This course provides an introduction to the field of labor and working-class history, asking how it developed over the past fifty years and where it might be headed in the future. We will start with the birth of the “New Labor History” of the 1960s and 1970s, and ask how it both differed from and re-imagined earlier examples of labor history. We will then move to efforts to integrate labor history with the parallel fields of African American and women’s history, examining how that led both to the perception that the field had lost its focus and also a burst of dynamic study and analysis of the intersections among class, race and gender. Taking that analysis as a starting point, we will then move through a brief chronological survey of U.S. working-class history from the Revolution to the Present. While it will be far from comprehensive, the survey will sample some of the more recent and innovative examples from the field.

Course requirements
1. Seminars (25%): Each student is expected to complete all core readings before weekly seminar meetings, attend all meetings and participate actively and respectfully in class discussions. If you cannot attend a meeting please notify me well in advance so we can develop an alternative assignment.

2. Seminar Leadership (10%): Each student must choose two class meetings in which she or he will lead the discussion of the core readings. Prepare for this task by completing both the core readings and the additional readings for that week. If these are books, please also read a few reviews of them. Prepare a 10-15 minute introduction to the readings and a few questions to kick off the discussion. When more than one student is leading discussion, please meet in advance to divide tasks and coordinate your presentation. Please be prepared to sign up for discussion leadership on September 8.

3. Short Paper (25%): Each student will write one 5-7 page paper addressing a historiographical question raised by the core and additional readings for one class meeting. You may choose any topic, but it should draw all of the readings into a coherent and interesting argument. The short paper is due the week following the class meeting where the readings are discussed. It may help to write this paper during a week when you are introducing the readings.

4. Final Paper (40%): Each student will write a 15-20 page historiographical essay that addresses a specific question or theme raised by the course material. Similar to literature reviews in other fields, such essays summarize the existing literature on a particular topic, explain the major issues of debate among scholars addressing that topic, and point to one or two questions raised by the scholarship that warrant future research. You should choose a topic that furthers
your own research or expands your knowledge in ways that will be useful for teaching. You might also elaborate on the topic addressed in your short paper. Please make an appointment to discuss your topic with me before October 6. A complete bibliography is due on March 8. The completed paper is due in class on May 3.

**Note on writing:** All written assignments for this class should be typed, double-spaced with standard one-inch margins. They should be carefully edited and free of grammatical, spelling or typographical errors. Please use the standard humanities style of documentation as described in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (7th Edition) or *The Chicago Manual of Style* (15th Edition). I recommend purchasing one of these books, as they will be useful throughout your scholarly career.

**Core Readings:** All articles and book chapters are posted at Learn@UW <https://learnuw.wisc.edu/>. The following books can be purchased at Room of One’s Own Books, 307 W. Johnson St. (257-7888).


**Seminar Schedule:**

- **September 8**  Introduction
- **September 15**  “Old” Labor History

**Core Readings:**

Selig Perlman, *A History of Trade Unionism in the United States* (MacMillan, 1922), 265-308


**Additional Reading:**
W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (Atheneum, 1935), Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4

**September 22**

**The “New” Labor History**

**Core Readings:**


**Additional Reading:**


**September 29**

**Race, Gender and the “Crisis” of Labor History**

**Core Readings:**

Sean Wilentz, “Against Exceptionalism: Class Consciousness and the American Labor Movement, 1790-1920,” *International Labor and Working Class History* (Fall, 1984), 1-24


David Roediger, “‘Labor in White Skin’: Race and Working Class History,” *Toward the Abolition of Whiteness* (Verso, 1994), 21-38

**Additional Reading:**

Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Towards a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca, 1991), Chapters 1, 4, 9, 10

October 6 Rethinking the Origin Story

**Paper Topics Due**

**Core Readings:**


**Additional Reading:**


October 13 Rethinking Free Labor

**Core Readings:**


Moon-Ho Jung, Outlawing "Coolies": Race, Nation, and Empire in the Age of Emancipation,” American Quarterly 57 (September, 2005), 677-701

Additional Reading:

Heather Cox Richardson, The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901 (Harvard University Press, 2001)

October 20  Labor and Nature in the Gilded Age

Core Readings:


Additional Reading:


October 27  Labor and Empire

Bibliography Due

Core Readings:

Julie Greene, The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal (Penguin, 2009)

Additional Reading:

Leon Fink ed., Workers across the Americas: The Transnational Turn in Labor History (Oxford University Press, 2011)
November 3  Class and Culture


Robin D. G. Kelley, "We Are Not What We Seem": Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” Journal of American History 80 (Jun., 1993), 75-112


Additional Reading:

Lizbeth Cohen, Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939 (Cambridge, 1990)

November 10  Immigration and the Making of the Working Class

Core Readings:


Additional Reading:


November 17  Labor and the New Deal Order

Core Readings:


Additional Reading:

November 24  Thanksgiving - No Class

December 1  No Class – Work on your paper

December 8  Workers and Rights
Core Readings:

Dorothy Sue Cobble, “‘A Spontaneous Loss of Enthusiasm’: Workplace Feminism and the Transformation of Women’s Service Jobs in the 1970s,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* No. 56, Fall 1999, pp. 23-44

Dennis A. Deslippe, “‘Do Whites Have Rights?’: White Detroit Policemen and ‘Reverse Discrimination’ Protests in the 1970s,” *Journal of American History* 91 (December 2004), 932-960

Kathleen M. Barry, “‘Too Glamorous to Be Considered Workers’: Flight Attendants and Pink-Collar Activism in Mid-Twentieth-Century America,” *Labor* 3 (2006), 119-138


Additional Reading:


December 15 The End of the Working Class?

Final Papers Due

Core Readings:


Additional Reading: