

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Department of History
Spring Semester, 1988

History 408

American Labor History, 1900-Present

Professor Zonderman
5213 Humanities Building
Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs., 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.
263-1972
263-1800

Lectures: Tues. and Thurs., 1 - 2:15 p.m.
1111 Humanities

This course will explore the history of work, workers, and working class culture in twentieth century America. We will focus on how men and women have shaped, and in turn have been shaped by, socio-economic and technological change both in and out of the workplace. We will discuss a wide variety of issues including: workers' perceptions of major historical events (such as the World Wars and the Depression), workers' attitudes towards new modes of production (such as scientific management, the assembly line, computers, and robotics), the organized labor movement and its relationship to twentieth century politics and government, and the pivotal roles played by race and gender and ethnicity in shaping modern working class culture.

The following books are required reading for the course. They are available for purchase at the People's Bookstore (458 W. Gilman Street); they are also on reserve in Room 1191, College Library, Helen C. White Hall.

David Brody, Workers in Industrial America
Ruth Milkman, ed., Women, Work and Protest
David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America
Studs Terkel, Working
Robert Zieger, American Workers American Unions, 1920-1985

(NOTE: For those of you who want to consult a brief survey text on twentieth century American labor history, there are also copies of James Green, The World of the Worker available for purchase. This is a recommended, not a required text.)

In addition, there will be a packet of photocopies for you to purchase at Kinkos (620 University Avenue). Copies will also be on reserve at the College Library. These readings are marked by the letter "P".

There will be two papers and a final exam in this course. Each paper will be approximately 6-8 pages long; the first paper will be due on Thursday, February 18th and the second will be due on Thursday, March 31st. Paper topics will be distributed in advance. The final exam will be on Friday, May 13th. Papers are to be turned in the day they are due in class at the beginning of the period; there will be no extensions for late papers.

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- Tues. Jan 19 Introduction: American Workers and the New Century
- Thurs. Jan. 21 Workers and Scientific Management
Reading: David Montgomery, Workers' Control in America, pp. 32-47.
- Tues. Jan. 26 Workers and the Progressive Era: The Problem of Child Labor
Reading: David Nasaw, Children of the City, pp. 138-186 (P)
- Thurs. Jan. 28 Workers and the Progressive Era: Industrial Health and Safety, Welfare Capitalism and Protective Legislation
Reading: David Brody, Workers in Industrial America, pp. 48-66.
- Tues. Feb. 2 The I. W. W. and Radical Syndicalism
Reading: Montgomery, pp. 91-112
Ruth Milkman, ed., Women, Work and Protest, pp. 42-61
- Thurs. Feb. 4 "Fordism," the Assembly Line, and American Workers
Reading: Stephen Meyer, The Five Dollar Day: Labor Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, pp. 9-65 (P)
- Tues. Feb. 9 Workers and the First World War
Reading: Montgomery, pp. 113-138
- Thurs. Feb. 11 1919 and the Rumbblings of Revolution
Reading: David Brody, Labor in Crisis: The Steel Strike of 1919, pp. 78-111, 136-178 (P).
- Tues. Feb. 16 Workers and the Myth of the Prosperous 1920s
Reading: Robert Zieger, American Workers, American Unions, 1920-1985, pp. 3-10.
Milkman, ed., pp. 110-138
- Thurs. Feb. 18 The Great Depression: Hard Times and Radical Visions
Reading: Zieger, pp. 10-25
Brody, pp. 67-78
Milkman, ed., pp. 181-205
- Paper Due
- Tues. Feb. 23 Workers and the New Deal
Reading: Brody, pp. 138-146
Bonnie Schwartz, "The New Deal Work Relief and Organized Labor: the CWA and the AFL Building Trades" (P)
- Thurs. Feb. 25 Changes in Labor Law
Reading: Zieger, pp. 26-41

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- Tues. Mar. 1 The C.I.O. and Industrial Unionism
 Reading: Zieger, pp. 41-61
 Brody, pp. 82-119
 Milkman, ed., pp. 235-258
- Thurs. Mar. 3 Workers and the Second World War: Mobilizing the Labor Force
 Reading: Zieger, pp. 62-76, 80-99.
- Tues. Mar. 8 Workers and the Second World War: Women and the Wartime Economy
 Reading: Zieger, pp. 76-80
 Studs Terkel, The Good War, pp. 105-119 (P)
- Thurs. Mar. 10 Workers in Post-War America: Was There a "Great Bargain"?
 Reading: Zieger, pp. 100-123
 Brody, pp. 173-214
 Milkman, ed., pp. 259-279
- Tues. Mar. 22 Working Class Culture in Post-War America: Were There
Blue Collar Suburbs?
 Reading: Zieger, pp. 137-147
- Thurs. Mar. 24 White Collar Labor: A New Working Class?
 Reading: Zieger, pp. 163-167
 Milkman, ed., pp. 206-234
 Studs Terkel, Working, pp. 448-462
- Tues. Mar. 29 American Labor and the Anti-Communist Purge
 Reading: Zieger, pp. 123-136
 Brody, pp. 215-228
- Thurs. Mar. 31 Black Workers, White Unions, and the Civil Rights Movement
 Reading: Zieger, pp. 174-182
 Philip Foner, Organized Labor and the Black Worker,
Paper Due pp. 397-424 (P)
- Tues. Apr. 5 American Workers, the New Left, and the War in Vietnam
 Reading: Zieger, pp. 168-174
 Brody, pp. 229-245
 Terkel, pp. 463-468
- Thurs. Apr. 7 The Women's Movement and the Labor Movement
 Reading: Milkman, ed., pp. 280-322
- Tues. Apr. 12 Union Corruption, Union Reformers, and Union Activists
 Reading: Zieger, pp. 147-163

- Thurs. Apr. 14 Harvest of Shame: The Enduring Problem of Migrant Workers
Reading: Mark Day, Forty Acres: Cesar Chavez and the
Farm Workers, pp. 61-97, 111-118, 140-151,
161-168 (P)
Terkel, pp. 30-38
- Tues. Apr. 19 The Third Industrial Revolution: Robotics and Industrial Labor
Reading: Terkel, pp. 221-265, 515-521
- Thurs. Apr. 21 The Third Industrial Revolution: Computers and Clerical Work
Reading: Robert Howard, Brave New Workplace, pp. 68-90 (P)
Terkel, pp. 344-355, 521-525
- Tues. Apr. 26 New Immigrants in the Contemporary American Workplace
Reading: Terkel, pp. 658-662
Elizabeth Weiner and Hardy Green, "A Stitch in
Our Time: New York's Hispanic Garment Workers
in the 1980s" (P)
- Thurs. Apr. 28 The Reagan Revolution and the Labor Movement
Reading: Zieger, pp. 182-199
Brody, pp. 245-255
- Tues. May 3 Darkness on the Edge of Town: Class and Culture in
Contemporary America
Reading: Terkel, pp. 396-405
- Thurs. May 5 The Future For American Workers
Reading: Montgomery, pp. 153-180

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Topics for First Paper

Choose one of the following three paper topics, and write an essay of 6-8 pages. Papers are due in class at the beginning of lecture on Thursday, February 23.

1. The year 1919 saw the largest strike wave in American history. Were these strikes a reflection of the radicalism in the American working class? Or, were these strikes simply an attempt to resolve problems with new technology and management in the workplace?

In your answer you should explain when these strikes occurred, where they occurred, how they were conducted, and how they were related to the early 20th century labor movement.

2. "One of the ironies of the early 20th century American labor movement is that even as millions of unskilled and immigrant workers were filling the nation's mass production industries, the AFL craft unions remained the predominant form of labor organization."

Evaluate this statement. Is it an accurate description of the American labor movement in the early 20th century? If so, why? If not, why not?

3. In the first two decades of the 20th century, the IWW, the AFL, and the Socialist Party all had significant working class followings; and yet, they consistently feuded among themselves. Which groups of workers were most likely to ally with each organization? What was the appeal of each organization to the workers who supported it? Were the divisions between these groups so large that they could not be overcome?