

History of Labor and Work in the U.S. 1880-1945
Labor Studies and Employment Relations
School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University
Spring 2026

Course Number: 37:575:202:05
Day and Time: **Monday-Thursday 12:10pm – 1:30pm**
Location: Janice Levin BLD RM 103

Professor: Carmen Martino
Office Location: Labor Education Center, 50 Labor Center Way,
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Contact Info: carmenm@smlr.rutgers.edu
Cell: 609-513-3504

Office Hours: By appointment

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will introduce the important developments and themes of the U.S. labor movement from the end of Reconstruction (1877) through World War II. We will take a close look at how American workers built and organized their unions and communities to defend their interests through wars, depressions, and intense conflicts with increasingly powerful owners of wealth and capital. Through examination of these struggles, we will gain a deeper understanding of the important historical role played by workers and their trade unions as well as learning about how U.S. citizens responded more broadly to the nature of the workplace in political, social and cultural terms.

II. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

This course meets the writing with revision requirement for the School of Arts and Sciences. In addition to developing your own writing skills through writing successive drafts, you will learn to provide constructive feedback to other students' writing. As part of the writing component, the class instructor(s) will facilitate writing instruction, coordinate peer review sessions on designated days, and assess final writing projects. At the conclusion of the course, students should be able demonstrate an increase in their knowledge and skills in writing/revising academic essays.

Specifically, students should be able to:

- Enter into a dialogue with specialists in a particular field of study;
- Read essays and extract and explain key points and terms;
- Organize a paper from thesis, to topic sentence, to conclusion;
- Interact with texts by using meaningful citations in their papers;
- Use a range of sentence structures; and
- Write meaningful, clear, and organized papers that incorporate thesis development, logic/organization, tone, vocabulary, and spelling.

III. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The following learning objectives of the course are based on Rutgers University's "Permanent Core Curriculum Learning Outcome Goals" (May 2008) and relate to the overall objective of a liberal arts education. A Rutgers student will be able to:

Core Curriculum: SCL, HST, WCr and WCd

- Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time. (HST-1)
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization. (SCL-1)
- 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)
- Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights. (WCd)

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- Demonstrate an understanding of the perspectives, theories, and concepts in the field of labor and employment relations (Goal 1); and
- Make an argument using contemporary or historical evidence (Goal 4).

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

IV. EXPECTATIONS

Preparation

We will be covering a lot of ground in a very short time so please do your reading assignments, pay attention to the (Questions to Consider) and come to class ready to discuss what you have learned from the readings and viewings.

Communication

I will communicate with you via email on a weekly basis. Most of the time I will be providing you with updates, reminders, adjustments and/or reworking of the syllabus so please check your Rutgers email account regularly. Feel free to contact me via email with questions or concerns about the course. I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours.

When emailing always include **"History of Labor and Work"** in the subject line of your email.

V. EVALUATION

Final grades will be based on the following:

Attendance/Participation	210	<i>28 classes x 7.5pts per class = 210</i>
Essay 1 Draft 1 Peer Review	20	<i>You must attend class to complete the peer review and get the points</i>
Essay 1 Draft 2	150	<i>Prof will comment and provide advice for improving final draft</i>
Essay 1 Final	150	<i>Prof will compare final version with Draft 2</i>
Essay 2 Draft 1 Peer Review	20	<i>You must attend class to complete the peer review and get the points</i>
Essay 2 Final	300	
Final Exam	150	<i>Take Home Exam (1 of 2 Questions Assigned)</i>
Total	1,000	

Attendance/Participation (210)

(For each class you will have an opportunity to earn a total of 7.5 pts for Attendance and Participation for a total of 210pts)

You get points for coming to class and signing the Attendance sheet. So, it is vitally important that you come to every class. Failure to sign the sign-in sheet will result in a loss of attendance and participation points. You can only be excused for an illness, death in the family or other real emergencies. It's important to note that being excused means that you will have an opportunity to make up the class by answering the **"Questions to Consider"** for the class you missed (*see below for more info on Questions to Consider*). And just to clarify, in order to qualify for an excused absence, you need to send me an email prior to the class, or in the case of an emergency, no more than 24 hours after the class.

You earn more points per class based on your contribution to the class discussion.

There will be two opportunities to participate—the first opportunity will be in your small group discussions and the second during full class discussions. **In order to get full credit for participation you will need to participate in both the small group and full class discussions.** I will ask for volunteers to keep track of student participation for each class. For purposes of clarity, if you come to class and only participate in small group discussions, you will earn 6.4 out of 7.5 points. If you come to class and participate in both the small group and full class discussion you will get more points and closer to a perfect score for the day (e.g., raise your hand and speak once = 6.8pt; raise your hand and speak twice = 7.2pts; and raise your hand and speak 3 or more times = 7.5pts).

Peer Review Drafts of Essay I and II (worth 40pts)

(Peer Reviews for Essay I and II are worth 20pts each for a total of 40 points)

Your first drafts of Essays I and II will undergo *in-class peer reviews* where you will read, comment, and make suggested edits to fellow classmates first drafts. The goal is to help

each other to improve your essays and improve your own editing skills. Peer review drafts of both papers are required. You will receive 20pts for conducting the Peer Reviews but to get the points, you must come to class and review at least 2 papers for each session.

Essay I (300 pts)

(Essay I, Draft 2, and the final version, are worth 150pts each for a total of 300pts)

For Essay I, you will submit a 2nd draft that I will evaluate and grade (this will be the draft that follows your peer reviewed draft). This 2nd draft of Essay I will count for 150pts and then a final version for another 150pts. You will submit the final version of Essay I after reviewing my comments and suggestions that will be included in the evaluation of Essay I, Draft 2 (**Note:** The 2nd draft—that includes my comments and suggestions—is required in order to submit the 3rd and final version!)

Optional One-On-One Writing Conferences

For Essay I, between Draft 2 and your revised final version, you will have the option of meeting with me to go over the 2nd draft of Essay I. For those of you who wish to speak with me about your 2nd draft, these meetings will be scheduled via Zoom, during the week of Spring Break (March 17th thru March 21st). I will provide details as we get closer to Spring Break. **Students who score less than 80% on the 2nd Draft of Essay I, are strongly encouraged to schedule a meeting** (though the opportunity to meet with me is open to all). Generally, the meetings last no more than 10-15 minutes.

Essay II (300pts)

For Essay II, you will be required to write a first draft for *Peer Review* (as described above) but will not be required to submit a second draft for grading. The final version of Essay II will count for 300pts.

The Final Exam (worth 150pts)

The written take home final exam will cover all course readings, lectures, discussion questions, films, group exercises, etc. You will have one week to complete the final exam.

The “Questions to Consider”

In each course module on Canvas, you will find “Questions to Consider” and they are posted with each weekly reading assignment. We will use them as the basis for all class discussions (and my occasional “rifts”—*planned and unplanned mini lectures*). You will find the Questions to Consider very useful for helping you know what to look for in the readings. They will help you develop your essays, as well as the take home final exam.

You should review the Questions to Consider each week before do the readings and try to answer them while you are doing the readings. It will make you a more active reader! In other words, if you answer the questions before the start of each week of class, you will be ready to engage the class discussion and that is important because it impacts your “participation” grade for the course. Furthermore, if you know the answers to the Questions to Consider, you won’t have any problem writing good essays or getting a good grade for class participation!

VI. RU Academic Integrity

(<https://policies.rutgers.edu/B.aspx?BookId=11914&PageId=459231>)

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational, research, and clinical missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community.

The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- make sure that all work submitted in a course, academic research, or other activity is the student's own and created without the aid of impermissible technologies, materials, or collaborations.
- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, images, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with the student's interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students ethically, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This principle requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the ethical standards and professional code of conduct in the field for which the student is preparing.

Use of AI is Prohibited

Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, GPT-4, DALL-E and other AI-based content creation platforms, are strictly prohibited in writing essays and/or completing take-home exams. This prohibition does not extend to AI-powered tools commonly used for proofreading, grammar correction, accessibility checks, Microsoft Word's grammar correction tool, Grammarly, TurnItIn Draft Coach, and Google. Violations of this policy will be treated as academic dishonesty, in accordance with the Rutgers' Academic Integrity Policy on plagiarism and cheating. Please consult with me before using any form of technology that could raise concerns about academic integrity.

VII. DISABILITY STATEMENT

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/registration-form>.

VIII. STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. This class will introduce an array of sometimes conflicting ideas and interpretations of U.S. history, and all who partake in the course should feel encouraged to express their views in an open, civic forum.

IX. COURSE READINGS

All materials for this course will be available on the course Canvas website.

X. SYLLABUS

Week 1: Intros/Course Overview

January 22nd

Introductions, Overview, What We All Have in Common with Workers of the Past

Review Course Syllabus

Discussion: Are You A Commodity?

Week 2: Slavery and Free Labor

January 26th - 29th

Readings:

The Wages of Whiteness, Chapter 3, Neither a Servant nor a Master Am I: Key Words in the Language of White Labor Republicanism, pp. 43-64

Who Built America? Prologue—From the Civil War to the Great Uprising of Labor: Reconstructing the Nation, 1865-1877, pp. 3-21

Watch Documentary: The Grand Army of Starvation (on Canvas)

❖ Assign Prompt for Essay I and explain the Peer Review Worksheet

Review the Rubric

How to write the essay

What does an “A” essay look like?

How we will manage Peer Reviews

Week 3: Slavery and Free Labor (continued)

February 2nd – 5th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 1, pp. 23-49, 70-71

Brecher, Strike! Chapter 1: The Great Upheaval, pp. 13-37

Gourevitch, Alex, From Slaver to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the 19th Century, Chapter 2: Independent Laborers by Voluntary Contract, pp. 47-66

Optional Readings Viewing:

[Ghosts of Gold Mountain, Chapter 7: The Strike, pp. 138-164](#)

[NYTimes: The Forgotten History of Chinese Railroad Workers Rises From the Texas Dust](#)

[Tender is the Hand Which Holds the Stone of Memory: Kenneth Tam The Chinese Workers Railroad Strike of 1867](#)

**Week 4: Labor Republicans, the Knights of Labor and the AFL
February 9th – 12th**

Readings:

Gourevitch, Alex, From Slaver to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the 19th Century, Chapter 3: The Sword of Want, pp. 67-96.

The Monied Metropolis, Chapter 6, pp. 172-195

❖ **First Drafts of Essay I due in class for Peer Review Session Thursday, February 12th (20pts)**

**Week 5: A Polarized Society: Industrial Capitalism and Worker Organizations in the Gilded Age (1877-1893)
February 16th – 19th**

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 2, pp. 77-79, 91-120

The Monied Metropolis, Chapter 9, pp. 279-285

Andrew Carnegie, Wealth, 1889 (read in class)

Gourevitch, Alex, From Slaver to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the 19th Century, Chapter 4: Labor Republicanism and the Cooperative Commonwealth, pp. 97-137.

❖ **Essay I, Draft 2 due Thursday, February 19th at 11:59 PM (submit to Canvas) (150pts)**

Week 6: The Triumph of Industrial Capitalism at Home and Abroad (1893-1900)
February 23rd – 26th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 3, pp. 124-157, 167-174

Wilentz, Sean, The Politicians and the Egalitarians, Chapter 9: The Steel Town and the Gilded Age, pp. 233-249

David Montgomery, Workers Control

“Statement from the Pullman Strikers,” pp. 234-236

Documentary: The Rive Ran Red: The Homestead Strike

Week 7: Reform and Radicalism in the Progressive Era (1900-1914)
March 2nd – 5th

Reform and Radicalism in the Progressive Era (1900-1914)

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 4, pp. 181-217;

“Frederick Winslow Taylor Explains,” pp. 205-209

“Machinist Testifies on the Taylor System,” pp. 83-85

Samuel Gompers “What Does the Working Man Want?”

Adam Smith “Wealth of Nations”

❖ **Assign Prompt for Essay II**

Week 8: Taylorism in the 21st Century
March 9th – 12th

Readings: (Note: These are required for Essay II)

[Rosenthal, Caitlin, *Accounting for Slavery*, Chapter 3: Slavery’s Scientific Management, pp. 85-120, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, London England, 2019](#)

[Adam Smith “Wealth of Nations” \(Education\)](#)

[Brown, Lauder, Ashton, The Global Auction, Chapter 2: The False Promise, pp. 15-28; Chapter 5: Digital Taylorism, pp. 65-82.](#)

[Guendelsberger, Emily, On the Clock](#)

Documentary: A Job at Fords (Part 1)

Spring Break March 16th -20th

Week 9: Reform and Radicalism in the Progressive Era (continued)
March 23rd – 26th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 5, pp. 223-225, 241-255

What Does the IWW Want?

The IWW

Documentary: TBA

❖ **Final Version of Essay I Due March 26th @ 11:59PM**
(150pts)

Week 10: World War One and the Lean Years for American Workers (1914-1929)
March 30th – April 2nd

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 6, pp. 279-280, 292-312, 320-329;

Two anti-war speeches by Eugene V. Debs, pp. 294-298

Joe Hill “The Preacher and the Slave” pp117-118

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn Justifies Sabotage pp. 148-150

“O’Connor on the Seattle General Strike,” pp. 151-156

“Steel Mill Worker in 1921,” pp. 132-135

❖ **First Drafts of Essay II due in class for Peer Review Session**
April 2nd
(20pts)

Week 11: The Great Depression and the New Deal (Part I)
April 6th – 9th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 7, pp. 335-339, 343-352, 375-384
Chapter 8, pp. 391-439

Documentary: The Crash of 1929 and The Road to Rock Bottom and/or A Job at Fords (Part 2)

Week 12: The Great Depression and the New Deal (Part II)
April 13th – 16th

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 9, pp. 445-491

“Adamic on the sit-down strike” and “Dollinger Remembers the Flint Sit-down Strike,” pp. 345-349

Jeremy Brecher, Strike!, Chapter 5 Depression Decade pp. 193-235

Documentary: With Babies and Banners

❖ **Final Version of Essay II due April 16th**
(300pts)

Week 13: Working People and World War II (Raising Expectations)
April 20th – 23rd

Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 10, pp. 497-547

Readings:

[Evelyn Gotzion Recalls Factory Work during World War II, pages 139-141](#)

[Marie Baker: Women’s Work in a California Warplane Factory, 1941-’45, pages 334-337](#)

Documentary: Rosie the Riveter

❖ **Assign Final Exam**

Week 14:

April 27th – April 30th

Readings:

Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Lost and Found: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History*, 75 (December 1988)

**❖ Take Home Final Exam due April 30th
(150pts)**

Week 15:

May 4th

Course Wrap Up and one more time... "Are You a Commodity?"