

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY CENTER
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Ph.D. Program in History

Spring 2017

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Hist. 75500 – History of U.S. Labor and Capitalism

This course will consider the history of work, workers, and labor movements in the context of the changing capitalist economy, from the colonial period to the early 21st century. It will not be a comprehensive survey of this very large subject but rather consider selected topics. While the bulk of the course will be devoted to labor and labor relations, some attention will be paid to capitalist development more generally, including finance, corporate organization, and globalization. Topics will include artisan culture and craft unionism, the constitutive role of labor law, labor radicalism, Fordism, the rise of industrial unionism, corruption and labor violence, gender and race in labor markets and labor movements, deindustrialization, capital mobility, and global supply chains. Readings will be in secondary works, including both recent and classic studies. Students who are unfamiliar with the basic outline of American labor history should read a survey history as soon as possible. Some possibilities are:

Melvyn Dubofsky and Foster R. Dulles, *Labor in America: A History*, 8th edition

Ronald Filippelli, *Labor in the USA: A History*

Daniel Nelson, *Shifting Fortunes: The Rise and Decline of American Labor, from the 1820s to the Present*

Steve Babson, *The Unfinished Struggle: Turning Points in American Labor, 1877-Present*

All assigned books are on reserve at the Graduate Center library. All the assigned articles are available through the Graduate Center library on-line full-text journals.

The most important requirement for the course is to do all the reading, come to class, and participate in class discussion. In addition, there will be a number of written assignments:

1) Each week one or two students will prepare a short paper (3-5 pages) on the readings for that week to begin our discussion. The papers should identify the issues, themes, and questions you think we should discuss, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the readings. Do not

summarize the reading. You might want to look at reviews of the books we are reading or supplementary readings, but you do not have to. The paper should be distributed to the class by e-mail **no later than the Tuesday before we meet.** Also, submit a hard copy in class.

2) Write a book review of one of the following books that we are reading for the course. Read the entire book, even if for the class we are reading only part of it.

Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*

Steve Fraser, *Every Man a Speculator: A History of Wall Street in American Life*

David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*

Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World*

Andrew Wender Cohen, *The Racketeer's Progress: Chicago and the Struggle for the Modern American Economy, 1900-1940*

Thaddeus Russell, *Out of the Jungle: Jimmy Hoffa and the Remaking of the American Working Class*

Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955*

Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered*

Daniel J. Clark, *Like Night and Day: Unionization in a Southern Milltown*

Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America*

Nancy MacLean, *Freedom in Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace*

Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's 70-Year Quest for Cheap Labor*

Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave new World of Business*

Write the review as if you were submitting it to *Reviews in American History* or the *Journal of American History*. If you are not familiar with these journals, pick an issue and look at the reviews. You do not have to maintain the fiction that you are reviewing a newly published book; if you like you can review the book in light of the subsequent literature. Your review should be 1000 to 1500 words long, and is due at the class at which we discuss the book you are reviewing.

3) Write a historiographic paper, due at the last class. The paper should be on a topic that interests you and that is related to the issues addressed in the course. Please clear your topic with me before starting. Your paper should be ten to fifteen pages long.

CLASS TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Feb. 2: INTRODUCTORY SESSION

Feb. 9: THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CAPITALISM/ COMMODITIES AND THE BIRTH OF CAPITALISM

Jeffrey Sklansky, "The Elusive Sovereign: New Intellectual and Social Histories of Capitalism," *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 1 (2012), 233-48

Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*, introduction and chapters 1-11

recommended: Sven Beckert, "History of American Capitalism," in Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, eds., *American History Now*

Feb. 16: THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF LABOR/ ARTISANS AND THE TRANSITION TO FACTORY PRODUCTION

Elizabeth Faue, "The United States of America," in *Histories of Labour: National and International Perspectives*, edited by Joan Allen, Alan Cambell, and John McIlroy

John R. Commons, "American Shoemakers, 1648-1895: A Sketch of Industrial Evolution," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Nov. 1909), pp. 39-84

Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn*, chapters 1-3, 5, 7

Jeanne Boydston, "To Earn Her Daily Bread: Housework and Antebellum Working-Class Subsistence," *Radical History Review* 35 (Spring 1986), pp. 7-25

Herbert Gutman, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrial America, 1815-1919," *The American Historical Review*, June 1973 (reprinted in Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America*, chapter 1)

Peter Way, "Evil Humors and Ardent Spirits: The Rough Culture of Canal Construction Laborers," *Journal of American History*, vol. 79, no. 4 (March 1993), 1397-1428

recommended:

E.J. Hobsbawm and John Wallach Scott, "Political Shoemakers," *Past and Present*, no. 89 (Nov. 1980), 86-114

Mary H. Blewett, "Work, Gender and the Artisan Tradition in New England Shoemaking, 1780-1860," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Winter 1983), 221-248

Tom Vanderbilt, *The Sneaker Book: Anatomy of an Industry and an Icon*

Feb. 23: THE TRANSITION FROM SLAVE LABOR TO WAGE LABOR

James Oakes, "Capitalism and Slavery and the Civil War," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 89 (Spring 2016)

Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and its Legacy*

Tera W. Hunter, "'Work that Body': African-American Women, Work, and Leisure in Atlanta and the New South," in Eric Arnesen, Julie Greene, and Bruce Laurie, eds., *Labor Histories: Class, Politics, and the Working-Class Experience*

Recommended: Eric Arnesen, "Biracial Waterfront Unionism in the Age of Segregation," in Calvin Winslow, ed., *Waterfront Workers: New Perspectives on Race and Class*

Mar. 2: FINANCE AND PLUTOCRACY

Steve Fraser, *Every Man a Speculator: A History of Wall Street in American Life*, introduction and parts one and two

Alan Dawley, "The Abortive Rule of Big Money," in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *Ruling America: A History of Wealth and Power in a Democracy*

Mar. 9: VIOLENCE, HEGEMONY, AND THE LAW

William Forbath, *Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement*, introduction and chapters 2-3, 5

Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War*

Mar. 16: ORGANIZED LABOR AND THE REORGANIZATION OF PRODUCTION

David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*

Recommended: Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930*

Mar. 23: LABOR RADICALISM

Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (2000 abridged edition)

Mar. 30: JUNGLE CAPITALISM

Andrew Wender Cohen, *The Racketeer's Progress: Chicago and the Struggle for the Modern American Economy, 1900-1940*

Thaddeus Russell, *Out of the Jungle: Jimmy Hoffa and the Remaking of the American Working Class*, introduction and chapters, 1-8

Apr. 6: MASS PRODUCTION, INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM, AND THE NEW DEAL

Lizabeth Cohen, "Encountering mass culture at the grassroots: the experience of Chicago workers in the 1920s," *American Quarterly*, 41 (1989), pp. 6-33

Antonio Gramsci, "Americanism and Fordism," in *Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith

Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935-1955*, chapters 1-7

Steve Fraser, *Every Man a Speculator: A History of Wall Street in American Life*, chapters 12 and 13

Apr. 13: NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Apr. 20: NO CLASS – COLLEGE ON MONDAY SCHEDULE

Apr. 27: WHAT UNIONS MEANT FOR WORKING PEOPLE

Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered*, pp. 1-117

Daniel J. Clark, *Like Night and Day: Unionization in a Southern Milltown*

May 4: GENDER, RACE, AND POSTWAR LABOR

Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America*, 1-4, 6-7

Joshua B. Freeman, "Hardhats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations," *Journal of Social History* 26 Summer 1993), 725-44

Nancy MacLean, *Freedom in Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace*, prologue, chapters 1-2, epilogue

May 11: DEINDUSTRIALIZATION AND DEUNIONIZATION

Jack Metzgar, *Striking Steel: Solidarity Remembered*, pp. 118-201

Thomas J. Sugrue, "'Forget about Your Inalienable Right to Work': Deindustrialization and its Discontents at Ford, 1950-1953," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 48 (Fall 1995), 112-30

Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's 70-Year Quest for Cheap Labor*, introduction and chapters 1-5, 7

May 18: GLOBAL CAPITALISM

Daniel E. Bender and Jana K. Lipman, *Making the Empire Work: Labor and United States Imperialism*, read the introduction and one other chapter of your choice

Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business*

Recommended: Dana Frank, "Where is the History of U.S. Labor and International Solidarity? Part I: A Moveable Feast," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*,

Vol. 1 no. 1 (Spring 2004), 95-119