

History 408
Fall 2008
Tues. & Thurs., 1:00-2:15
1217 Mosse Humanities Building

Professor Camille Guérin-Gonzales
Office Hours: Tuesday, 3:30-5:30
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American Labor History, 1900-Present

This course surveys the history of working people in the United States in the 20th and 21st century, focusing on the historical meanings of work and working-class culture. We will look at the ways in which a variety of scholars and “organic intellectuals” have drawn upon the methods and practices of labor history, social history, economic history, and cultural studies (including cultural geography), to examine the lives of working women and men. Throughout the course, we will be examining relations of power by looking closely at ideas about race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. We will be especially concerned with how these ideas have shaped working-class lives, informed class relations, and organized communities of solidarity. Some of the questions we will address are: What is unique about US labor history and what is part of a shared international history of workers? How have processes of cultural fusion and cultural fragmentation operated to unite and divide workers? In what ways does an interrogation of the politics of space (place, location, landscape, architecture, environment, home, neighborhood, city, region, and territory) help us to understand working-class cultures? Questions about American Exceptionalism and the American Dream; community and solidarity; class formation and social identity; and the relationship between working-class strategies of resistance and the everyday lives of working people will be the focus of our course readings, films, discussions, and research projects during the semester.

Course Requirements

1. General

Class Participation. The success of the course depends upon your contribution to the creation of a community of scholars dedicated to cooperative learning. Thus, class participation includes: attending all class meetings, completing all reading and writing assignments in preparation for class discussions, and engaging in lively and respectful dialogue with one another.

2. Writing and Research

Film Critique. You will write one 3-page (approximately 900 words) essay discussing how one of the following groupings of films represents labor history:

Select one due date and write an essay on the films listed for that date:

- Oct. 9:** *The Killing Floor & Uprising of '34*
Oct. 30: *Wage Slaves: Not Getting By in America & Free a Man to Fight*
Nov. 13: *From Sleepy Lagoon to Zoot Suit & Chavez Ravine*
Nov. 25: *Yuri Kochiyama: A Passion for Justice & San Francisco State*
Dec. 2: *Uprising of '34 & Harlan County, USA*

Extra Credit: You may write 3-page essays on additional groups of films to earn extra credit toward your final grade in the course. *These must be submitted by the due dates listed.*

2. Writing and Research (cont.)

Working-Class History Research Project. You will conduct in-depth research using archival materials housed at the Wisconsin Historical Society and write a two-part essay.

Part One. Due Tuesday, October 14:

You will identify an archival collection at the Wisconsin Historical Society used in one of the single-author books assigned for this course listed below, familiarize yourself with the contents of the archival collection, and write a 900-word essay (approximately three pages) describing the contents of the collection.

1. Janet Irons. *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
2. Peter B. Levy. *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Part Two. Due Tuesday, December 9. You will submit a second copy of Part One as the introduction to Part Two of your working-class history project.

You will write a 1,500-word essay (approximately five pages) explaining how the collection expanded your understanding of an event, issue, relationship, community, or institution that is addressed in your course readings. You must include examples and evidence from the collection (in the form of quotations or photocopied documents or photographs) to support your analysis. You will conclude your essay by suggesting or proposing future research projects based on the collection. Be insightful and brilliant.

3. Examinations

Midterm Examination. There will be an in-class midterm examination Tuesday, October 21, consisting of one long essay question and four short identification questions.

Final Examination. The final examination will cover material since the midterm. This will be an in-class examination on December 19, 12:05-2:25 p.m.

Grade Distribution:

Class Participation	20%
Film Critique	10%
Midterm Examination	20%
Research Project	25%
Final Examination	25%

Readings*

The following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore, 711 State Street, and are on reserve in Helen C. White College Library. The Stuart Cosgrove essay, "The Zoot Suit and Style Warfare," is on the Learn @ UW site for this course.

***Readings should be completed by Tuesday of each week, unless otherwise noted.**

Required Readings

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein. *Major Problems in the History of American Workers: Documents and Essays*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003.

Tera Hunter. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Janet Irons. *Testing the New Deal: The General Textile Strike of 1934 in the American South*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

George Lipsitz. *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Peter B. Levy. *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

Stuart Cosgrove. "The Zoot Suit and Style Warfare," in *Zoot Suits and Second-Hand Dresses: An Anthology of Fashion and Music*. Edited by Angela McRobbie. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988. Available on the Learn @ UW site for this course.

Recommended Style Books

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

An earlier version is available in the University Bookstore: Kate Turabian, *A Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*, 3d rev. ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). This edition is not as comprehensive as the 7th edition listed above and does not include a section on conducting research.

William Strunk, E. B. White, and Maira Kalman. *The Elements of Style Illustrated*. New York: Penguin, 2007.

Calendar and Assignments

Week 1 Labor History and Historical Meanings of Work

Sept. 2 & 4

Readings

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. v-xiv and 1-18.

Film & Discussion: *Wage Slaves: Not Getting By in America*

Labor Day, September 2 & Ramadan begins September 1

Week 2 The Agrarian Dream and Wage Slavery

Sept. 9 & 11

Readings (complete all readings by Tuesday of each week, before class)

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 19-123.

Week 3 Freedom and “Free Labor”

Sept. 16 & 18

Readings

Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*, pp. vii-129.

Week 4 Workers' Control of the Workplace

Sept. 23 & 25

Readings

Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom*, pp. 130-238.

Film: *The Killing Floor*

Week 5 Working-Class Cultures and Class War

Sept. 30 & Oct. 2

Readings

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 124-236.

Photographs

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 237-247.

Film: *Uprising of '34*

Rosh Hashanah, September 30-October 1 & Eid Al-Fitr, October 1

Week 6 Revolution or Reform?

Oct. 7 & 9

Readings

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 248-326.

Janet Irons, Testing the New Deal, pp. 3-62.

Due Thursday: Film Critique, *The Killing Floor & Uprising of '34*

Yom Kippur, October 9

Week 7 “Bread and Roses”

Oct. 14 & 16

Readings

Janet Irons, Testing the New Deal, pp. 63-181.

Due: Working-Class History Project, Part One

Week 8 “A Rainbow at Midnight”

Oct. 21 & 23

Tuesday Midterm Examination

Thursday Reading & Discussion: George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, pp. 1-15.

Film: *Free a Man to Fight*

Week 9 Working-Class Culture War

Oct. 28 & 30

Readings

George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, pp. 19-95.

Stuart Cosgrove, “The Zoot Suit and Style Warfare,” pp. 3-22.

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 327-360.

Film: *From Sleepy Lagoon to Zoot Suit: The Irreverent Path of Alice McGrath*

Due Thursday: Film Critique, *Wage Slaves: Not Getting By in America & Free a Man to Fight*

Week 10 Labor Geographies

Nov. 4 & 6

Readings

George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, pp. 99-225.

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 361-396.

Film: *Chavez Ravine*

Week 11 Dividing Workers, Creating Consumers, Redefining Class

Nov. 11 & 13

Readings

George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, pp. 229-333.

Film: *Yuri Kochiyama: A Passion for Justice*

Due Thursday: Film Critique, *From Sleepy Lagoon to Zoot Suit & Chavez Ravine*

Week 12 The Politics of Working-Class Resistance

Nov. 18 & 20

Readings

George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, pp. 335-347.

Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*, pp. 1-107.

Film: *San Francisco State*

Week 13 “Which Side Are You On?”

Nov. 25 & 27

Readings

Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*, pp. 108-196.

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 397-431.

Film: *Harlan County, U.S.A.*

Due Tuesday: Film Critique, *Yuri Kochiyama: A Passion for Justice & San Francisco State*

Thanksgiving Recess, November 27

Week 14 The New Working Class

Dec. 2 & 4

Readings

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 432-521.

Due Tuesday: Film Critique, *Uprising of '34 & Harlan County, USA*

Week 15 Everyday Practices and Spaces of Hope and Justice

Dec. 9 & 11

Tuesday

Working-Class History Research Paper Due* at 1:00 p.m.

**Submit Part One as the introduction to Part Two of your paper. The two parts should be merged into one polished research paper.*

**No late papers accepted for any reason other than a documented religious or health excuse. No exceptions, including computer & transportation problems.*

Thursday

Reading & Discussion: Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 522-562.

Eid al Adha, December 9

Week 16 Final Examination, 12:25 a.m.-2:25 p.m.

Dec. 19