

History of Labor and Work in the U.S. 1880-1945
Labor Studies and Employment Relations
School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University
Summer 2023

Course Number: 37:575:202:T1
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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will introduce the important developments and themes in 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 and learn more broadly about how U.S. citizens responded to the nature of the workplace in political, social and cultural terms.

In our review of the history, you will notice two recurring themes: 1.) Workers have always demanded that employers treat them with dignity and respect and this struggle continues; and 2.) Property rights are the source of all workplace struggles, and this too continues into the present.

II. SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

In addition to learning about the history of the working class in the U.S., this course will help you to develop your writing skills. Through writing successive drafts, you will learn to provide constructive feedback to other students' writing. At the conclusion of the course, you will be able to demonstrate increased knowledge and skills in writing/revising academic essays.

Specifically, students will 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 SAS graduate will be able to:

Core Curriculum: SCL, HST, WCr and WcD

- Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place (Goal h);
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems and other forms of social organization (Goal m);
- Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations (Goal n);
- Explain the development of some aspect of society or culture over time, including the history of ideas or history or science (Goal k);
- Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors (Goal L);
- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience (Goal S1);
- Respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, and/or supervisors through successive drafts and revision (Goal S2);
- Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry (Goal t);
- Evaluate and critically assess sources and the use of conventions of attribution and citation correctly (Goal u); and
- Analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights (Goal v).

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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. EVALUATION

Course grading will be based on the following:

Week 1 – Intro Quiz	=	10pts
Week 1 – Forum Intros	=	10pts
Week 2 – Group Forum #1	=	75pts
Week 2 – Essay 1(Draft for Peer Review)	=	3.0pts
Week 4 – Essay 1 Peer Review	=	4.5pts
Week 4 – Group Forum #2	=	75pts
Week 5 – Essay 1 Draft 1 (For Prof Review and Grading)	=	125pts
Week 6 – Group Forum #3	=	75pts
Week 6 – Mid-Term Exam	=	100pts

Week 7 – Essay 1 Final Version (For Prof Review and Grading)	=	125pts
Week 7 – Essay 2 (Draft for Peer Review)	=	3.0pts
Week 8 – Group Forum #4	=	75pts
Week 9 – Essay 2 Peer Review	=	4.5pts
Week 10 – Group Forum #5	=	75pts
Week 11 – Essay 2 Final Version (For Prof Review and Grading)	=	240pts
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Total Points:	=	1,000pts

Essays

For Essays I and II, you will be assigned a topic to write about. For Essay I, you will submit Peer Review drafts for 7.5pts; a draft that will count for 125 points; and a final version for another 125 points. For Essay II, you will submit Peer Review drafts for 7.5pts and a final version for 240pts.

Peer Reviews

Both papers will undergo peer review sessions where you will share your drafts with other members of the class. You will use a Peer Review Worksheet to evaluate each other's papers. The goal is to improve your draft and your writing skills! Again, Peer Reviews will count for a total of 15pts (7.5 per Peer Review = 3pts for turning in the draft and 4.5 for reviewing another student's draft).

Mid-Term Exam

You will be assigned a "take home" mid-term exam that will count for 100 points. It will be a short essay based on a question or prompt that is derived from the readings, viewings and "Questions to Consider." The structure, formatting, etc. will be exactly the same as the Essays.

Group Forums

In online discussions you will interact through a series of posts about a particular topic. You will be able to communicate questions, insights, and conclusions in *threaded discussions* pertaining to a topic, as well as learn from one another in the process.

The *Online Group Discussion Guidelines and Grading Rubric* document (available on the course site in Canvas) provide in-depth explanations of how to successfully participate in an online discussion and how the discussions are evaluated. Your posts will be evaluated on a scale from minimally adequate to exceptional, with more typical responses being in the good to excellent range.

As you review the class schedule, please note that over the course of the semester there are five graded discussions (six if you count the Forum Intro). Although the discussions

are held online and are asynchronous (meaning you don't have to participate in a forum in "real time") they still require a weekly time commitment. In this way, the discussions are much like signing up for a class with mandatory attendance. You are required to post on the discussion site multiple times during the week of study.

V. RU LEARNING CENTERS

"Rutgers is committed to your success and offers free academic services to all students. The Learning Centers provide tutoring, study groups, and review sessions for your courses. They also host workshops and provide individual academic coaching to help you further develop your study strategies and self-management skills. To learn more about how the LCs can help you succeed, visit rlc.rutgers.edu."

VI. 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>.

VII. 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, labor law, politics, etc. and all who partake in the course should feel encouraged to express their views in an open, civic forum.

VIII. COURSE READINGS

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

IX. SYLLABUS

Week 1

May 30th – Intros, Overview and What We All Have in Common with Workers of the Past

Review Course Syllabus

Discussion: Are You A Commodity?

Assignments:

Intro Quiz (Tell me about yourself...and are you a commodity?) **(10pts)**

Forum Intros (Introduce yourself to the other members of your group) **(10pts)**

Week 2

June 6th – Slavery and Free Labor

1. 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

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

Documentary: The Grand Army of Starvation

<https://ashp.cuny.edu/1877-grand-army-starvation>

Assignments:

Group Forum #1: Agrarian Republicanism –“I shall be even with you and you shall be even with me.” (75pts)

❖ **Prompt for Essay #1**

❖ **Peer Review Worksheet and Grading Rubric for grading of Essay 1**

How to write the essay

What does an “A” essay look like?

Week 3

June 13th – A Polarized Society: Industrial Capitalism and Worker Organizations in the Gilded Age (1877-1893) (Part I)

2. Readings:

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

Gourevitch, Alex, From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the 19th Century, Chapter 2: Independent Laborers by Voluntary Contract, pp. 47-66, and Chapter 3: The Sword of Want, pp. 67-96.

Optional Reading: The Monied Metropolis, Chapter 6, pp. 172-195

Assignment:

Essay 1 Draft 1 (for Peer Review) 3.0pts Due June 19, 2023

Week 4

June 20th – A Polarized Society: Industrial Capitalism and Worker Organizations in the Gilded Age (1877-1893) (Part II)

3. Readings:

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

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

Optional Reading: The Monied Metropolis, Chapter 9, pp. 279-285

Assignments:

Peer Review of Essay 1 Draft 1 **(4.5pts) (Due June 26th)**

Group Forum #2: The Problem with the Wage Bargain (75pts)

Week 5

June 27th – The Triumph of Industrial Capitalism at Home and Abroad (1893-1900)

4. 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

Andrew Carnegie, Wealth, 1889 (read in class)

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

Documentary: 10 Days that Changed America: The Homestead Strike
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeuhiu9CHK8>

Assignment:

Complete Essay 1 Draft 2 (for Prof Grading) **(125pts) (Due July 3rd)**

Week 6

July 4th – Taylorism/Change and Continuity in Daily Life (1900-1914)

5. Readings:

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

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

Interview with Rosenthal

<https://archives.kpfa.org/data/20191126-Tue1000.mp3>

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

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

Adam Smith “Wealth of Nations” (Pins)

Adam Smith “Wealth of Nations” (Education)

Assignments:

Mid-Term Exam Due July 10th (100pts)

Group Forum #3: Smiths Pins, Taylorism and the Past, Present, and Future of Work (75pts)

Week 7

July 11th – Reform and Radicalism in the Progressive Era

6. Readings:

Who Built America? Chapter 5, pp. 223-225, 228-255

Peter Cole, Wobblies on the Waterfront, Chapters 1: *Philadelphia: The Workshop of the World*; Chapter 2: *Wobblies Take the Docks*; pp. 9-49, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2007.

Documentary: Introduction to the IWW

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5l7uwtqkqU>

Assignment:

Complete Essay 1 Final Version (for Prof Grading) (125pts) (Due July 20th)

❖ **Prompt for Essay #2**

❖ **Peer Review Worksheet and Grading Rubric for Essay 2**

Week 8

July 18th – World War I and the Lean Years for American Workers (1914-1929)

7. 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” pp. 117-118

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

Documentary: The Killing Floor

Watch it on Apple TV, Amazon Prime, Youtube, or Vudu (cost is between \$2-\$3)

Assignments:

Essay 2 Draft 1 (for Peer Review) 3.0pts Due July 24, 2023

Group Forum #4: What were workers demanding and why did they ultimately fail? (75pts)

Week 9

July 25th - The Great Depression and the New Deal

8. Readings:

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

Documentary: PBS Presentation: The Great Depression

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ_lizW5zSI&t=4s&has_verified=1

Assignments:

Peer Review of Essay 2 Draft 1 **(4.5pts) (Due August 4th)**

Week 10

August 1st – The Great Depression and the New Deal **(Part II)**

9. 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

Brecher, Strike!, Chapter 5: Depression Decade pp. 159-235

Documentary: With Babies and Banners

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pa75V-tdBko&t=3s>

Assignments:

Group Forum #5: What Did the Workers at Flint Want? Why did they win this time?
And one last time, “Are You A Commodity?” (75pts)

Week 11

August 8th – Working People and World War II (Raising Expectations)

10. Readings:

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

Sherna Berger Gluck, Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War and Social Change,
Interview with Marie Baker (1987)

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

Documentary: Rosie the Riveter

Assignment:

Complete Essay 2 Final Version (for Prof Grading) **(240pts) (Due August 14th)**