

September 1, 2009

**Swarthmore College
Department of History**

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History 50
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History 50: The Making of the American Working Class

History 93: Directed Reading in American Working Class Literature

In this course we will explore the history of the American Working Class in the United States and as it relates to the world economy. From the Atlantic trade system of the 17th century to globalization in the 1980-1990's, the history of labor in the new world is one of migration and struggle. There is a mid-term and final paper in the class, absences will effect your grade and there are no late papers accepted. A reading attachment is offered.

Books:

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. (2nd edition).

Kevin Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*

Robert Zieger, *American Workers, American Unions*

Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*

Frank Norris, *The Octopus*

James Green, *Death in the Haymarket*

Jose M. Alamillo. *Making Lemonade Out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor And Leisure in a California Town 1880-1960 (Statue of Liberty - Ellis Island Centennial Series)*

Nelson, Lichtenstein, *Wal-Mart; The Face of 21st Century Capitalism*.

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*.

Everyone will read at least one of these novels, those credit for a directed reading will read them all.

Novels:

Herman Melville, *Bartleby, the Scrivener*

Jack Conroy, *The Disinherited*

John Oliver Killens, *YoungBlood*

Denise Giardina, *Storming Heaven*
Howard Fast, *The American*
Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*
John Steinbeck, *In Dubious Battle*
Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*

Directed Reading Students: You must read each novel and write a final paper. Your final paper can be fiction based on a strike or person or it can be based on an actual event. See me for more details.

Requirements

Class Trip to the Hagley Mills Museum, Saturday
Movie: Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times*

Assignments: Readings, (Class attendance is mandatory the Department by penalty of one half grade), midterm examination, paper and final examination. Our Class Trip is to Hagley Mills, the first month of Classes. The Trip is *required*. Mid-term is one hour, essay questions and ten Ids, final exam, three hours, essay questions, ten Ids. Papers are 7-10 pages including interview, history and analysis. Find one labor activist (Government official i.e. Bureau of Labor, NLRB); Labor Lawyer (pro-management or labor) union officer, shop steward or rank and file. Find your source in the phone book, web page, alumni directory. Before you interview read the history of the union, plant or industry. (You will write an annotated bibliography) Offer to leave a copy of the interview for their use, transcribe it; incorporate it into an essay where you evaluate the future of American labor in a globalized world. **OR Using the archives in McCabe or Archives at Hagley Mills in Delaware, write a research proposal using primary and secondary sources, same page length.**

Schedule of Classes, assignments, movies.

WEEK 1

September 1-3

“Industrialization, factories and mass production: a New Idea in 1750”

Chapters 14& 15

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. (2nd edition). Chapter 2: *The Labor Systems* and Chapter 3 on *the factory system*. Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History*, Ch. 1&2.

Discussion: Why did the Industrial revolution happen and why in 18th century England? What did it do? What difference does that make in the history of the US? What is a mode of production? What was the prelude to industrialization? What did it take to reorganize labor? What was the role of the machines in the early labor systems of America? What is the difference between an artisan and an operator?

WEEK 2

September 8-9

“The Machine in the Garden: Plantation, Company Town and Free Labor”

Kevin Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires*, Intro, chapters 1-2

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. (2nd edition). Ch.4-5.

“The hard coal district of eastern Pennsylvania was an important industrial center in the nineteenth century. But it was far from the urban paradigm often associated with the industrial revolution. Its cities and towns were separated by long stretches of rural and semi-rural landscape, much of it mountainous and heavily wooded.”

Kevin Kenny, chapter 2.

Discussion: How do the machines make money? Who owns the machines? Where did they get the money to buy them? What is capital? What are wages? How were workers paid before wages? What is the relationship between wages and production? Who are the workers? Where do they come from? Do workers have ideas? What do we mean by free labor? How free was the labor? How did slave labor shape free labor? Compare and contrast the social relations between the company town and the plantation work ethic.

WEEK 3

September 15-17

“Artisan Republic to Factory System”

“First-generation factory workers were not unique to pre-modern America. And the work habits common to such workers plagued American manufacturers in later generations when manufacturers and most native urban whites scarcely remembered that native Americans had once been hesitant first generation factory workers.”

Herbert Gutman, pg 192

Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in the 19th Century*, Introduction, Ch. 1-4

Kevin Kenny, *Molly Maguires*, ch. 3-6.

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. (2nd edition). Ch.5.

“Was American labor less class-consciousness in comparison with European labor, and were conditions in the United States exceptional? Sean Wilentz...finds American workers to have been acutely aware of their class interests during the nineteenth century, for they fought the transformation of their labor power into a commodity to be bought and sold like any other merchandise. They expressed their opposition to capitalism in the language of republicanism...”

Bruce Laurie pg. 9

Discussion: How did these rural immigrant cultures integrate into the new urban industrialized society? Labor is so much the history of migration, how does this movement shape class consciousness in America? Does ethnicity determine one's relationship to class struggle? In what way were the Journeymen in NYC the pioneers in the labor movement? What was the GTU? Who was in it? How did the depression of 1837 destroy the Workingmen's Party? What were the differences-- strategically and ideologically--between the men in the WBA and those in the Molly Maguires? How were these differences expressed? Which was more in the tradition of radical republicanism? How would you define that? Who was John Siney and what role did he play in the struggles of the miners? Did ethnicity explain the differences between the WBA and the MMs? Was there a neat transition between the Artisan republic and the factory system in the mine fields? Who were the Pinkertons?

WEEK 4

September 22-24

"The Organization of Labor: The Knights of Labor and the Strike of 1877"

"When the great railroad strike of July and August 1877 swept across the United States from the east coast to the Midwest, Pennsylvania was one of the major sites of conflict. In Pittsburgh, the railroad yards were set on fire after troops brought in from Philadelphia killed twenty strikers...Schuylkill County, hitherto the center of labor activism in the anthracite region, remained quiescent and played no part in the upheaval..."

Kevin Kenny, pg.277.

Kevin Kenny, *Molly Maguires finish.*

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers.* (2nd edition). Ch. 6 &7

James Green, *Death in the Haymarket, ch1-9*

Discussion: Who was William Sylvis and the National Labor Union? Where did the eight hour leagues come from? How many of you have done physical labor for 12 hours? How long did you do it? Why was a 12 hour day standard in the pre-Civil War era? How did that change? What was Lincoln's promise in the Civil War? What was the Knights of Labor? Why were so many labor unions secret societies? How did this secrecy effect the union movement? Who was Terrence Powderly? What kind of unionism did he believe in? When did the AFL emerge? How did they differ from the Kof L? Where were women in this organization? Who made the work rules? How did management change its attitudes about worker knowledge? What is a sympathetic strike? What contemporary examples can you think of in sympathetic strikes?

WEEK 5

September 29-Oct 1

"The Managerial Ethos and the Newer Immigrants"

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. (2nd edition). Ch. 8

“The Managers Brain under the workman’s cap.”

“The second distinctive feature of Taylor’s thought was his concept of control. Control has been the essential feature of management throughout its history, but with Taylor it assumed unprecedented dimensions.”

Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capitol, pg 90.

James Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, ch1-9

“American craftsmen like Parsons were also quite familiar with practical experiments in cooperative production and exchange, because the Knights of Labor and, on a much large scale, the Farmers Alliance were busy creating them all over the country in 1885. Through these efforts, confidence in working people and a new kind of hope that they could reconstruct the economy on a democratic basis. Thus the dream of a self-governing community of equal producers articulated by Parsons and the Chicago anarchists had something in common with the idea of a cooperative commonwealth embraced by labor reformers and agrarian populists in the 1880’s.”

James Green, pg.130

Discussion: How did Ford Taylorize the workplace? What was the managerial ethos? How was Taylorism a new form of managerial control? How was the manager’s brain under the workman’s cap? How did Taylor contribute to the change? What was the relationship between skills, technology and managerialism at the turn of the century? What difference did Taylor make on the shop-girls at Macys and other department stores? Who was Johann Most? Do you think it made a difference that he could not speak English? Who were the immigrants who followed him? How did the depression contribute to his success? Who was Albert Parsons, August Spies and George Schilling?

WEEK 6

October 6-8

James Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, finish.

Discussion: Why does Green go out of his way to tell us “ every man on the Jury was an American”? Compare the trial of the Molly Maguires to the trial of the Haymarket men; And what are the differences?

Midterm examination

WEEK 7 October Break October 9th-October 19th.

Frank Norris, *The Octopus*

WEEK 8

Movie, *Modern Times*

October 20-21

“Unions for Outsiders: the IWW, Farmworkers and Race Matters”

Jose M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons*, Part 1.

Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, PART I.

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. (2nd edition). *Documents on the IWW*: pp.235

Discussion: Plan to bring in your ideas for paper topics. You need to read one secondary source before doing your oral history. Not all immigrants went into the factories, some left for the fields and worked in deplorable conditions. We will discuss the Norris novel, the community of Corona and the the strategies of the employers to attract new immigrant workers.

WEEK 9

October 27-29

November 3-5

“Depression and the Industrial Unions”

Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, PART II

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. (2nd edition). Ch. 9

Robert Zieger, *American Workers, American Unions* ch. 1-4

Jose M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons*, ch.6.

WEEK 10

“Gender, Leisure and Community”

Jose M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons*, Part 2.

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. (2nd edition). Ch. 10

WEEK 11

November 10-12

“World War II and Its Aftermath”

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. (2nd edition). Ch. 11,12

Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, PART III

Robert Zieger, *American Workers, American Unions*, ch5-7.

WEEK 12

November 17-19

Post Industrialism

Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*. (2nd edition). 13

Robert Zieger, *American Workers, American Unions*, 8

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES FOR YOUR PAPER ARE DUE NOVEMBER 19

WEEK 13

November 24

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*.

New Workers, New Labor Movement

WEEK 14

December 1-3

Changes in Global Capitalism

Nelson, Lichtenstein, *Wal-Mart; The Face of 21st Century Capitalism*.

WEEK 15

Summary and Exchange

December 8

Papers are Due December 17th at Noon.