

History of Labor in the United States
History 474
Spring 2006

Instructor: Steve Leikin
Room: HSS 152
Class Hours: Thursday 4:10-6:55
Office: Science #227
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Course Description: This course is about the history of American labor in its broadest possible meaning. We will take as fundamental the place of work in establishing human identity and meaning. We will then explore the changing nature of work from the 17th century to the present. We will also take as fundamental the role of labor systems and class in distributing power and wealth in American society. Consequently we will examine how systems of labor changed over time and the way in which people participated in and resisted these changes. We will explore the intersections of race, gender and class in the making and unmaking of labor systems in, among other contexts, the slave South and free labor North, the new mass production industries of the early 20th century, and during wars both hot and cold.

Course Requirements:

Books:

- Boris and Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. 2nd Edition.
- Leikin, *The Practical Utopians: American Workers and the Cooperative Movement in the Gilded Age*.
- Liz Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*.
- Murolo and Chitty, *From the Folks Who Brought You the Weekend*.
- Register, *Packinghouse Daughter*.

Grades will be based on the following:

1. Three book reviews (3 to 5 typed pages) (15% each, collectively 45% of the final grade)
2. A final exam. (25% of the final grade)
3. 9 short summaries of articles from *Major Problems*. For weeks 3,4,7,8,12,13,14,15,16, you are required to summarize in one typed page one of the assigned articles from *Major Problems*. You will also be given a simple quiz that day on any other aspect of the reading assigned for that week. These summaries and quizzes are **all** required in order to receive this portion of your grade. If you fail any of them you must take them over within a week. (30% of the final grade)

Lecture Schedule and Assignments:

Week One: Feb. 2

Exploring the meaning of labor and history.

Film: *Nat Turner: A Troublesome Property*

Week Two: Feb. 9

The many meanings of class.

Read: Cheri Register, *Packinghouse Daughter*

Paper due

Week Three: Feb. 16

Free and unfree labor in early America

Read: FTFWBYTW, chapters one and two

Major Problems, chapter two

Summary due

In-class quiz

Week Four: Feb. 23

The development of slavery and the free labor North

Read: FTFWBYTW, chapter three

Major Problems, chapters three and four

Summary due

In-class quiz

Week Five: March 2

The Gilded Age and the Knights of Labor

Read: FTFWBYTW, chapters four and five

Major Problems, chapter five (docs 1-2, all essays)

In-class quiz

No summary this week

Week Six: March 9

The rise and fall of the cooperative alternative

Read: Leikin, *Practical Utopians*, all.

Paper due

Week Seven: March 16

Class canceled

Week Eight: March 23

Labor in the Progressive Era and WWI

Read: FTFWBYTW, chapter six

Major Problems, chapters six and eight

Summary due

In-class quiz

Week Nine: March 30

The 1920s and the onset of the Great Depression

Read: FTFWBYTW, chapters seven and eight

Major Problems, chapter nine

Summary due

In-class quiz

Week Ten: April 6 Spring Break No Class

Week Eleven: April 13

The Great Depression

Read: Liz Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, all

Paper due

Week Twelve: April 20

Labor and War: WWII

Read: FTFWBYTW, chapter nine

Major Problems, chapter ten

Summary due

In-class quiz

Week Thirteen: April 27

Labor and the Cold War

Read: FTFWBYTW, chapter nine (review)

Major Problems, chapter eleven

Summary due

In-class quiz

Week Fourteen: May 4

1960s and 70s: Labor conservatism and insurgency

Read: FTFWBYTW, chapter ten

Major Problems, chapters twelve and thirteen

Summary due

In-class quiz

Week Fifteen: May 11

Labor in retreat

Read: FTFWBYTW, chapter eleven

Major Problems, chapter fourteen

Summary due

In-class quiz

Week Sixteen: May 18

The state of labor today

Read: FTFWBYTW, chapter twelve

Major Problems, chapter fifteen

Summary due

In-class quiz

Final Exam: May 25, 4:10-6:40