

History 408  
Spring 2009  
Tues. & Thurs., 1:00-2:15  
1651 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 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 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, 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 and Research

**Film Critique.** You will write one 3-page (approximately 900 words) essay discussing how one of the following pairs of films represents labor history. *Select one due date and write an essay on the films listed for that date:*

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>March 26:</b> | <i>The Killing Floor &amp; Uprising of '34</i>                                     |
| <b>April 16:</b> | <i>From Sleepy Lagoon to Zoot Suit &amp; Free a Man to Fight</i>                   |
| <b>April 16:</b> | <i>Wage Slaves: Not Getting By in America &amp; Free a Man to Fight</i>            |
| <b>April 30:</b> | <i>Yuri Kochiyama, A Passion for Justice &amp; From Sleepy Lagoon to Zoot Suit</i> |
| <b>April 30:</b> | <i>Chavez Ravine &amp; Yuri Kochiyama, A Passion for Justice</i>                   |
| <b>May 7:</b>    | <i>Uprising of '34 &amp; San Francisco State</i>                                   |

**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. Over the course of the semester, you will conduct original archival research in one or more of the collections listed below and write a 2,300-word (approximately eight-page) essay describing the collection and explaining how the sources you found in the collection expanded your understanding of an event, issue, relationship, community, or institution that is addressed in your course readings. You will conclude your essay by suggesting or proposing future research projects based on the collection.

**Part One** of the research project consists of a 900-word (approximately three-page) essay in which you will identify one of archival collections at the Wisconsin Historical Society listed below, offer a brief overall survey of the collection, and give a more detailed description of one box contained in the collection. **Due Tuesday, March 3.**

Students for a Democratic Society Records  
United States Servicemen's Fund Records, 1967-1973  
Stanley Aronowitz Papers  
Paul Booth Papers  
Robb Burlage Papers  
Committee for Miners Papers  
Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace Papers  
Staughton Lynd Papers  
Sam Shirah Papers  
Teaching Assistants Association, American Federation of Teachers, Local 3220, Records, 1966-76  
Walter Tillow Papers  
George Tselos Papers, 1961-71  
Lee Webb Papers  
James P. Cannon Papers  
Robert S. Gabriner Papers  
Wisconsin Women during World War II Oral History Project Interviews  
Michael Lipsky and David J. Olson Papers

**Part Two** of the research project consists of a 1,500-word essay (approximately five pages). You will submit a second copy of Part One as the introduction to Part Two of your working-class history project (you may revise Part One, if you wish). Your final paper will be a 2,300-word (approximately 8-page) essay.

Your essay should expand on the introduction you wrote as Part One of your project. It should explore one or more of the questions about U.S. working-class history sparked by your research in the archival collection and explain how the collection can enhance our understanding of an event, story, issue, relationship, community, institution, or other aspect of U.S. working-class history. You may draw on the insights, arguments, and perspectives presented in course readings, films, lectures, and discussions (both inside and outside class) in making your argument. You will, of course, be insightful and brilliant. **Due Tuesday, May 5.**

### 3. Examinations

**Midterm Examination.** There will be an in-class midterm examination Tuesday, March 10, 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 Sunday, May 10, 2:25 to 4:25 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" and the Barbara Ehrenreich essay, "Down and out in America: Barbara Ehrenreich Talks about Life as a Minimum Wage Employee," are on the Learn @ UW site for this course.

#### **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.

Lizabeth Cohen. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. 2d ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

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

David Cortright. *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War*. 1975; Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005.

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.

#### **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*, 7<sup>th</sup> 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. 20 & 22

#### *Readings*

Barbara Ehrenreich, "Down and out in America: Barbara Ehrenreich Talks about Life as a Minimum Wage Employee," *The Women's Review of Books*, vol. 18, no. 10/11 (Jul., 2001), pp. 6-7. Available on the Learn @ UW site for our course.

*Film & Discussion:*      *Wage Slaves: Not Getting By in America*  
Barbara Ehrenreich interview (cited above)

*Martin Luther King Day, Jan. 19*

### **Week 2      The Agrarian Dream and Wage Slavery**

Jan. 27 & 29

#### *Readings*

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. v-xiv and 1-123.

### **Week 3      Freedom and "Free Labor"**

Feb. 3 & 5

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

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

### **Week 4      Workers' Control of the Workplace**

Feb. 10 & 12

#### *Readings*

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

### **Week 5      "Bread and Roses"**

Feb. 17 & 19

#### *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:*    *The Killing Floor*

**Week 6      Race, Riots, and Community**

February 24 & 26

*Readings*

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, pp. 1-97.

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 248-281.

**Week 7      Mass Culture & Working-Class Communities**

March 3 & 5

*Tuesday      Part One of Research Project due*

*Readings*

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, pp. 99-158.

**Week 8      Revolution or Reform?**

March 10 & 12

*Tuesday      Midterm Examination*

*Readings*

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 282-326.

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, pp. 159-211.

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

**Week 9      Spring Recess**

March 17 & 19

**Week 10      "Adrift in the Great Depression"**

March 24 & 26

*Readings*

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, pp. 213-368.

*Due Thursday:*

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

**Week 11 Working-Class Culture Wars**

March 31 & April 2

*Readings*

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

George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, pp. 1-95.

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

**Week 12 "A Rainbow at Midnight"**

April 7 & 9

*Readings*

George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, pp. 95-225.

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 327-396.

*Film: Free a Man to Fight*

*Passover, April 9 Good Friday, April 10*

**Week 13 Geographies of Class and Culture**

April 14 & 16

*Readings*

George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, pp. 229-347.

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

*Due Thursday:*

Film Critique, *From Sleepy Lagoon to Zoot Suit & Free a Man to Fight*

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

*Film: Chavez Ravine*

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

April 21 & 23

*Readings*

David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, pp. 1-156.

*Film: Yuri Kochiyama: Passion for Justice*

**Week 15**      **“Which Side Are You On?”**

April 28 & 30

*Readings*

David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt*, pp. 159-243.

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 432-472.

*Due Thursday:*

Film Critique, *Yuri Kochiyama: Passion for Justice & From Sleepy Lagoon to Zoot Suit*

Film Critique, *Chavez Ravine & Yuri Kochiyama: Passion for Justice*

*Film: San Francisco State*

*Film Clips: The War at Home*

*International Workers' Day, May 1*

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

May 5 & 7

*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:*

David Cortright, “Postscript,” *Soldiers in Revolt*, pp. 245-281.

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, pp. 473-562.

*Due Thursday:*

Film Critique, *San Francisco State & Uprising of '34*

**Week 17**      **Final Examination, Sunday, 2:25 a.m.-4:25 p.m.**

May 10

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