

HIST-2819: SPECIAL TOPICS IN THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN WORKER FROM 1877 TO A.I.

Cuyahoga Community College

Viewing: HIST-2819 : Special Topics in The History of the American Worker from 1877 to A.I.

Academic Term:

Fall 2026

Subject Code

HIST - History

Course Number:

2819

Title:

Special Topics in The History of the American Worker from 1877 to A.I.

Catalog Description:

This course traces the history of American labor from Reconstruction to the age of artificial intelligence, examining how work, technology, and social movements have shaped one another. Students study industrialization, unionization, deindustrialization, and automation, focusing on how race, gender, and policy structured opportunity and exclusion. Emphasis is placed on how labor has been redlined and redefined across eras. By connecting past and present, the course helps students understand their place in a changing economy and the evolving meaning of work in Northeast Ohio and beyond.

Credit Hour(s):

3

Lecture Hour(s):

3

Requisites

Prerequisite and Corequisite

None.

Outcomes

Course Outcome(s):

Analyze and interpret the evolution of work through historical inquiry and informed research practices.

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Critical/Creative Thinking: Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to consider problems/ideas and transform them in innovative or imaginative ways.

Information Literacy: Demonstrate contextual awareness of the research process through the reflective discovery of the production and value of information, the use of information in the creation of new knowledge, and ethical participation in the use of information in communities of learning.

Objective(s):

1. **Interpret Historical Contexts:** Analyze major transformations in American labor from 1877 to the present—industrialization, unionization, deindustrialization, and automation—to evaluate how work has reflected and reshaped broader social and economic systems.
2. **Assess Structural Inequities:** Examine how race, gender, immigration status, and policy have influenced labor opportunities and exclusions, including the historical redlining of labor markets and neighborhoods.
3. **Engage with Worker Voices:** Critically analyze primary sources such as letters, oral histories, songs, and union documents to interpret the lived experiences and perspectives of workers across eras.
4. **Synthesize Historical and Contemporary Trends:** Connect historical patterns in labor and technology to current developments in automation and artificial intelligence, creatively envisioning potential futures of work.
5. **Apply Research and Information Literacy Skills:** Locate, evaluate, and ethically integrate diverse sources—including archival materials, digital databases, and scholarly works—to construct evidence-based analyses of labor history.

6. **Develop Informed Perspectives:** Reflect on how the history of work informs present-day decisions about career, equity, and civic engagement in Northeast Ohio and the broader national economy.

Course Outcome(s):

Communicate and articulate labor histories effectively across oral and written mediums using disciplinary conventions.

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Oral Communication: Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication for an intended audience that is clear, organized, and delivered effectively following the standard conventions of that language.

Written Communication: Demonstrate effective written communication for an intended audience that follows genre/disciplinary conventions that reflect clarity, organization, and editing skills.

Objective(s):

1. **Industrialization and Communication:** Explain, in both oral and written form, how industrialization after 1877 transformed work, cities, and class relations, using clear organization and historically grounded evidence.
2. **Labor Movements and Collective Voice:** Present and write analyses of union organizing, strikes, and protest speeches—such as those of the Knights of Labor, AFL, and CIO—demonstrating command of persuasive and historically informed rhetoric.
3. **Redlining and Segregated Labor Markets:** Communicate, through presentations and essays, how redlining, migration patterns, and racial exclusion shaped employment opportunities in urban America, especially in the industrial Midwest.
4. **Deindustrialization and Community Change:** Deliver structured oral or written narratives about the decline of manufacturing in regions like Northeast Ohio, synthesizing worker testimonies and local histories into coherent, evidence-based accounts.
5. **Technology and the Future of Work:** Compose and present arguments about the social impact of automation and artificial intelligence, effectively comparing past technological shifts to contemporary transformations in labor and identity.

Course Outcome(s):

Evaluate and engage with issues of labor, equity, and community across diverse cultural and historical contexts.

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Civic Responsibility: Analyze the results of actions and inactions with the likely effects on the larger local and/or global communities.

Cultural Sensitivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

Objective(s):

1. **Labor and Social Reform:** Evaluate how worker movements—from the Pullman Strike to the Civil Rights—era labor coalitions—demonstrated civic action and shaped public policy affecting communities locally and nationally.
2. **Migration and Cultural Exchange:** Analyze how waves of immigration and internal migration transformed the American workforce, fostering cultural diversity while also generating conflict, adaptation, and new labor solidarities.
3. **Racialized Labor Systems:** Examine the long-term civic consequences of redlining, segregation, and exclusionary labor practices, assessing their impact on equity, opportunity, and neighborhood development in places like Northeast Ohio.
4. **Global Interdependence of Labor:** Discuss how global trade, outsourcing, and supply chains connect American workers to labor systems worldwide, considering both ethical responsibilities and cultural perspectives.
5. **Automation, Ethics, and Community Futures:** Reflect on how the rise of artificial intelligence and automation affects civic life, employment equity, and cultural identity, identifying ways communities can respond responsibly and inclusively.

Course Outcome(s):

Envision and propose equitable futures of work through critical analysis and civic reflection.

Essential Learning Outcome Mapping:

Critical/Creative Thinking: Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to consider problems/ideas and transform them in innovative or imaginative ways.

Civic Responsibility: Analyze the results of actions and inactions with the likely effects on the larger local and/or global communities.

Cultural Sensitivity: Demonstrate sensitivity to the beliefs, views, values, and practices of cultures within and beyond the United States.

Objective(s):

1. **Interpret Labor as Civic Action:** Analyze key moments when workers organized for fair treatment and social reform, evaluating the broader civic and ethical implications of their actions within diverse cultural contexts.
 2. **Connect Local and Global Workforces:** Critically assess how global economic shifts, migration, and technological change have linked local labor experiences—especially in Northeast Ohio—to international systems of production and inequality.
 3. **Reimagine Inclusive Futures of Work:** Synthesize historical patterns and cultural perspectives to creatively propose ways communities can build more equitable and sustainable economies in the age of automation and AI.
 4. **Evaluate the Moral Dimensions of Policy:** Examine how decisions around labor, housing, and education have differentially impacted racial, gender, and immigrant groups, demonstrating civic awareness and cultural sensitivity.
 5. **Reflect on Personal and Collective Agency:** Consider one's own role as a worker, student, and community member in shaping fair and inclusive workplaces, integrating critical thought with ethical civic engagement.
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Methods of Evaluation:

1. Exams
2. Primary Source Analyses
3. Class Discussions
4. Research Paper
5. Presentation

Course Content Outline:

- I. Development of Industrial Capitalism and the Gilded Age
 - a. Development of the Industrial Capitalism
 - b. Development of the New South
 - c. Sharecropping
 - d. Working conditions
- II. Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1877-1893
 - a. Working women and the working at home
 - b. Workingman's Club
 - c. The Development of the Knights of Labor
 - d. Politics of the workingman
 - e. Rise of the AFL
 - f. Conflicts Railroad Strike of 1877 and the Homestead Steel Strike
- III. Workers and American Imperialism, 1893-1900
 - a. Origins of American imperialism
 - b. Responses of the workers to imperialism
 - c. Development of American radical organizations and their response to imperialism
- IV. Daily Life of the American Worker, 1900-1914
 - a. Development of the Mass Production System
 - b. Scientific Management
 - c. Welfare Capitalism
 - d. Leisure activities
 - e. Development of Fordism
- V. The Progressive Movement and the Worker, 1900-1914
 - a. Origins of Progressivism
 - b. Progressive Reformers
 - c. Progressivism and the workplace
 - d. Factory reform
- VI. World War I and the Worker, 1914-1920
 - a. Causes of World War I
 - b. Mobilization and the home front
 - c. Changes to the workplace
 - d. Wartime labor gains
 - e. Working class politics and radicalism
 - f. Post War strikers and the Red Scare
- VII. The Workers in the 1920s
 - a. Conservatism of the 1920s
 - b. Economic growth of the 1920s
 - c. new consumer economy

- d. Changes to the workplace
- e. African Americans in the workplace
- f. The Crash and its effects

VIII. The Great Depression and the First New Deal, 1929-1935

- a. Great Depression and Hard Times
- b. Hoover's response
- c. Poor Peoples movement
- d. The First New Deal and workers
- e. Agriculture and the New Deal
- f. Wave of strikes
- g. Populist critics of the First New Deal

IX. Workers and the Second New Deal, 1935-1946

- a. Social and Wagner Acts
- b. CIO and organizing drives
- c. Flint Sit-Down Strike
- d. Little Steel Strike
- e. Women and the unions
- f. Organizing in the South and its defeat
- g. The New Deal and the CIO

X. Workers and the Post World War II World, 1946-1960

- a. World War II: Causes and America joins the war
- b. Mobilization at Home
- c. Wartime Industrial Boom
- d. Women in the workforce
- e. Labor's War at home

XI. The Civil Rights Era and the Worker, 1960-1973

- a. Origins of the Cold War
- b. 1948 election and labor
- c. Labor-Management Accords
- d. Taft-Hartley and workers
- e. splintering of the working class

XII. Economic Changes in the 1970s, the Regan Era, and the Worker, 1973- 1989

- a. Origins and development of the Civil Rights Movement
- b. War on Poverty
- c. Rights Consciousness and the workplace
- d. Vietnam War and the Rise of the Counterculture
- e. 1968 and workers
- f. Militancy and Dissent in the labor movement

XIII. Worker and the Global Economy, 1989-2001

- a. 1970s: End of the post war boom
- b. Stagflation politics and workers
- c. Regan Revolution and workers
- d. Global Economic development and the worker

XIV. Workers and the World after 9/11, 2001-2007

- a. End of the Cold War
- b. Changes to the world of the worker
- c. 9/11 and changes in the workplace

XV. Workers, 2007-2016

- a. Economic changes in the Obama years
- b. Response of the workers

XVI. Workers in the recent world and AI, 2016-Present

- a. Changes in the workplace in the early 21st Century
- b. Responses of the workers to these changes
- c. AI is the future?

Religious Accommodation

Before reviewing the course schedule, students should carefully review the following religious accommodation policy and other required instructional policies:

Religious Accommodation:

Students seeking an accommodation for absences permitted under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act must provide the instructor with written notice of the specific dates for which the student requires an accommodation and must do so not later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of instruction. Please submit requests for accommodations at this link: <https://portal2.tri-c.edu/ReligiousAccommodation/ReligiousAccommodationForm>. Students with questions about their religious accommodations under Ohio's Testing Your Faith Act may contact the College's Office of General Counsel and Legal Services by phone at 216.987.4856 or via email at legal@tri-c.edu.

Other Required Instructional Policies:

<https://www.tri-c.edu/student-resources/curriculum/documents/syllabus-part-b.pdf>

Weekly Schedule

	Topics
Week 1	Development of Industrial Capitalism and the Gilded Age
Week 2	Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1877-1893
Week 3	Workers and American Imperialism, 1893-1900
Week 4	Daily Life of the American Worker, 1900-1914
Week 5	The Progressive Movement and the Worker, 1900-1914
Week 6	World War I and the Worker, 1914-1920
Week 7	The Workers in the 1920s
Week 8	The Great Depression and the First New Deal, 1929-1935
Week 9	Workers and the Second New Deal, 1935-1946
Week 10	Workers and the Post World War II World, 1946-1960
Week 11	The Civil Rights Era and the Worker, 1960-1973
Week 12	Economic Changes in the 1970s, the Regan Era, and the Worker, 1973- 1989
Week 13	Worker and the Global Economy, 1989-2001
Week 14	Workers and the World after 9/11, 2001-2007
Week 15	Workers, 2007-2016
Week 16	Workers in the recent world and AI, 2016-Present

The Course Schedule is subject to change due to pedagogical needs, instructor discretion, parts of term, and unexpected events.

Required/Recommended Readings

American Social History Project/Center for Media & Learning, Graduate Center, CUNY. *Who Built America? An Open Educational Resource*. <https://whobuiltamerica.org/a> (https://whobuiltamerica.org/about/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

Additional Resources for the Instructor

Baron, Eva. *Work Engendered: Towards a New History of American Labor*. Cornell University Press, 1991.

Bernstein, Irving. *A Caring Society: The New Deal, Workers, and the Great Depression*. Houghton Mifflin, 1985

Bluestone, Barry and Bennett Harrison. *Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment and the Dismantling of Basic Industries*. Basic Books. 1987

Bodnar, John. *Workers World: Kinship, Community and Protest in American Industrial Society, 1900-1940*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982

Brody, David. *Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era*. Harvard University Press, 1960

Clark, Claudia. *Radium Girls: Women and Industrial Health Reform, 1910-1975*. University of North Carolina Press. 1997

Cowley, Jefferson. *Staying Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*. New Press, 2020

Dawley, Alan. *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn*. Harvard University Press, 1976

Fine, Sidney. *Sit Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-37*. University of Michigan Press, 2020

Dray, Philip. *There is Power in a Union: The Epic Story of Labor in America*. Anchor Books, 2018

Dubovsky, Melvyn and Warner Van Tine. *John L Lewis: A Biography*. University of Illinois Press, 1986

Foner, Philip. *Organized Labor and Black Workers*. Haymarket Books, 2018

Gutman, Herbert. *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America*. Vintage Press, 1977

Lichenstein, Nelson. *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Ruether and the Fate of American Labor*. Basic Books, 1995

Milkman, Ruth. *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II*. University of Illinois Press, 1987

Milkman, Ruth. *Women, Work and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History*. Routledge, 1985

Montgomery, David. *Workers Control in America*. Cambridge University Press, 1979

Montgomery, David. Fall of the House of Labor. Cambridge University Press, 1987

Rosner, David. and Gerald Markowitz. Dying for Work: Workers Safety and Health in 20th Century America. Indiana University Press, 1989

Trotter, Joe William. Workers on Arrival: Black Labor and the Making of America. University of California Press, 2019

Wilkerson, Isabel. The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration. Vintage Press, 2010

Zieger, Robert H. The CIO, 1935-1955. University of North Carolina Press, 1990

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