



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

37:575: 202 (Section 82) – Fall 2018

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course explores the history of the labor movement in the U.S. from 1880 to 1945. 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 were formed in this period; and the on-going debate over the goals and purposes of unions.

Although unions are not the exclusive focus of the course, we will closely study how labor unions were affected by changes in our economy, politics, and culture, as well as how working people and their unions impacted and shaped these systems. *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 unions– 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 the labor movement's ability to improve their members' living standards and working conditions widely fluctuated from 1880 to 1945. 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:



1. ***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 **Canvas**.

2. **Other Required Readings:** In addition to the textbook, the other required readings are also available online with the course. Some 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 online readings are secondary sources; they are interpretations and evaluations of the events or developments.

Most primary sources are from the following books:

- ***American Labor: A Documentary Collection*** (AL), edited by M. Dubofsky and J. McCartin, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- ***Major Problems in the History of American Workers*** (MPHAW), edited by E. Boris and N. Lichtenstein, 2nd ed., Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2003.
- ***Voices of a People's History of the United States*** (VPHUS), edited by H. Zinn and A. Arnove, Seven Stories Press, 2004.
- ***Voices of Freedom: Documentary History, volume 2*** (VOF), edited by Eric Foner, 4th ed., W.W. Norton & Co., 2014.
- ***The Voice of the People*** (VOP), edited by J. Rees and J. Pollack, Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2004.

OUTLINE OF COURSE

Class #1: INTRODUCTION & KEY THEMES OF THE COURSE

Sept. 10

Readings:

- Course Syllabus

Class #2: REVIEW OF EARLY U.S. LABOR HISTORY & THE RAILROAD STRIKES OF THE 1870s

Sept. 17

Readings:

- Slott and Voos, "A Very Brief History of U.S. Labor until 1877," pp. 1-4.
- Gutman, "Trouble on the Railroads in 1873-1874: Prelude to the 1877 Crisis?" in *The Labor History Reader*, pp. 132-152 (1985).
- Brecher, "The Great Upheaval," pp. 138-148. [MPHAW]

→Assignment: Response Paper/Writing Assignment 1

Class #3: INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM IN THE GILDED AGE (1880 to 1893)

Sept. 24

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 1 - pp. 23-52, 64-71 (begin on p. 64 with the section "Extractive Industries and Exploited Workers").

→Assignment: Peer Review of another student's Response Paper/Writing Assignment 1

Class #4: WORKING PEOPLE'S RESPONSES TO INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM (1880 to 1893)

Oct. 1

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 2
- "Knight of Labor" (pp. 115-119), "American Federation of Labor" (pp.119-126), and "Black Workers and Unions" (pp. 129-133). [Primary Source - AL]

Class #5: INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM TRIUMPHS (1893 to 1900)

Oct. 8

- WBA? Chapter 3
- "Statement from the Pullman Strikers" (1894), pp. 234-236. **[Primary Source - VPHUS]**
- "How to Write an Argumentative Essay"

→Assignment: First Draft of Writing Assignment 2

Class #6: THE TRANSFORMATION OF WORK AND HOME (1900 to 1914)

Oct. 15

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 4 - pp. 180-202.
- "Machinist Orrin Cheney Testifies to Congress on the Taylor System of Shop Management" (1911), pp. 83-85. **[Primary Source - VOP]**

→Assignment – Peer Review of another student's Writing Assignment 2

Class #7: REFORM AND RADICALISM IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA (1900 TO 1914)

Oct. 22

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 5
- "Radical Alternatives" (pp. 134-137). **[Primary Source - AL]**
- "Revising Your Paper"

→Assignment – Final Version of Writing Assignment 2

Class #8: THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR I ON LABOR; POST-WAR BACKLASH (1914 to 1920)

Oct. 29

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 6
- "Post-War Backlash" (pp. 149-154). **[Primary Source - AL]**

Class #9: THE "LEAN YEARS" FOR AMERICAN WORKERS (1920 to 1929)

Nov. 5

Readings:

- WBA? Ch. 7

Class #10: THE GREAT DEPRESSION & THE FIRST NEW DEAL (1929 to 1935)

Nov. 12

Reading:

- WBA? Chapter 8
- "Depression" (pp. 176-186). **[Primary Source - AL]**

Class #11: LABOR UPSURGE: THE INDUSTRIAL UNION MOVEMENT & THE SECOND NEW DEAL, Part 1 (1935 to 1939)

Nov. 19

Readings:

- WBA? Chapter 9
- "Industrial Union Upsurge" (pp. 187-193). **[Primary Source - AL]**
- "Steelworkers Organizing Committee, a New Declaration of Independence" (1936), pp. 163-166. **[Primary Source - VOF]**

→Assignment: First Draft of Writing Assignment 3

THANKSGIVING BREAK – Thursday, Nov. 22 to Sunday, Nov. 25

Class #12: LABOR UPSURGE: THE INDUSTRIAL UNION MOVEMENT & THE SECOND NEW DEAL, Part 2 (1935 to 1939)

Nov. 26

→Assignment: Peer Review of another student's Writing Assignment 3

Class #13: WORKING PEOPLE & WORLD WAR II (1939 to 1946)

Dec. 3

Reading:

- WBA? Chapter 10
- "World War II" (pp. 194-205). **[Primary Source - AL]**

→Assignment – Final Version of Writing Assignment 3

**Class #14: THE STATUS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE AFTERMATH OF
WORLD WAR II**

Dec. 10

Reading:

- 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

→Assignment: Writing Assignment 4 (Due December 17)

GRADING CRITERIA AND COMPONENTS

Grading Criteria:

A	90-100%	900 to 1000 points
B+	85-90%	850 to 899 points
B	80-85%	800 to 849 points
C+	75-80%	750 to 799 points
C	70-75%	700 to 749 points
D	60-69%	600 to 699 points
F	59% and below	0 to 599 points

Grading Components:

Grades are based on the following components:

#1 – 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 and attend all classes (unless there is a valid reason for the absence).

20% of the grade = **200** points

#2 – Peer Review/Edit of another Student's Writing Assignment:

Each peer review = 50 points. 3 x 50 = **150** points = **15%** of the grade

#3 – Writing Assignments:

Response Paper/Writing Assignment 1 = 50 points

First Draft of Writing Assignment 2 = 50 points

Final Version of Writing Assignment 2 = 100 points

First Draft of Writing Assignment 3 = 50 points

Final Version of Writing Assignment 3 – 150 points

Final Assignment/Writing Assignment 4 = 250 points.

Total = **650** points = **65%** of the grade

Total Course Points = 1000

Please note:

Unless there is prior notification and a legitimate reason, all late papers will be downgraded one letter grade (e.g. A → B)