

Black Workers in American Society

Department of Labor Studies and Employment Relations
Rutgers University
100% Virtual Asynchronous
Spring 2023

Instructor

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Course Description

In this course, we will take a multimedia, mixed material, and intersectional approach to exploring systemic inequalities that have impacted Black workers' lives in the United States (US) historically and today. We will begin the semester learning about intersectionality as a theoretical framework for analyzing deeply systemic inequalities in the US economy and for imagining a future of labor justice. During the first part of the semester, we will examine the history of racial, class, and gender disparities in the US economy and how Black people have protested labor exploitation. In the second half of the semester, we will analyze how persistent disparities of race, class, and gender continue to impact the lives of Black workers today and how Black people are organizing against labor injustices.

Course Rationale

Black people have and continue to engage in worker resistance in visual, media, and written forms. Every student must have access to the internet and streaming services such as YouTube to read and view the range of materials that we will examine in this course such as book chapters, articles, policy reports, augmented reality maps, photographs, and documentaries. Students who take this course must also be prepared to deepen their writing, thinking, and reading of written and media source materials, while demonstrating effective writing skills. Everyone must approach the course with an openness to new ideas and a willingness to learn.

Office Hours via Zoom

Tuesdays-1pm-2:30pm
Wednesdays- 1pm-2:30pm

***Students may make virtual appointments for other meeting times as well.**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE. The student will be able to:

Core Curriculum: 21C and SCL

- CCD-1: Analyze the degree to which forms of human differences and stratifications among social groups

shape individual and group experiences of, and perspectives on, contemporary issues. Such differences and stratifications may include race, language, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, abilities or other social distinctions and their intersections.

- SCL-1: Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
- SCL-2: Employ tools of social scientific reasoning to study particular questions or situations, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.

The Instructor's Goals and Outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of the labor injustices that have impacted Black workers since slavery.
- Examine how intersecting racial, class, and gender inequalities have shaped the labor experiences of Black people historically.
- Trace the ways in which racial, class, and gender disparities shape Black workers' lives today
- Explore Black workers' organized resistance to labor exploitation historically and today

Course Materials

There are no required books for this course. All required materials are available on Canvas in the Modules section.

Course Requirements

- a. Ice Breaker Assignment- 5%
- b. Syllabus Quiz- 5%
- c. Remix assignments-10%
- d. Weekly Facilitations- 15%
- e. Responses to Facilitations- 15%
- f. Mid-Term Assignment -25%
- g. Final Assignment – 25%

Required Assignments

1& 2- Class Discussions and Facilitations:

All students are expected to begin each week of class prepared to share their interpretation, analysis and synthesis of assigned readings and media materials. Each week, a group of students will be responsible for co-facilitating class discussion with their own discussion questions. The group is also expected to post their discussion questions and

commentaries about the assigned readings in advance of class discussion. This assignment will rotate each week. When you are not co-facilitating the discussion, you are expected to respond to the discussion questions.

Everyone was randomly divided into small groups named after labor leaders to create spaces where you can engage in deeper discussions about the readings than you can in a large lecture size class. You are a member of one of these groups: Nannie Helen Burroughs, Stacey Gates, A. Philip Randolph, and Chris Smalls. Within those discussion groups, you are either a member of writing group A or B. Each week, the writing groups will rotate between serving as facilitators or responding to the facilitators' questions within the respective discussion groups. Facilitation commentaries and questions are due by **Mondays at 11:59pm**. Responses are due by **Wednesdays at 11:59pm**. Reflections from facilitators are due by **Fridays at 11:59pm**.

Check the "Discussion and Writing Groups" file in Modules in Canvas to determine to which writing group you have been assigned.

Carefully read the guidelines and examples for facilitators and responses to facilitation questions in the Modules section on Canvas before writing your first facilitation commentary and response. The examples will provide you with the quality of work that is expected for each type of assignment and that adheres to the assignment rubrics.

The rubrics will be used to grade each weekly discussion board assignment. You can view the rubrics for all course assignments in the rubrics section in Canvas.

3- Remix Assignments

Twice this semester we will convene online as an entire class to discuss materials related to Black workers. We will do this so to provide opportunities for everyone to engage with people outside of your respective discussion group members and explore Black worker experiences in different ways.

4- Mid-Term Project (Worker Profile)

Students will complete a mid-term assignment to demonstrate and apply their knowledge of the information covered during the first half of the course.

5- Final Exam Project (Worker Profile)

Students will complete a final assignment that builds upon the mid-term project to demonstrate and apply comprehensive knowledge of the information covered throughout the entire course.

Technical Assistance

This course will be conducted asynchronously via Canvas (occurring at different times rather than at the same place and time). Canvas can be accessed through <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/>. You can mark this URL as a bookmark in your computer system. Canvas is a course delivery system that provides private space on the web server that is used for members of this course. No one has access to the "space" except for those who are registered for the class. The space that is set aside for our course includes places to post comments and questions, access course grades, send email messages to your colleagues and me, view links to outside resources, and submit assignments.

To access the Canvas system, you'll need a Rutgers user ID and password. If you have any difficulty accessing Canvas or course materials, contact Rutgers Canvas Help.

Support Website: <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/canvas-help/>

Email: help@oit.rutgers.edu Call: 833-648-4357

Access to Internet and Word Processing Software

You will need regular internet access to participate in this course. Although you do not need extensive experience with computers or the Internet, you need to have a basic familiarity with web browsing, personal computers, and the internet. You will need to make sure that your internet service provider and web browser will work together with Canvas. If you wish to participate in Canvas courses from your place of employment, this may be difficult if there are firewalls at your workplace. You also will need to use Microsoft Word to prepare and submit your written assignments. I am not responsible for grading assignments that I cannot open.

Email

Make sure that the email address listed for you in Canvas is the email address that you use and check regularly. You are responsible for checking the announcements board and your Canvas email regularly to stay in tune with the latest course developments. All emails sent to me must be sent through Canvas.

Rules of Engagement

Internet-based courses have unique opportunities and challenges. Our interactions in Canvas will be text-based and will be asynchronous (occurring at different times rather than at the same place and time). Since our written contributions in Canvas will be posted electronically and accessible to all participants, each of us have the opportunity to contribute to this course and respond to each other's contributions in more thoughtful and carefully considered ways than we might in face-to-face classroom sessions. We will also have the opportunity to refer back to what we have written in earlier weeks to build on our ideas throughout the semester.

However, we will not be able to make use of body language and other cues to help us interpret each other's words in Canvas. Therefore, responses that we post must be carefully written, thoughtful, and respectful. We'll need to pay attention to both what we say and how we say it. Your postings should be well-written with few or no typographical or grammatical errors.

Language and symbols commonly used in texting should not be used when posting in the Discussion Board forums. Before making any postings to the Discussion Board, you should read and follow the guidelines about "netiquette" (rules of online communication) found here: <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/node/443>. This site also includes helpful tips for success in online courses.

Attendance Policy

Consistent and attentive participation online multiple times a week is vital to academic success and expected of everyone in the course. Grades are determined by academic performance and the level and quality of participation. If you cannot participate in class discussions for more than one week because of a personal emergency, it is your responsibility to inform me. Three or more weeks of non-participation will likely result in a failing grade.

An incomplete may be granted if you have already completed 80 percent of the course assignments. Incompletes are not issued in this course unless you are unable to finish the course due to dire and extreme circumstances. Finally, you must provide strong evidence as to why you cannot register for the course when it is

offered again. See Rutgers policy regarding incomplete grades here:
https://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/sph_current/pg34.html

Referrals

If you experience emotional distress during the semester, do not hesitate to contact medical and counseling services:
<http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

Media Policy

The recording and transmission of classroom activities and discussions by students or faculty is prohibited without written permission from the class instructor and all students in the class. Class participants must have been informed that audio/video recording or reposting of forum contributions may occur. Recording of lectures or class presentations is solely authorized for the purposes of individual or group study with other students enrolled in the same class. Permission to allow the recording is not a transfer of any copyrights in the recording or rights to ownership of content. The recording may not be reproduced or uploaded to publicly accessible web environments without written permission. You may not share any part of any recording without express written permission by all parties potentially affected by the recording.

Recordings, course materials, forum content, and lecture notes may not be exchanged or distributed for commercial purposes, for compensation, or for any other purpose other than study by students enrolled in the class. Public distribution of such materials may constitute copyright infringement in violation of federal or state law, or University policy. Violation of this policy may subject a student to disciplinary action under the University's Standards of Conduct.

Exception: It is not a violation of this policy for a student determined by the Learning Needs and Evaluation Center ("LNEC") to be entitled to educational accommodations, to exercise any rights protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, including needed recording or adaptations of classroom lectures or materials for personal research and study. Such recordings of lectures or class presentations are solely authorized for the purposes of individual or group study with other students enrolled in the same class. Permission to allow the recording is not a transfer of any copyrights in the recording or rights to ownership of content. The restrictions on third party web and commercial distribution apply in such cases.

Disability Services: 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/getting-registered>.

Academic Integrity Policy: All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to behave in an ethical and moral fashion, respecting the human dignity of all members of the community and resisting behavior that may cause danger or harm to others through violence, theft, or bigotry. All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to adhere to the civil and criminal laws of the local community, state, and nation, and to regulations promulgated by the University.

All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to observe established standards of scholarship and academic freedom by respecting the intellectual property of others and by honoring the right of all students to pursue their education in an environment free from harassment and intimidation. Please see <https://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/> for details regarding the Academic Integrity Policy. Students are expected to refrain from cheating, fabricating information, plagiarizing, inappropriately denying others access to material, and facilitating others in academic dishonesty. Avoid plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity! Your written questions will be submitted to “Turnitin.com” to ensure that your answers are yours alone – not answers from another student, from the web, or another source. Be careful not to “copy” phrases or sentences excessively from the readings. The goal is to put the ideas into your own words. Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review via Turnitin in Canvas.

Reading Schedule

Week of January 16th— Exploring Course Site and Introducing Ourselves

- Review syllabus and online course content carefully
- Read texts for “Week of January 23rd”
- Complete Syllabus Quiz (**Deadline: Friday, January 20th by 11:59pm**)
- Complete Ice Breaker Activity (**Deadline: Friday, January 20th by 11:59pm**)

Week of January 23rd—Introduction to Intersectionality: A Framework for Labor Justice

- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Issue 1, Article 8, 138-167.
- **View:** Kimberlé Crenshaw’s “The Urgency of Intersectionality,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o&t=404s>

Week of January 30th— Introduction to Intersectionality: A Framework for Labor Justice (Continued)

- T. Lee & M. Tapia, “Confronting Race and other Social Identity Erasures: The Case for Critical Industrial Relations Theory,” T. Lee, S. Davis-Faulkner, N. Williams, M. Tapia, eds. *A Racial Reckoning in Industrial Relations: Storytelling As Revolution from Within*. Labor and Employment Research Association Series, 2022.
- **View:** N. Williams and S. Davis-Faulkner, “Black Womxn Demands: Black Women’s Equal Pay Day, A Live Discussion,” Advancing Black Strategists Initiative & Center for Innovation in Worker Organization (Rutgers University), 2020.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmmZne65f0I&t=1s>

A Look at History: Intersectional Disparities in Labor and Quality of Life

Week of February 6th— Labor, Migration, & Resistance During Reconstruction

- Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997. (**chapter 2**)
- **View:** Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Reconstruction: America After the Civil War” PBS Documentary, 2019, (Part 1 of 2)
- After clicking on link below, click on red button “Watch Now.” Type Rutgers University Libraries into the box under “Log in via your academic institution.” Press enter. Lastly, log in using your Rutgers username and password to view the entire documentary.

https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7C5067716

Week of February 13th—Labor, Migration, & Resistance During Jim Crow Era

- Sarah Haley, “‘Like I Was a Man’: Chain Gangs, Gender, and the Domestic Carceral Sphere in Jim Crow Georgia,” *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society*. Vol. 39, No. 1 (Autumn 2013), pp. 53-77.
- Mary Church Terrell, “Peonage in the United States: The Convict Lease System and the Chain Gangs,” *The Nineteenth Century And After: A Monthly Review*. London: New Street Square Publishing (August 1907): 306-322.
- **View:** Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Convict Leasing,” Black History in Two Minutes or so.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fATymSYfSWA>

Week of February 20th—REMIXING CLASS

Exploring Black Entrepreneurship and Independent Towns During Jim Crow —See assignment guidelines and required texts and public history sites on Canvas under Module “Week of February 20th”

Week of February 27th—Black Labor Strategists During Jim Crow Era

- D. Phillips-Cunningham, “[‘The World Will Get a Correct Estimate of the Negro Woman’: The Intellectual Work of Early Black Women Labor Organizers](#),” T. Lee, S. Davis-Faulkner, N. Williams, M. Tapia, eds. *A Racial Reckoning in Industrial Relations: Storytelling As Revolution from Within*. Labor and Employment Research Association Series, 2022.
- **View:** “Rise from the Rails: The Story of the Pullman Porters”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b885Mr4-PZg>

Week of March 6th—No class discussion; submit mid-term assignment by Friday, March 10th at 11:59pm.

March 11th-19th—*Spring Break*

Tracing Histories of Resistance and Disparities into the Present

Week of March 20th—Double Wage Gap & Covid-19 Pandemic

- Holder, Michelle. “How Gender and Racial Discrimination Lead to a Double Wage Gap for African American Women,” Policy Report, Roosevelt Institute, May 2020.
- Bozarth, Kendra, Grace Western and Janelle Jones “Black Women Best: The Framework We Need For An Equitable Economy,” Roosevelt Institute Issue Brief, September 2020.

*Suggestion: Take a look ahead at the guidelines for the Remix assignment due April 3rd and begin preparing for it.

Week of March 27th—Amazon Plant & Essential Workers

- S. Davis-Faulkner & M. Sneiderman, “[Moneybags for Billionaires, Body Bags for Workers: Organizing in the Time of Pandemics](#),” *New Labor Forum: A Journal of Ideas, Analysis, and Debate*, October 2020.
- A. Hsu and A. Selyukh. “He was fired by Amazon 2 years ago. Now he’s the force behind the company’s 1st union,” *National Public Radio*, April 2, 2022.
<https://www.npr.org/2022/04/02/1090353185/amazon-union-chris-smalls-organizer-staten-island>
- **View:** “Chris Smalls on Unionizing Against Amazon, Protesting Unfair Working Conditions,” *The Breakfast Club*, 2022.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= ktmxT-rh2U>

Week of April 3rd—REMIXING CLASS (Final community gathering)

- View a documentary, interview, movie, or television series OR attend an event related to the working conditions of Black people.
- Post a 2-paragraph commentary or a 5-minute video recording of yourself address the questions below.
- Respond to at least 3 of your group members posts. Responses must be written and at least 3-4 sentences.

Questions:

- 1- Describe the event or media source that you selected for the assignment.
- 2- How was the event or media source related to our class discussions and materials?
- 3- How did the event or media source extend or challenge your thinking about systemic inequalities that impact Black people’s working lives and/or Black worker activism?

Week of April 10th—Domestic Worker Activism

- N. Owilaei and S. Salazar, “Black Immigrant Domestic Workers Share Notes on the Storm,” *Institute for Policy Studies*. June 2020.
<https://inequality.org/great-divide/black-immigrant-domestic-workers/>
- **View:** “Black Domestic Workers in the Time of Covid-19,”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOKOPq5AAmA>

Week of April 17th—Black Tradition of Teacher Activism

- Andrene Castro, “The Activist Work of K-12 Educators: Then and Now,” *Black Perspectives*,
<https://www.aaihs.org/the-activist-work-of-k-12-educators-then-and-now/>, October 2017.
- **View:** “A Conversation with Stacy Davis Gates: Black History & Black Futures,” Center for Innovation in Worker Organization, Rutgers University.
<https://youtu.be/AUJQA7r5qlg>

Week of April 24th—Work on final assignment

Finals due on May 5th by 11:59pm