

History 408
Spring, 2013
Tues. & Thurs., 1:00-2:15
1221 Mosse Humanities Building

Professor Camille Guérin-Gonzales
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:30-4:30
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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 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, viewing all films, and engaging in lively and respectful dialogue with one another.

Laptops and Notetaking. The use of laptop computers or other screen-based devices is *not* permitted during lecture (including when films are screened). Please take notes by hand.

2. Writing & the Work of History

Film Critique. You will write one 900-word essay (approximately 3-pages) discussing how one of the following pairs of films represents labor history. *Select **one** due date and write an essay on **one** pair of films listed for that date (must be a designated pair, don't mix and match films on your own):*

March 21: *Triangle & Uprising of '34* **OR** *Riding the Rails & Uprising of '34*

April 4: *The Killing Floor & Brothers on the Line*
OR *Uprising of '34 & Brothers on the Line*

April 25: *Chavez Ravine & the House We Live In*

May 2 : *Free a Man to Fight & Sir! No Sir!* **OR** *San Francisco State & Sir! No Sir!*

May 9: *Made in L.A. & Triangle* **OR** *Made in L.A. & Uprising of '34*

Films are on reserve in Helen C. White College Library. **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. In addition, check the Learn@UW site for our course for additional extra-credit opportunities.*

Working-Class History Projects.

1. The Craft of History Primary Source Paper

You will write a 600-word paper (approximately two pages) examining how historians craft history through a close reading and analysis of primary source readings in the first three chapters of *American Labor: A Documentary Collection*, chap. 1, "Labor in the Colonial and Early National Periods, to 1828," chap. 2, "The Rise of Free Labor, the Factory System, and Trades," and chap. 3, "Workers in a Maturing Industrial Society, 1877-1914." You will select two or more of the primary sources from any of these three chapters and address the question posed by the compilers of the document collection, Melvyn Dubofsky and Joseph A. McCartin, in the section containing the primary source/s you have selected. **Extra Credit:** Locate one or more original document/s and write a 300-word (approximately one-page) paper elaborating on your analysis of the excerpt reprinted in *American Labor: A Documentary Collection*. **Due Feb. 19, at the beginning of class.**

2. The Laboring of American Culture Paper

You will write a 1,500-2,100-word paper (5-7 pages) that explores the "laboring of American culture" during the 1930s. Your paper will examine the ways in which working people constructed and used expressive culture, such as music, film, photography, drawing, and other art forms to a) represent their everyday lives; b) unsettle and subvert power hierarchies that subordinated them; c) reclaim and even re-create their working-class bodies (both the basis and the goal of "recreation"); and d) reclaim the power of pleasure to transform their lives. *Strike Songs of the Depression*, by Timothy Lynch, will provide a foundation for a paper that draws on course films, music, slides, readings, and lectures. You may draw on materials and experiences outside of class, as well, if you wish. I will distribute a detailed guide. **Due MAY 7, at the beginning of class.**

3. Examinations

Midterm Examination. There will be an in-class midterm examination Tuesday, March 5, 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 Wednesday, May 15, 2:45-4:45, consisting of one long essay question, one short essay question, and four short identification questions.

Grade Distribution:

Class Participation	20%
Film Critique	10%
Midterm Examination	20%
Working Class History Projects	
Primary Source Paper	10%
Laboring of American Culture Paper	15%
Final Examination	25%

Readings*

The following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore, 711 State Street, & are on reserve in Helen C. White College Library. *Strike Songs of the Depression* is on reserve at Mills Library in Memorial Library. Journal articles & essays are on the Learn @ UW site for this course.

Required Readings:

Monographs & Document Collection

David Roediger. *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the Working Class*, rev. ed. London: Verso Press, 2007. (Note: ACLS Humanities E-Book available on the UW Library website).

Melvyn Dubofsky and Joseph McCartin, eds. *American Labor: A Documentary Collection*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Annelise Orleck. *Common Sense & a Little Fire: Women and Working Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995. (Note: EBSCOhost eBook available on the UW Library website).

William P. Jones. *The Tribe of Black Ulysses: African American Lumber Workers in the Jim Crow South*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Nelson Lichtenstein. *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Essay Collection (Working-Class History Project Assignment)

Timothy P. Lynch. *Strike Songs of the Depression*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

Pamphlets

Frances Fox Piven. *Lessons for our Struggle*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

Dana Frank. *Women Strikers Occupy Chain Stores, Win Big*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

Mike Davis. *Be Realistic, Demand the Impossible*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

Articles

Articles listed in the syllabus are available on the Learn @ UW site for our course.

Style Books

Kate L. Turabian, Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

William Strunk, E. B. White, and Maira Kalman. *The Elements of Style Illustrated*. New York: Penguin, 2005.

Calendar and Assignments

Week 1 Labor History and Historical Meanings of Work

Jan. 22 & 24

Readings

David Brody, "Reconciling the Old Labor History and the New," *Pacific Historical Review* 62, no. 1 (February 1993): 1-18. Available on the Learn @ UW site for our course.

Frances Fox Piven, *Lessons for our Struggle*, pp. 1-30

Film Clip:

& Reading Discussion

We Are Wisconsin: This is What Democracy Looks Like (2012)

David Brody article & Frances Fox Piven essays (cited above)

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 21

Week 2 The Agrarian Dream and Wage Slavery

Jan. 29 & 31

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

David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, pp. 1-64.

Melvyn Dubofsky & Joseph A. McCartin, *American Labor: A Documentary Collection*, pp. 1-42.

Week 3 Freedom and "Free Labor"

Feb. 5 & 7

Readings

David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, pp. 65-163.

Melvyn Dubofsky & Joseph A. McCartin, *American Labor*, pp. 43-87.

Week 4 Workers' Control of the Workplace

Feb. 12 & 14

Readings

David Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century," *Labor History* 17, no. 4 (Fall 1976): 485-509.

David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, pp. 165-190.

Melvyn Dubofsky & Joseph A. McCartin, *American Labor*, pp. 89-137.

Week 5 "Bread and Roses"

Feb. 19 & 21

Readings

Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense & a Little Fire*, pp. 1-113.

David Montgomery, "Immigrants, Industrial Unions, and Social Reconstruction in the United States, 1916-1923," *Labour/Le Travail* 13 (Spring 1984): 101-113

Film: Triangle: Remembering the Fire

Due Tuesday: Craft of History Primary Source Paper

Week 6 Race, Riots, and Community

Feb. 26 & 28

Readings

Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense & a Little Fire*, pp. 115-203.

Melvyn Dubofsky & Joseph A. McCartin, *American Labor*, pp. 139-176.

William P. Jones, *The Tribe of Black Ulysses*, pp. 1-42.

Film: *The Killing Floor*

Week 7 Mass Culture & Working-Class Communities

March 5 & 7

Tuesday Midterm Examination

Reading (complete by Thursday, May 7)

Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense & a Little Fire*, pp. 205-315.

William P. Jones, *The Tribe of Black Ulysses*, pp. 43-88.

Film: *Riding the Rails*

Week 8 Adrift: Utopian Radicalism & the New Deal

March 12 & 14

Readings

William P. Jones, *The Tribe of Black Ulysses*, pp. 89-124.

Melvyn Dubofsky & Joseph A. McCartin, *American Labor*, pp. 176-194.

Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, pp. 1-53.

Film: *Uprising of '34* (12:50-2:15; 85 minutes long)

Week 9 Workers' Common Ground

March 19 & 21

Readings

William P. Jones, *The Tribe of Black Ulysses*, pp. 125-150.

Dana Frank, *Women Strikers Occupy Chain Store, Win Big*, pp. 1-61.

Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, pp. 54-97.

Film: *Brothers on the Line* (12:55-2:15; 80 minutes long)

Due Thursday: Film Critique of *Triangle: Remembering the Fire & Uprising of '34*
OR *Riding the Rails & Uprising of '34*

Passover Begins March 25; Easter, March 31

Week 10 Spring Break

March 26 & 28

Week 11 **“There’s Work to be Done and a War to be Won”**

April 2 & 4

Readings

William P. Jones, *The Tribe of Black Ulysses*, pp. 151-188.

Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, pp. 97-177.

Melvyn Dubofsky & Joseph A. McCartin, *American Labor*, pp. 194-217.

Film: *Free a Man to Fight*

Due Thursday: Film Critique of *The Killing Floor & Brothers on the Line*
OR *Uprising of '34 & Brothers on the Line*

Week 12 ***Rainbow at Midnight: Rising Fears & the Politics of Exclusion***

April 9 & 11

Readings

Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, pp. 178-276.

Melvyn Dubofsky & Joseph A. McCartin, *American Labor*, pp. 217-227.

Week 13 **Geographies of Class and Culture**

April 16 & 18

Readings

Melvyn Dubofsky & Joseph A. McCartin, *American Labor*, pp. 227-255.

Frank Wilkinson, “Revisiting the ‘McCarthy’ Era,” *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 33 (January, 2000): 681-698.

Film: *The House We Live In (Race: Power of an Illusion, Episode 3) & Chavez Ravine*

Week 14 **The Politics of Working-Class Resistance**

April 23 & 25

Readings

James Lewes, “Envisioning Resistance: The GI Underground Press During the Vietnam War,” *Media History* 7, no. 2 (2001): 137-150.

Peter Levy, “Labor and the New Left: The Early Years, 1960-1963,” *Labor History* 31, no. 3 (1990): 298-321.

Film Clip: *The War at Home*

Films: *San Francisco State*
Sir! No Sir!

Due Thursday: Film Critique of *Chavez Ravine & The House We Live In*

Week 15 **“Which Side Are You On?”**

April 30 & May 2

Readings

Jane Collins, “Mapping a Global Labor Market: Gender and Skill in the Globalizing Garment Industry,” *Gender and Society* 16, no. 6 (December 2002): 921-940.

Film: Made in L.A.

Due Thursday: Film Critique of *Sir! No Sir!* & *Free a Man to Fight*
OR *San Francisco State & Sir! No Sir!*

Week 16 **“We Shall Overcome” & New Communities of Solidarity**

May 7 & 9

Tuesday

The Laboring of American Culture Paper Due* at 1:00 p.m.

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

Thursday

Readings (Complete by Thursday, before class)

Joseph A. McCartin, “Bringing the State’s Workers In,” *Labor History* 47, no. 1 (February 2006): 73-94.

Jane Collins, “Theorizing Wisconsin’s 2011 Protests: Community-Based Unionism Confronts Accumulation by Dispossession,” *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 1 (February 2012): 6-20.

Christine Garbough, “Folklore and Performing Political Protest: Calls of Conscience at the 2011 Wisconsin Labor Protests,” *Western Folklore* 70, nos. 3-4 (Summer 2011): 337-370.

Mike Davis, *Be Realistic, Demand the Impossible*, pp. 1-36

Film Clip: We Are Wisconsin: This is What Democracy Looks Like (2012)

Due Thursday: Film Critique of *Made in L.A.* & *Triangle: Remembering the Fire*
OR *Made in L.A. & Uprising of '34*

Week 17 **Final Examination**

May 15

2:45-4:45 p.m. (room assigned by Registrar in mid-April)