure your own copy.


COURSE OUTLINE

**Week 1 (Sept 11) INTRODUCTIONS**

**Week 2 (Sept 18) THE TRANSITION TO CAPITALISM**

Reading:

Response Paper #1: What is capitalism? What are the most important differences between capitalism and the economic systems it replaced? What is capitalism’s greatest strength? Its greatest weakness?

**Week 3 (Sept 25) SLAVERY AND EMANCIPATION**

Reading:
*Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Boston, 1845), 1-76.

Response Paper #2. What is freedom? How is it different from slavery? What effects did slavery have on slaves and slave owners? How did slave owners sustain the system of slavery? Would you describe the new systems of labor that replaced slavery after the Civil War as free labor systems? Why or why not?
Week 4 (Oct 2) NO CLASS MEETING/PARAGRAPH DUE ON SAKAI

Assignment: Please read about the final project on page 7 of the syllabus. This week we ask you to start thinking about the first part of the assignment. Please post on sakai a brief description of what you see as the most important problem facing the labor and employment system in the United States. You may change your choice as we go forward but we want you to be thinking about contemporary problems and the relevance of the past to solving those problems over the course of the semester.

Week 5 (Oct 9) CORPORATE CAPITALISM AND ORGANIZED LABOR

Reading:
*David Montgomery, Workers’ Control in America, 9-31.

Response Paper #3. Compare and contrast the ideas of Carnegie and Gompers. Whose ideas do you find more persuasive and why? Why does Montgomery prefer workers’ control to Taylorism? Do you agree or not, and why?

Week 6 (Oct 16) IMMIGRATION AND CONTRACT LABOR

Reading:

Response Paper #4. What problems did immigrant workers face as contract laborers and what strategies did they use to change their situation? Should labor be as mobile and as free from restrictions on its movement as capital or less? More? Why or why not?

Week 7 (Oct 23) SOCIALISM, SUFFRAGE, AND INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

Reading:

IN-CLASS QUIZ
Week 8 (Oct 30) NEW DEAL REVOLUTIONS

Reading:
*Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Fireside Chats” (READ FOUR ONLY: May 7, 1933; September 30, 1934; April 28, 1935; January 11, 1944), selected and formatted on Sakai or accessed July 15, 2010, at http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/FIRESI90.HTML.

Response Paper #5 Was the New Deal primarily a capitalist or a socialist program? Why? What parts of the New Deal still in force should we get rid of? What forgotten parts of it should we restore?

Week 9 (Nov 6) SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, AMERICAN-STYLE

Reading:
*Jack Metzgar, Striking Steel, 118-148.


Week 10 (Nov 13) OTHER LABOR MOVEMENTS

Reading:

Response Paper #7 Discuss and assess the main arguments in each of the readings.

Week 11 (Nov 20) THE GREAT REVERSAL AND RUNAWAY INEQUALITY

Reading:
Les Leopold, Runaway Inequality, chapters 1-3, 5-6.
Response Paper #8. What is financialization? Why is it a problem for the American economy? For the American people? What can be done to fix the problem of runaway inequality?

Week 12 (Nov 27) CAPITALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Reading:
*US Global Change Research Program Climate Science Special Report (CSSR) (DRAFT: December 2016), Front Matter and Executive Summary, 1-31 ONLY.

Response Paper #9: How much bigger can the human population and its economy get before it is too big to sustain? What does (or can) prevent it from becoming too big? How do you rate our chances of survival?

Week 13 (Dec 4) DEBATING GLOBAL STRATEGIES

Reading:
*Jody Heymann and Alison Earle, Raising the Global Floor (2010), chapter 3.

Response Paper #10: Are we currently pursuing the best global strategies to enhance our nation’s economic and social wellbeing? If so, what are they? If not, what should we be doing?

Week 14 (Dec 11) IN-CLASS QUIZ/STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1. Class Attendance and Participation (10%)
2. Response Papers (60%)
3. Two Short In-Class Quizzes (20%)
4. Final Project (10%)

1. CLASS PARTICIPATION (10%)

ATTENDANCE. Students are expected to attend each class. You should plan to arrive on time and stay the full class session. If you anticipate a problem with attendance or
timeliness, you should discuss the matter with us before signing up for the class. If work
or other conflicts preclude your class attendance you should sign up for a class on a
different night or for an on-line class.

CLASS DISCUSSION. Students are expected to participate actively in class discussion.
You should read the assigned texts carefully prior to each class meeting and bring a copy
of the readings with you to class. Students will be asked to offer their own understanding
of the main claims in each text and their opinion of these claims. You will not be judged
on whether or not you agree with the claims of the authors or with the opinions of the
instructors but on whether your ideas are informed by the week’s readings and/or
substantiated by other evidence and examples. Students are also expected to help raise the
level of class discussion by interacting with others to help clarify and extend their
comments. Active, respectful listening is as important to class participation as talking.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES. Over the course of the semester, students will participate
in small group activities and will be asked to serve as a small group discussion leader one
or more times. Your goal as a discussion leader is to encourage participation from each
member of the group; keep the group focused on the assignment; and help the group
reach common or shared understandings of the material, if possible. Small group leaders
should be prepared to summarize the group’s conclusions and present them to the class.
Small group leaders are not expected to be experts or to have all the answers.

2. RESPONSES PAPERS (60%)

Students should submit FIVE short papers responding to the questions posed by the
instructors on the syllabus. Papers should be 2-3 pages, typed, double-spaced, and 12-
point font. Please do not submit papers over 3 pages in length.

Papers should be posted on Sakai by 5 pm on Monday BEFORE the readings are
discussed in class. No papers will be accepted after the deadline. At least two papers
should be submitted before the first quiz and at least two after. Students may submit two
additional papers, if they wish, which will be counted in their final point total.

Papers will receive a grade of 1 point, ½ point, or 0 points. Responses that show
evidence of engagement with the readings, respond to the questions posed, and do not
have major writing problems will receive full credit or one point. Responses that are
incomplete or poorly written (do not show engagement with the readings or do not
respond to the questions) will receive partial credit or ½ point. Points translate to grades
as follows:

- 5 (or more)=A
- 4.5= B+
- 4= B
- 3.5=C+
- 3= C
- 2.5=D+
2=D
Below 2 = not a passing grade

4. TWO IN-CLASS QUIZZES (20)

There will be two short in-class quizzes. Each will be less than an hour and will ask you about significant concepts presented in the reading and discussed in class. The quizzes are designed to help you retain, integrate, and deepen your understanding of the material.

5. FINAL PROJECT: IN-CLASS PRESENTATION (10)

One of the learning objectives of this course is to apply insights from the past to solving contemporary labor and employment problems. During the last class, each student will be asked to make a brief presentation in which you are to: (1) identify what you think is the most important problem facing the current labor and employment system in the US; and then (2) discuss how a particular historical event, policy or person covered in the class offers a helpful perspective on, or a possible solution to, the problem you have chosen. Be prepared to justify both the problem on which you have chosen and the perspective or solution that you believe your historical example provides. Presentations should be under five minutes. Instructors will circulate further guidelines for the presentations during the course of the semester.

Academic Integrity. Work submitted for other classes or work cut and pasted from the Internet is not acceptable. In addition, using phrases from another person’s writing without quotation marks or paraphrasing another person’s ideas without crediting the source of the idea is plagiarism. Plagiarism or any form of cheating can result in course failure and disciplinary action through University channels.

Special Needs: Any student with a disability requiring accommodations should contact us as soon as possible.

Final Grades: Final course grades are available through regular university channels. If you need your final grade earlier, contact Amy Marchitto at lobelosmlr.rutgers.edu

September 3, 2017