

PRELIMINARY 575:203:02 American Labor History from 1940 to the Present Spring 2026

Professor: Dr. Christopher Hayes
Class meetings: Wednesday 10:20-1:20, Labor Education Center 137
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INTRODUCTION

This course explores developments in work, labor organizations, and related social movements from the mid-20th century to now in the U.S. It details the relationship of labor movements to the changing economic, social, and public policy context, including increasing globalization as we move into the 21st century. We will learn about some of the people, ideas, and institutions that shaped the U.S. labor movement, while also exploring the historical transformations of the workplace and the economy in political, social, and cultural terms.

Pre-requisite for this course: College Writing or the equivalent (01:355:101, 103, or 104).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The student is able to:

Core Curriculum

- HST-1 – Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time.
- WCR – 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.

School of Management and Labor Relations

- I – Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry-level professional.

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department objective:

- 4 – Make an argument using contemporary or historical evidence.

REQUIRED TEXT

Who Built America? Vol. 2: 1877 to the Present, OER version: [Textbook website](#)

NO COMPUTERS

Seriously. No laptops, no tablets, no phones. Computers in class tempt us to multitask (it happens to me!), but you're not here for that. What people do on their computers in a group setting can be distracting. Plus, best of all, taking notes on paper is better for your understanding! See for yourself:

psychologicalscience.org/index.php/news/releases/take-notes-by-hand-for-better-long-term-comprehension.html

wsj.com/articles/can-handwriting-make-you-smarter-1459784659

pbs.org/wgbh/nova/next/body/taking-notes-by-hand-could-improve-memory-wt/

kon.org/urc/v12/duran.html

npr.org/sections/health-shots/2024/05/11/1250529661/handwriting-cursive-typing-schools-learning-brain

scientificamerican.com/article/why-writing-by-hand-is-better-for-memory-and-learning/

Choosing to ignore this policy will negatively impact your grade for attendance and participation.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Read the syllabus

Be here on time

Pay attention

Do the readings

Find out what you missed if you are unable to attend

EVALUATION

Written assignments

You will write at least four in-class assignments this semester. They will account for 30 percent of your final grade. You can only make up missed assignments (and exams) with an excused, documented absence.

You must complete all written assignments to receive credit for this course. We will turn back all assignments in a timely manner. If we do not turn back your assignment, it is your job to bring this to our attention. If you believe we have not recorded a grade for an assignment you have turned in, you must clear this up during the semester. After the semester is over, we will not be able to consider claims that you turned in an assignment if we have no record of it.

Attendance

I expect you to come to class every meeting, on time, for the duration of the meeting. If you have more than two unexcused absences, your final grade will be reduced by one full grade (e.g. from an A to a B). For every one after that, the same will happen. An excused absence would mean something along the lines of a medical emergency or a funeral and requires documentation. Leaving early and showing up late will count against you as well.

Being physically present is important, but you should strive to be mentally present as well. Being attentive and actively participating in class enhances your learning, as well as that of those around you. Someone (you, your parents, you in the future, Rutgers donors) is paying for you to be here, so try to get the most out of it. Contributing to class discussion is a very easy way to earn a higher overall grade in the course.

Coming to class every time, on time, which you are supposed to do anyway, and being attentive, meaning not engaging in distractions, including, but not limited to side conversations and use of electronic devices, will earn you 80% of the maximum attendance grade. Actively participating in class will earn you more points.

Cheating/plagiarism

There are serious consequences, including expulsion, for both cheating and taking someone else's work without attribution.

Use of generative AI such as ChatGPT is not permitted in any stage of the writing process on any assignment, from gathering initial ideas through the final product. Using any type of "paraphrasing" tool to "improve" your work is a violation of the academic integrity policy, as you are submitting work that is no longer your own. Something else has rewritten your work for you, and it may include plagiarized text without your knowledge. I expect that all ideas and work will be your own.

The university has clear, strict policies on these matters. I will report all suspected violations. If you have not done so already, please familiarize yourself with the university's academic integrity policy by visiting nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/home/academic-integrity-policy/ The relevant parts are brief and straightforward. If you have any questions, please ask me.

Exams

There will be a first exam in class on March 11, and a second exam in class on April 29.

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and participation	20%
In-class writing assignments	30%
First exam	25%
Second exam	25%

I grade according the following grade breakdown:	A 90
	B+ 87 B 80
	C+ 77 C 70 D 60

Use of Class Materials

The materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, the syllabus, exams, lecture materials, and assignments are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized copying of the class materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary actions being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of class materials without the specific, express approval of the instructor may be a violation of the University's Code of Student Conduct and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of sharing those materials with other current or future students. You may not make audio or video recordings of any part of this class without my consent.

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: 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: ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

CLASS SCHEDULE

January 21	Introduction
January 28 Reading	World War II <i>Who Built America</i> Chapter 10
February 4 Reading	The Cold War <i>Who Built America</i> Part III
February 11 Reading Assignment	The Affluent Society <i>Who Built America</i> Chapter 11 In-class writing
February 18 Reading	The Great Society <i>Who Built America</i> Chapter 12
February 25	Vietnam
March 4 Assignment	Civil Rights and Labor In-class writing
March 11	First in-class exam
March 25 Reading	Industrial Decline and Economic Anxiety <i>Who Built America</i> Chapter 13
April 1 Reading	The Triumph of Globalization <i>Who Built America</i> Part IV & Chapter 14
April 8 Reading Assignment	9/11 as a Year Zero <i>Who Built America</i> Chapter 15 In-class writing
April 15 Reading	The Iraq War <i>Who Built America</i> Chapter 16
April 22 Reading Assignment	Contemporary Developments <i>Who Built America</i> Chapter 16 In-class writing
April 29	Second exam