

History 390: United States Labor and Working Class History
Moravian College, Spring 2009
PPHAC Room 338, Friday 10:20-12:40

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Office Hours: Thursday 1-2, Wednesday 10-Noon, and by appointment.

This seminar course explores the ways that labor and working class historians have interpreted the experiences of working people. Focusing primarily on the twentieth century, the class will challenge each student to make an original contribution to the understanding of this most important topic. Among the topics discussed include the construction of social class identities and relationships, working class institutions, especially labor unions, the power of working people in local political organizations, the fragmentation of working peoples' identities along racial, gender, sexual orientation, region and skilled lines, and the importance of leisure and culture in modern life.

The inauguration of this seminar as part of the class offerings in the Moravian College History Department marks an important moment in the region's economic and cultural life. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the Lehigh Valley region has been an international center for industrial production and working class culture, and our activities this semester will draw upon this rich heritage. I have invited four important labor leaders to be a part of some of our class discussions through the semester: I will provide more information about them and their contributions to American labor history the week before their arrival. It is my hope that we will uncover, both in our original research initiatives and discussions on thematic issues with the seminar's four invited guests, some of the forgotten narratives of our regional history.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (ex. 1510) Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Office of Learning services.

Please be aware of Moravian College's standards for grading. It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment or for the course.

Required texts:

The following books are available at the Moravian College bookstore.

Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants*

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*

Thomas Dublin and Walter Licht, *The Face of Decline: The Pennsylvania Anthracite Region in the Twentieth Century*.

Michel Honey, *Going Down Jerico Road*.

Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class*.

Grading and Evaluation:

Final exam: 20% A Final Exam will be scheduled by the Registrar's Office.

Final Paper 30% Major Research Paper. Details at end of Syllabus.

In class Presentation 10% Students will prepare one in class oral presentation on a scholarly article that covers the topic of the week.

Participation 10% As this is a once a week seminar, attendance is expected at every class meeting. Active and thoughtful contribution to discussions and attention to all written assignments is also essential.

Consultations: 5% During the semester, student should consult with me at least once to go over research topic progress and issues.

Research Paper Bibliography/proposal 5% On January 30, students will hand in a research topic proposal along with a preliminary bibliography.

Film Review: 10% Students will write a two page, single spaced review of an assigned film.

Book Review: 10% Students will select one book from the list presented at the end of this syllabus and compose a two page, single spaced review that follows the traditional format of academic book reviews.

January 23: Introduction: Concepts of Class and Community in American Society

"The New Labor History" and U.S. Labor and Working Class History in the Early Twenty-First Century

In class Reading, David Brody, "The Old Labor History and the New: In Search of an American Working Class."

January 30: The New Deal: Labor, Culture and American Consumerism

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago* (entirety)

Article review: Jefferson Cowie and Nick Salvatore, "The Long Exception: Rethinking the Place of the New Deal in American History," *International Labor and Working Class History*, Fall 2008.

Research Topic Proposal Due in class.

February 6: Working Class Politics and Radicalism

Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class*, pp. 1-16; 103-161.

Edward P. Johanningsmeier, "The Trade Union Unity League: American Communists and the Transition to Industrial Unionism, 1928-1934," *Labor History* 42:2 (May 2001): 159-178.

Presentation: Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* (March 2005): 1233-1263

Howard Kimeldorf and Robert Penney, "Excluded by Choice: Dynamics of Interracial Unionism on the Philadelphia Waterfront, 1910-1930," *International Labor and Working Class History* 51 (Spring 1997): 50-71.

Film: *The Great Debaters* Time and location to be determined.

February 13: Culture and the Experience of Everyday Life

Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 17-77

Presentation: Michael McCoy, "Rough Mens" in the "Toughest Places I Ever Seen:" The Construction and Ramifications of Black Masculine Identity in the Mississippi Delta's Levee Camps, 1900-1935," *International Labor and Working Class History* 69 (Spring 2006): 57-80.

Patricia Cooper and Ruth Oldenziel, "Cherished Classifications: Bathrooms and the Construction of Gender/Race on the Pennsylvania Railroad during World War Two," *Feminist Studies* 25:1 (Spring 1999): 7-41.

Steven Maynard, "Without Working?" Capitalism, Urban Culture and Gay History," *Journal of Urban History* 30:3 (2004): 378-398.

Methods Topic: Oral History and the Challenges of Working Class History.

February 20: Pink Collar Labor: Women and the Retail Service Workplace.

Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants*

Guest: Wendell Young III, President Emeritus, United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1776.

Presentation: Dorothy Sue Cobble, "Organizing the Post-Industrial Work Force: lessons from the History of Waitress Unionism," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 44:3 (1991): 419-436.

Bryant Simon, "Consuming Lattes and Labor, or Working at Starbucks," *International Labor and Working Class History* 74 (Fall 2008) 193-211.

February 27: Research Field Trip: National Canal Museum Archives, Easton, Pennsylvania.

Details will follow.

Book Review Due in class

March 6: Spring Break

March 13: Finding the Public Sector Worker

Joseph A. McCartin, "A Wagner Act for Public Employees: Labor's Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism, 1970-1976," *Journal of American History*, (June 2008): 123-148

Guest: Jeff Brown, founding organizer and president, AFSCME Local 1971, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, (1974-2005)

Presentation: R. Shaffer "Where are the Organized Public Employees? The Absence of Public Employee Unionism from U.S. History Textbooks, and Why It Matters," *Labor History* 43:2 (August 2002): 315-334.

Peter Rachleff "Is the Strike Dead? An Historical Look at the Future" *New Labor Forum*, 12:2 Summer 2003, 87-96

Joshua Freeman, "The Strike Weapon: Can It Still Work?" *Dissent* (Spring 1997)

Film Review Due at beginning of class period.

March 20: Labor and the Civil Rights Movement

Michael K. Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign*.

Guest: Al Johnson, Former Vice-President AFSCME District Council 33, Past-President, AFSCME Local 488 Municipal Hospital Workers, (1968-1990)

Presentation: "I AM A Man!: Race, Masculinity, and the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike," *Labor History* 41:2 (May 2000): 153-171

Film: *Killer of Sheep* Time and Location to be determined.

March 27: The Decline of Organized Labor

Thomas Dublin and Walter Licht, *The Face of Decline: The Pennsylvania Anthracite Region in the Twentieth Century*.

Guest: Dr. Alice Hoffman, Retired Director of Pennsylvania Dislocated Worker Unit, Pennsylvania Department of Labor

Presentation: Elizabeth McKillen, Hybrid Visions: Working Class Internationalism in the Mexican Borderlands, Seattle and Chicago, 1910-1920. *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 2:1 Spring 2005, 77-107.

Anthony Carew, "The American Labor Movement in Fizzland: The Free Trade Union Committee and the CIA," *Labor History* 39:1 (February 1998): 25-42.

Film: *Hoffa* Time and location to be determined.

April 3: Peer Review
First Draft of Paper Due in class.

April 10 (No Class)

April 17: Walking Tour of Industrial Philadelphia.

Reading, Tera W. Hunter, "The Brotherly Love for Which This City Is Proverbial Should Extend to All: The Everyday Lives of Working Class Women in Philadelphia and Atlanta in the 1880s" in W.E.B. DuBois, *Race and the City: the Philadelphia Negro and Its Legacy*, ed. Michael B. Katz and Thomas J. Sugrue. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1998)

Tour Stops: Our tour will take us from the University of Pennsylvania in West Philadelphia to South Philadelphia where we will walk the same streets of the old 7th and 30th wards that W.E.B. DuBois surveyed in the late nineteenth century. From the Skittereen (birthplace of William Z. Foster, 17th and Kater Streets, South Philadelphia), we will walk through center city and have lunch at the historic Reading Terminal before taking the el to Tioga Street in the city's Kensington section to visit the original neighborhood where my family settled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Special stopping points are 1117 E. Tioga Street, the first Ryan household in Philadelphia, Luitlien Dye House, Scanlon Recreation center and Ascension of Our Lord Church.

April 24: Literary Sources as Primary Evidence

Our class today will allow for additional peer review and editing. As part of the class meeting, we will also explore some methodological issues of applying cultural history methodologies to literary work. Our in-class workshop will focus on the writings of Chester Himes, Anzia Yezierska and Amiri Baraka.

May 1 : Presentations

Books to Review: Please look over these selections and chose a book to review for the assignment due on February 27. (I would suggest reviewing a book that fits your broader research topic. If there is not one listed here that dies so, please let me know as soon as possible...)

Tera Hunter, *To Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Womens' Lives and Labor after the Civil War.*
Robin G.D. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression.*

Joshua Freeman, *In Transit: The Transit Workers Union in New York City, 1933-1966*.
 Walter Licht, *Getting Work: Philadelphia, 1840-1950*.
 Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing it Out; Waitresses and their Unions in the Twentieth Century*.
 Peter Cole, *Wobblies On the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive Era Philadelphia*.
 James Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divide: Race and Politics in the City of Brotherly Love*.
 Leon Fink and Brian Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone: A History of Hospital Workers' Union Local 1199*
 Philip Scranton and Walter Licht, *Work Sights: Industrial Philadelphia, 1890-1950*
 Laurie B. Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle*
 Joe William Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: the Making of An Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945*.
 Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor: Black and White Workers in Chicago's Packinghouses, 1904-1954*
 Eduardo Obregon Pagan, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race and Riot in Wartime LA*.
 Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White Unite and Fight: A Social History of Industrial Unionism in Meatpacking, 1930-1990*
 Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality*.
 Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945-1968*.
 William P. Jones: *Tribe of Black Ulysses: African American Lumber Workers in the Jim Crow South*.
 Daniel Letwin, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism: Alabama Coal Miners, 1878-1921*
 Lawrence Glickman, *A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society*
 Michael Honey, *Black Workers Remember: An Oral History of Segregation, Unionism and the Freedom Struggle*.
 Jerome P. Bjelopera, *City of Clerks: Office and Sales Workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920*.
 Glenda E. Gilmore: *Defying Dixie: the Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*.

Research Paper Possibilities....

Due to the short amount of time we will have in this one-semester seminar, it is essential that you begin work on your major research paper immediately. As stated earlier, by January 30 your topic proposal should be handed in, and once it is approved by me, assemble a preliminary bibliography and bring it to class on February 6.

The paper is to be no fewer than 20 pages. It will require significant original research using primary sources—the sooner you begin canvassing local manuscript and newspaper collections the better off you will be.

For those selecting topics related to Philadelphia labor history, a number of local libraries and collections will be of value. Temple University Urban Archives maintains the records of numerous regional labor unions and twentieth century activists, in addition to community based organizations that had working class men and women as their primary constituents. Besides Temple University's rich collection, you may also make use of the *Union Labor Record* a journal of the local labor movement from the 1930s that reported extensively on the Reading and Lehigh Valley industrial world. It is housed at the Free Library of Philadelphia.

I will be leading research trips to Temple University Urban Archives through the semester. The first trip will be Monday, February 9.

Histories of local strikes from the Philadelphia, Lehigh Valley and Berks County area provide a legion of untapped narratives of working class culture, power and division that you may discover. To successfully construct these works, you will need to be fully versed in local and national politics, the dynamics of local labor movement. Please consult with me as you progress in your work, as I am familiar with most of the regional collections and archivists with whom you will be working.

Other research centers include the Reading Public Library, which has runs of the *Reading Eagle* and *Reading Times*. The Historical Society of Berks County is also a local research source that may have useful records. The Marx Reading Room of the Easton Area Public Library also has a full range of regional newspapers you may wish to canvass, including the *Easton Express Times*, *Easton Sunday Call*, and *Easton Sentinel*.

Very close to home, The Moravian Church Archives has microfilm copies of *The Globe Times*, a Bethlehem newspaper that covers the last decades of the nineteenth century into the 1960s, and would be a useful primary resource that you can canvass. I encourage those interested in Moravian Church history to explore topics that will build a new understanding of the relationship of the Moravian community and significant leaders (such as Archibald Johnston, an early twentieth century Bethlehem Mayor and Moravian Church Elder) to the Steel industry and industrial conflicts such as the 1919 Steel Strike.

Please keep in mind the potential wider readership your original scholarship on Pennsylvania labor history will involve. These original works of Pennsylvania history have potential for publication in highly respected historical journals and or as presentations at historical conferences, especially the annual Pennsylvania Labor History Conference and the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical Association.

You may have an interest in a specific research topic: please meet with me about your interests before January 30 so we may discuss your ideas. I have assembled the following list of possible research topics:

Philadelphia Sanitation Strikes (1978, 1986, 1992)
Transit Workers Union Strikes (1986, 1983, 1998)
Philadelphia Public School Teachers Strike (1973, 1981)
Association of Catholic Teachers Strike 1976.
Philadelphia Dressmakers Strike 1922.
1890 Catasauqua Ironworkers Strike.
Allentown Mack Truck Strikes (1941, 1946)
1913 Easton Trolley Strike .
1957 Cement Strike (Easton)

Organizing Bethlehem Steel 1940s.
Organizing Allentown School District.
Organizing Philadelphia Teachers (1965)
AFSCME Organizing in Easton, late 1960s.
The Rise and Fall of John F. Kennedy Hospital (labor health collectives in Philadelphia)
The Carl Mackley Homes (Philadelphia experiment in collective housing, run by Hosiery Workers)
Father Dennis Comey and Philadelphia Longshoremen, 1940s-1970s.
The Socialist Era of Reading Politics (J. Henry Stump, James Hudson Maurer)
Communist Activism in Pennsylvania, 1925-1936.
Max Weiner and Community Activism in Philadelphia (1970s-1980s)
Working class leisure activities.
Industrial Sports Leagues.
Pennsylvania Miners.
The impact of the New Deal in local communities.
The History of Housework.
Bethlehem School District School Crossing Guards and Part Time Labor.
The Social Uses of the Steelworkers Union Hall.
Police/Fire Unionization in the Lehigh Valley.
Drinking Establishments of South Bethlehem in the early postwar era.
Building Trade Unionism.
Working Class/labor union responses to the Vietnam War.