

**Course No. 37:575:207:90**  
**New Jersey Labor History (online)**

**Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations**  
**Spring 2026**

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Important Points:

- ✓ This is an asynchronous online course, with all assignments and discussion taking place in Canvas; you can complete the work at your own convenience, as long as you meet the deadlines.
- ✓ There will be an assignment due for most weeks; late assignments will not be accepted more than one week after the due date (but see final point below).
- ✓ Two physical visits to historical labor history locations in New Jersey are required, even though this is an online course. Contact the instructor if you have questions.
- ✓ You will need to log in to the course Canvas website several times a week, read all Announcements, and respond promptly to any Canvas or email messages from the instructor.
- ✓ Because of domestic and international crises, the pandemic, the economy, and other impacts, we'll make whatever adjustments are needed so that everyone can succeed. Contact the instructor if you have any concerns/questions.

Learning Objectives:

Labor Studies & Employment Relations Department:

- Demonstrate an understanding of perspectives, theories, & concepts in our field. (1)
- Make an argument using contemporary or historical evidence. (4)

School of Management and Labor Relations:

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

Course Overview

History can sometimes seem remote. But in this course on New Jersey's workers and labor unions, the history of the state's workers will be as close as our backyards. We will learn how America's workers and their allies fought hard to win the rights and improvements we take for granted today, like minimum wage, weekends, and Social Security, advances that have again been under attack.

We'll learn how these changes came about by studying people and events in our own state, like the child workers in Paterson who went on strike in 1835 to win an 11-hour day, and the unemployed families of the "Army of Unoccupation" who took over the State House in Trenton in 1936 to press for relief during the Great Depression. We'll learn about surprising events like the battle of multiracial workers at Seabrook Farms against vigilantes and the Ku Klux Klan (in 1934), and the war between striking workers in Elizabeth and mobsters from Murder, Inc. (in 1946).

We will also visit some of the sites where this history took place, walking the streets of Paterson where thousands of immigrant strikers marched in 1913, and standing on the balcony of Pietro and Maria Botto's

house where Big Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn rallied the strikers. The history of America's working class really is exciting, and there's no better way to find that out than by learning about the labor movement in New Jersey. Please be aware that at least two physical site visits are required for the course.

Among other topics, we will explore the history of trade unions and other worker movements in New Jersey from the first demands voiced by the Hibernia iron workers in the 1770s to the changing political role of the New Jersey AFL-CIO, the growth of public sector unions, and the challenges faced by working people and the union movement in New Jersey today.

We'll examine the craft unionism of the New Jersey Federation of Labor and its dominant building trades unions, the "one big union" philosophies of the Knights of Labor and the IWW, the revolutionary goals of Paterson's Italian anarchists and the Passaic textile strike's Communists, the industrial unionism of the CIO, the rise of public sector unionism, and new methods of organizing in the twenty-first century, including right here at Rutgers.

We place New Jersey worker movements in historic context with contemporaneous labor movements elsewhere in the United States and in other countries, and we examine the impact of political ideology, culture, ethnicity, race and gender issues on the development of New Jersey worker movements.

An important goal of the course is for students to learn to think logically and critically about ideas and events in history and to evaluate arguments from a variety of perspectives.

Please do not hesitate to contact me via email or the Canvas Inbox if you have any questions about the course.

*Statement on Disability:* 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. 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>.

*Statement on Academic Honesty:* All work in this course must be your own. Be careful to always cite your sources. For direct quotes, include them within quotation marks and cite appropriately. Since none of us lived during the times we are studying, we must, of course, rely on the words and writings of others, but these must always be cited -- otherwise the use of those words is considered plagiarism. Any assignments containing the work of others and not cited will receive a grade of zero. *Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns on this point.*

*Support for students:* Information on how to receive extra support for (a) victim and mental health services, (b) academics, and (c) financial assistance (mainly emergencies) is available at <https://smlr.rutgers.edu/academic-programs/current-students>

*Academic Freedom:* Faculty and students alike are free to express their viewpoints at appropriate times in class, including perspectives that differ from most in the Rutgers University community. Students may be exposed to views they find challenging, uncomfortable, or distressing. But, since Rutgers is a public institution, First Amendment speech protections apply. Legally, feelings of discomfort are not

sufficient to restrict speech. Pedagogically, exposing people to different ideas—even challenging their most deeply held beliefs—is a feature, not a flaw, of academic life. Free inquiry is essential to a robust learning environment. Students and professors are at our best—and best able to contribute to society—when we are exposed to a wide range of challenging ideas.

### Class Structure

The course is organized into 7 modules, each lasting 1 to 3 weeks and covering a chronological period and theme. There will be an assignment for most weeks ranging from 2- or 3-page reading responses to 3-page site visit reports, to forum discussions. There will also be two quizzes. All late assignments will be downgraded one letter grade (e.g. A to B) and will not be accepted more than one week after due date.

This online course also requires you to physically visit at least two labor-history-related locations in New Jersey. The site visits are organized around the periods we will be studying: one for the earlier period (Modules 1-2), one at Paterson (Module 3), and one for Modules 4-7 (any two of these three are required). *Note: **If you will be unable to complete these visits due to physical disability or distance from New Jersey, you must contact the instructor during the first week of the course** to arrange alternative assignments. Those living outside New Jersey will complete equivalent visits to labor-related locations in their areas.*

*Students are responsible for checking their Canvas inbox and the course website, including all announcements, frequently, and completing all readings, videos, and assignments on time.*

### Required Text

*Workers in New Jersey History* by Joseph Gowaskie. This will be our basic outline text. It is available in pdf format in the course website or at <https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/3744> (click on PDF-1). It is also available in hardcopy if you prefer from online bookstores.

All other readings listed below will be available in the course website or via the Web.

### Class Schedule

Changes may be made in the schedule and readings. Assignments are discussed in more detail on each week's web page in the Canvas course website.

### **Module 1: Work in Early New Jersey**

Week 1: <i>Tuesday, Jan 20</i> <i>Sunday, Jan 25</i>	Introduction and overview. Become familiar with the Canvas website for our online course.
	Readings: Gowaskie, <i>Workers in New Jersey History</i> , chapter 1.
	Assignment: (1) Introduce yourself in Meet the Other Students, (2) post Account Profile, and (3) respond to instructor message.

Week 2: <i>Monday, Jan 26 - Sunday, Feb 1</i>	Iron, Slavery, and Indenture
	Readings: Green, "Child Labor" and "Oxford Furnace" (very short) Kury, "Labor and the Charcoal Iron Industry: The New Jersey-New York Experience" Bezís-Selfa, "Slavery and Free Labor in the Iron Industry"
	Assignment: Reading Response

## Module 2: Artisans and Early Trade Unions

Week 3: <i>Monday, Feb 2 - Sunday, Feb 8</i>	Artisans and Laborers
	Readings: Gowaskie, <i>Workers in New Jersey History</i> , chapter 2; Bensman, <i>The Practice of Solidarity</i> , chapters 4 and 11.
	Assignment: Discussion Forum

## Module 3: Industrial NJ: Paterson

Week 4: <i>Monday, Feb 9 - Sunday, Feb 15</i>	The Factory System and the Significance of Paterson
	Readings: Gowaskie, <i>Workers in New Jersey History</i> , chapter 3; and four very short articles: "The Situation in New Jersey" and "The Strike on the Jersey Central," 1877 NYT; "March of the Mill Children"; Leonora Barry's Report to the Knights of Labor, 1887
	Assignment: Site Visit 1 Report (3 pp.)

Week 5: <i>Monday, Feb 16 Sunday, Feb 22</i>	The Paterson Silk Strike of 1913
	Readings: The Paterson Strike Pageant Program at <a href="#">Paterson Strike Pageant</a> ; Golin, <i>The Fragile Bridge: Paterson Silk Strike 1913</i> , chapters 1-2
	Assignment: Listen to Library of Congress "Working in Paterson" oral history, post response to Forum (300-500 words), respond to 2 others (100-200)

Week 6: <i>Monday, Feb 23 Sunday, Mar 1</i>	The Red Scare and the Roaring 20s
	Readings: DeBrizzi, "The Standard Oil Strikes In Bayonne, New Jersey, 1915-16"; Howard Green, "The Red Scare" (1919) ( <i>New Jersey Heritage</i> magazine)
	Assignment: Quiz 1

## Module 4: The Great Depression

Week 7: <i>Monday, Mar 2</i> – <i>Sunday, Mar 8</i>	The Great Depression in New Jersey
	Readings: Gowaskie, <i>Workers in New Jersey History</i> , chapter 4; Sidorick, <i>Condensed Capitalism</i> , chapters 1 and 2 (excerpts).
	Assignment: Site Visit 2 Report (3 pp.)

Week 8: <i>Monday, Mar 9</i> – <i>Friday, Mar 13</i>	New Jersey Workers Fighting Back in the 1930s
	Readings: The Army of Unoccupation (Trenton 1936); "Life and Labor at Seabrook Farms" and "Them Women Sure Are Scrappers" (Seabrook 1934); Cowie, <i>Capital Moves</i> , chapter 1 (part)
	Assignment: Reading Response (2 pp.)

\*\*\* Spring Break \*\*\* March 14-22

## Module 5: World War II and Aftermath

Week 9: <i>Monday, Mar 23</i> <i>Sunday, Mar 29</i>	The New Jersey Homefront in World War II
	Readings: Sidorick, <i>Condensed Capitalism</i> , chapter 3 "Divisions of Labor at Seabrook"
	Assignment: Listen to Rutgers NJ Homefront oral histories, no written assignment.

Week 10: <i>Monday, Mar 30</i> <i>Sunday, Apr 5</i>	Postwar Strikes and Repression
	Readings: Bruno, "1946 UE strike against Phelps-Dodge Copper Co."; Schrecker, "McCarthyism and Organized Labor"
	Assignment: Reading Response (2 pp.)

**Module 6: 1950s-1970s; Public Sector Unionism**

Week 11: <i>Monday, Apr 6 - Sunday, Apr 12</i>	Public Sector Unions in New Jersey
	Readings: Golin, <i>The Newark Teacher Strikes</i> , chapter 1; Steve Early articles on NJ Public Worker Organizing; McCartin. "Public Sector Unions under Assault"
	Assignment: Forum Discussion (300-500 words), respond to 2 others (100-200)

Week 12: <i>Monday, Apr 13 - Sunday, Apr 19</i>	Industrial Decline and Deindustrialization
	Readings: Gowaskie, <i>Workers in New Jersey History</i> , chapter 5; Sidorick, <i>Condensed Capitalism</i> , chapter 8; "Singer Plant Closes"
	Assignment: Site Visit 3 Report (3 pp.)

**Module 7: New Jersey Workers in the Recent Past**

Week 13: <i>Monday, Apr 20 - Sunday, Apr 26</i>	NJ Workers in the Period of Neoliberalism and Today
	Readings: New Jersey Adjunct Professors Organize; Farmworker Support Committee newsletter (skim); Laborers Join with NJ Worker Centers; Debate on union political activity.
	Assignment: Quiz 2

## 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:

Meet the Other Students, Profile Posting, and Response to Instructor Message: Week 1  
6% of the grade (60 points)

Reading Responses: Weeks 2, 8 & 10  
27% of the grade (Each reading response = 90 points)

Site Visit Reports: Weeks 4, 7, 12 (any TWO required)  
20% of the grade (Each of two site visit reports = 100 points)  
Extra credit for doing optional third site visit report, max 25 points

Quizzes: Units 6 & 13  
(Quizzes are True/False, Multiple Choice, and Essay Questions)  
20% of the grade (Each quiz = 100 points)

Forum Discussions: Weeks 3, 5 & 11  
27% of the grade (Each forum = 90 points)

Please note: All late assignments will be downgraded one letter grade (e.g. A to B) and will not be accepted more than one week after due date.