

University of Texas-Dallas
Special Topics in American History: Labor History
Section 0w1
Summer 2022
7/07/22 – 08/30/22

Instructor: Dr. Ryan Pettengill
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Office: W-JO 5.109
Office Hours: Friday 8-10 a.m.

Meeting Days and Times:

Online

Credit Hours: 3 Semester Hours

Division:

Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Prerequisite:

Subject matter will vary from semester to semester. May be repeated for credit as topics vary (9 semester credit hours maximum). Prerequisite: Completion of a 060 core course. (3-0) R

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide students with a balanced and thorough education in comparative labor history. Since the class is grounded in history of the modern American working class, students will begin their studies in the turmoil of the Gilded Age. From there the class will navigate through the implications for working Americans when it comes to the reform movements of the Progressive era, explore the unionization drives of the New Deal era, note the changes to working-class life brought about by the Cold War, and, finally, assess the lives of workers in a “post-industrial” America. The final week of the semester will situate working-class Americans in the context of the early twenty-first century and study the rapidly-changing definitions for terms like “power structure,” “work,” and “dissent” and how these terms define working-class life in modern times.

Required Texts:

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, ISBN: 139780486290386

Course Goals:

- ✓ understand the evolution and national influence of organized labor and the working class in the United States
- ✓ analyze the effects of social, political, economic, cultural, and global forces on the development of the concepts of “work,” “workers,” class relations, and economic transformations under capitalism
- ✓ improve their writing skills
- ✓ analyze primary sources and apply them to critical concepts to learn about the American past and answer history-based questions
- ✓ engage in scholarly debate and differentiate documentary and statistical historical evidence and differing points of view

Course Outline:

Week 1: July 5-8

Title for Week

Reading/Lecture Assignment:

- Review Resources in Chapter 2 Folder
- Listen to Episodes 1-8 of *Union Talkin'* (optional)

Written Assignment:

- Participate in Discussion Forum 1, due Fri. July 8, 11:59 p.m.
- Historical Meme Assignment (optional/extra credit), due Fri., July 8, 11:59 p.m.

Week 2: July 11-15

Title for Week

Reading/Lecture Assignment:

- Review Resources in Chapter – Folder
- Listen to Episodes 9-16 of *Union Talkin'* (optional)

Written Assignment:

- Participate in Discussion Forum 2, due Fri., July 15, 11:59 p.m.
- History and Comics Project due Fri., July 15, 11:59 p.m.

Week 3: July 18-22

Title for Week

Reading/Lecture Assignment:

- Review Resources in Chapter -- Folder
- Listen to Episodes 17-24 of *Union Talkin'* (optional)

Written Assignment:

- Participate in Discussion Forum 3, due Fri., July 22, 11:59 p.m.
- Working-Class/Protest Song Project due Fri., July 22, 11:59 p.m.

Week 4: July 25-29

Title for Week

Reading/Lecture Assignment:

- Review Resources in Chapter -- Folder
- Listen to Episodes 25-32 of *Union Talkin'* (optional)

Written Assignment:

- Participate in Discussion Forum 4, due Fri., July 29, 11:59 p.m.
- Working-Class Film Project due Wed., July 27, 11:59 p.m.
- Labor Feminism Assignment due, Fri., July 29, 11:59 p.m.

Week 5: Aug. 1-5

Title for Week

Reading/Lecture Assignment:

- Review Resources in Chapter – Folder
- Listen to Episodes 33-40 of *Union Talkin'* (optional)

Written Assignment:

- Participate in Discussion Forum 5, due Fri., July 29, 11:59 p.m.
- Term Paper due, Aug., 5, 11:59 p.m.

Term Paper Due: Aug. 5, 11:59 p.m.

Description of Graded Work

1. Discussion Forums (5 forums @ 2 points for 10 total points): Debate and dialogue are an important parts of this course. Each week students will be asked to participate in one (1) discussion forum. There are a total of five (5) forums for the semester. These forums will pose a question and ask students to weigh in on it. The question will involve a topic under examination for that week. Students will use primary documents available in the RESOURCES tab of Blackboard to respond to the question and are expected to engage classmates' opinions, observations, and/or perspectives in these discussions. A detailed overview of each forum can be found in the DISCUSSION section of Blackboard.

Participation in these forums is **MANDATORY**. If students do not respond to the discussion questions by the specified due date, their grade will suffer as a consequence. Also the content and quality of students' participation will be taken into account. Generally speaking, discussion posts that fully engage the central question and respond to classmates/professor's perspectives will receive full credit for this portion of the course.

2. Labor History and Comics Project (1 submission/comic 10 @ points for a total of 10 points): Labor and working-class organizations have been especially effective at telling their stories through comics. Students will construct a comic or comic strip that illuminates an important time or event in labor history based on the primary sources available in the Resources tab of Blackboard. More specific instructions are available in the ASSIGNMENTS tab of Blackboard.
3. Working-Class/Protest Songs Project (1 submission 15 @ points for a total of 15 points): Students will select a song from a list prepared by the instructor. The list of songs as well as specific instructions are available in the ASSIGNMENTS tab of Blackboard. Students will break down the lyrics and provide an analysis of the historical context. Students will then explain how and why it may have appealed to workers at the specific time it was written/used as a piece of propaganda.

It is the STUDENT'S JOB to investigate the history and background of the song. This includes the author and her/his background, the historical context, as well as the strikes, demonstrations, or rallies in which it may have been featured. It is perfectly acceptable to use online sources but it is also important that these sources are credible (e.g., Wikipedia, blogs, etc. may not be sufficient).

4. The Working Class in Film Project (1 submission @ 20 points for a total of 20 points): Students will select a film from a list prepared by the instructor. Students will view the film and then construct a paper that analyzes how it portrays the specific event in labor history to the masses. Students will use information from the Course Lectures as well as the Resources to support the points they make in their papers.
5. Labor Feminism Project (1 submission @ 20 points for a total of 20 points): Students will construct a 6-8 page paper that analyzes how the National Organization for Women's (NOW) statement of purpose demonstrates how work had changed by the mid-twentieth century, how work intersects

with sex, and what these changes suggest with respect to calls for broader social transformation.

6. Term Paper (1 submission @25 points for a total of 25 points): Students will use the novel *Looking Backward*, as a starting point, to construct an essay that explains how labor and working-class history, the lived experiences of the American working class, the reform measures, and/or organizing campaigns designed to empower people at the lower level of the socio-economic ladder. Students will explain how organized labor and the working class influenced life in the United States by the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Final Grade

Points:	Percentage	Grade
100	100%	A+
99-91	99-91%	A
90	90%	A-

Points:	Percentage	Grade
89-85	89-85%	B+
84-81	84-81%	B
80	80%	B-

Points:	Percentage	Grade
79-75	79-75%	C+
74-71	74-71%	C
70	70%	C-

Points:	Percentage	Grade
69-65	69-65%	D+
64-61	64-61%	D
60	60%	D-

Points:	Percentage	Grade
59-0	59-0%	F

Resources to Help You Succeed:

The following offices are helpful with respect to allowing all UTD students a chance to be successful:

The Office of Student Success operates the Student Success Center (SSC, <http://www.utdallas.edu/studentsuccess>), which offers assistance to students in the areas of writing, mathematics, communication, multiple science fields, reading, study skills, and other academic disciplines. These services are available through individual and small group appointments, workshops, short courses, and a variety of online and instructional technologies. All students enrolled at UT Dallas are eligible for these services.

It is the policy and practice of UTD to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. However, written notification from the Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA) is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please discuss it with your professor and allow one week advance notice. Students who have questions about receiving accommodations, or those who have, or think they may have, a disability (mobility, sensory, health, psychological, learning, etc.) are invited to contact OSA for a confidential discussion at 972-883-2098 or by email at studentaccess@utdallas.edu.

Resources to Help You Succeed:

Students considering sharing personal information in email, in person, or within assignments or exams should be aware that faculty members and teaching/research assistants are required by UT Dallas policy to report information about sexual misconduct to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Per university policy, faculty have been informed that they must identify the student to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Students who wish to have confidential discussions of incidents related to sexual harassment or sexual misconduct should contact the Student Counseling Center (972-883-2527 or after hours 972-UTD-TALK or 972-883-8255), the Women's Center (972-883-8255), a health care provider in the Student Health Center (972-883-2747), the clergyperson (or other legally recognized religious advisor) of their choice, or an off-campus resource (i.e., rape crisis center, doctor, psychologist). Students who are sexually assaulted, harassed, or victims of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, or stalking, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the UT Dallas Police Department at 972-883-2222 or to the Title IX Coordinator at 972-883-2218. Additional information and resources may be found at <http://www.utdallas.edu/oiec/title-ix/resources>.

*****The instructor reserves the right to adjust this syllabus with advanced notice.*****