American Labor and Working-Class History (HIS 3370)

M/W/F: 11:15-12:10
Instructor: Evan Daniel
Email: edaniel@stfranciscollege.edu
Office Hours: Room 7005; M/W/F 10:00AM-11:00AM and W 12:15PM-1:45PM

Course Description

This seminar explores the thought, organizations, and activism of American workers in key moments of conflict and transformation in the history of the United States including the American Revolution; slavery and Reconstruction; the rise of corporations and mass production; the “Great Depression” of the 1930s and the New Deal; and, the Cold War. Particular attention will be paid to the intersections of class, ethnicity, race and gender in the construction of an American working-class.

Course Expectations:

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to show up to every class on time and stay until the end. Students may not miss more than 3 classes for any reason. Students who miss four classes will be dropped from the roster. Attendance is not identical to participation (see below).

Cell phones and electronic devices: All electronic devices including cell phones must be turned off before coming in to class. If you use an electronic device during class you will be marked absent.

Mutual Respect: Students and faculty are expected to treat one another with mutual respect.

Books and Reading Assignments:

Students are required to purchase or borrow copies of the following books for their own use during the course.

5. **Additional readings as listed in this syllabus and made available via Blackboard or as a hand-out.**

Texts are available in the St. Francis Bookstore or online.

**Class Participation:** The most important element of class participation is completing the assigned readings and being prepared to talk or write about the readings in class. Students are encouraged to express differing views and interpretations of the texts. You do not have to agree with the interpretation of an author, classmate or the instructor but please always be respectful and courteous.

**If you do not do the reading, you are not participating in class.** Historians read a lot and this course requires you to read a lot. If you are too busy to spend the necessary time it takes to understand the readings, you are too busy to take this course. Seriously, do not take this course if you do not want to read.

We will generally start with a secondary source to provide context and then move into a primary source to understand what individuals and groups were saying/thinking/believing in a particular time and place. For example, we will read Philip Foner’s overview of labor in colonial America followed by William Manning’s “The Key of Liberty,” a tract written by, in Manning’s words, “a laborer.”

You will write during class time on a regular basis so it is incredibly important to complete the reading **prior** to arriving. You will occasionally be handing these writing assignments in to me. Please write as legibly as possibly when you do so. I will always let you know at the beginning of class if these assignments will be collected.

Failure to participate constructively in class for whatever reason (for example, not doing the reading) earns an unsatisfactory mark for the day. Your overall participation grade is determined by the number of unsatisfactory marks you receive: the more unsatisfactory marks, the lower your grade for this element of the class.

**Informal Writing Assignments (Reading Reflections):** Students are required to write a reading reflection (one to two paragraphs, typed, double-spaced) each week. These papers are based on the reading due for the week and are marked either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Reflections are due every Thursday. Late reflections will automatically receive an unsatisfactory mark.

A Reading Reflection is a combination of three things:

1) First, identify the author’s thesis. *What* is the author trying to say in this chapter, speech, document, etc.? Do not provide a simple summary.
2) Second, analyze the sources. *How* is the author supporting his or her thesis? For example, is the author making a strong claim but not backing it up?
3) Third, what criticisms do you have? Were the author’s points made clearly? Did you find the author difficult to follow?

A student’s overall grade for this element will be based upon the number of satisfactory reflections submitted. If you hand in all of your reflections and receive credit for all of them, you will receive an A, if you miss one or fail to receive credit for one you will earn
an A-, missing two earns a B, missing three earns a B-, missing four a C, missing five a C-, missing six a D, seven or more unsatisfactory papers earns a failing mark for this element.

**Formal Writing Assignments (Research Proposal and Research Paper):** There are two larger written assignments required for this class. The first is a research proposal (4-6 pages, double-spaced) describing your topic, your thesis, and anticipated sources. The second is a research paper based on primary sources (10-20 pages, double-spaced). Detailed information on both assignments will be distributed by the end of the second week of class.

**Class Presentations:** Every student will give two 10-15 minute oral presentations. The first presentation is an opportunity to explain your research proposal to the class: What is your topic? What questions do you seek to answer? What sources will you use to answer these questions? The second presentation will summarize the findings of your research paper. Were you able to answer the questions addressed in your thesis?

Your presentation can take a variety of forms. Whether you want to give a memorized speech, read a formal paper, or present from notes is up to you. However, PowerPoint is not acceptable. Presentations too short (under ten minutes) or too long (over 20) will be penalized so **make sure to practice prior to the day of your presentation.**

**Grades:** The six elements of the class: Attendance and Participation, Reading Reflections, Formal Writing Assignments (x2), and Presentations (x2), will all count toward your final grade in equal proportion. You will be given a score of 0-100 for each assignment/element. To calculate your final grade I will add up the total and divide it by six.

**Grading Guidelines:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>100-90 percent of possible semester points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>89-87 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>86-80 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
<td>79-77 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>76-70 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>69-60 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failing</td>
<td>below 60 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*No Credit:* A student who does not hand in a paper (or give a presentation) will receive a zero. This student will have difficulty passing the class.

**CALENDAR OF CLASSES**

* Readings marked with parentheses ( ) will be provided by me or, when a url is provided, you will print the reading off the Internet.
WEEK ONE

Wednesday, January 21
Introduction: Review of Syllabus

Friday, January 23
Watch Video: Why Historical Thinking Matters
(http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/why/)
Discussion: What is Labor History?

WEEK TWO

Monday, January 26

Wednesday, January 28
Merrill et al. The Key of Liberty, p 1-39 and 48-77

Friday, January 30
Manning, The Key of Liberty, p.122-170

WEEK THREE

Mon, Feb 2
Frederick Douglass, My Bondage, My Freedom, Ch 4-6

Weds, Feb 4
Douglass, My Bondage, My Freedom, p. Ch 7-9

Fri, Feb 6
Douglass, My Bondage, My Freedom, p. Ch 10-12

WEEK FOUR

Mon, Feb 9
Douglass, My Bondage, My Freedom, p. Ch 18-21

Weds, Feb 11
Eric Foner, Nothing but Freedom, p 1-60

Fri, Feb 13
Foner, Nothing but Freedom, p 61-110

WEEK FIVE

Mon, Feb 16
(Marc Karson, “The Political History of the American Labor Movement in the Nineteenth Century,” in American Labor Unions and Politics, p. 3-28)

Weds, Feb 18
(Karson, “American Federation of Labor Social and Political Thought,” in American Labor Unions and Politics, p. 117-149)
Discussion: The Research Proposal and Research Paper, Resources and Approaches
Fri, Feb 20
(Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, p.15-67)
(Primary Sources: Anarchism and Labor)

WEEK SIX

Mon, Feb 23
(Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy*, p 68-149.)
(Primary Sources: Anarchism and labor)

Weds, Feb 25

Fri, Feb 27
First Presentation: Research Proposal
Research Proposals Due

WEEK SEVEN

Mon, Mar 2
(Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the IWW, the Industrial Workers of the World*, p. 1-56)

Weds, Mar 4
(Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, p. 57-145)
(Primary Sources: IWW)

Fri, Mar 6
(Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, p. 146-197; 227-262)
(Primary Sources: IWW)

WEEK EIGHT

Mon, Mar 9
Field Trip to Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University

Weds, Mar 11
NO CLASS: BREAK

Fri, Mar 13
NO CLASS: BREAK

WEEK NINE
Mon, Mar 16
Founding of the CIO at http://www.explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=793


Weds, Mar 18
(Bert Cochran, Labor and Communism: The Conflict that Shaped American Unions, p. TBA)

Fri, Mar 20
(Paul Street, “The ‘Best Union Members’: Class, Race, Culture, and Black Worker Militancy in Chicago's Stockyards during the 1930s.” in Journal of American Ethnic History (Sep. 2000) available on Blackboard)


WEEK TEN

Mon, Mar 23
(David Palmer, “An Anarchist with a Program: East Coast Shipyard Workers, the Labor Left and the Origins of Cold War Unionism” in American Labor and the Cold War, p. 85-117)

Weds, Mar 25
(Michael Honey, “Operation Dixie, the Red Scare and the Defeat of Southern Labor Organizing” in American Labor and the Cold War, p. 216-244)

Fri, Mar 27
(Gigi Peterson, “‘A Dangerous Demagogue’: Containing the Influence of the Mexican Labor Left and its United States Allies” in American Labor and the Cold War, p. 245-276)

WEEK ELEVEN

Mon, Mar 30


Weds, Apr 1
(Carey McWilliams, Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California, p. 1-45)
Fri, Apr 3
(Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*, p. 46-95)

**WEEK TWELVE**

Mon, Apr 6

Weds, Apr 8

(Chris Friday, "Asian American Labor History and Historical Interpretation," *Labor History* 35:4 (Fall 1994):524-546.)

Fri, Apr 10
NO CLASS: BREAK

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

Mon, Apr 13
NO CLASS: BREAK

Weds, Apr 15

(Primary Source, Kee Chak Hon, "There Is No Reason or Justice," *Nation*. January 23, 1924.)

Fri, Apr 17

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

Mon, Apr 20
Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, Ch 1

Weds, Apr 22
Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement*, Ch 2
Fri, Apr 24
Cobble, Ch 3

WEEK FIFTEEN

Mon, Apr 27
Cobble, Ch 4

Wed, Apr 29
Cobble, Ch 5

Fri, May 1
Cobble, Ch 6
Discussion: Labor History Today, What Next?

WEEK SIXTEEN

Mon, May 4
Second Presentation: Research Paper

Wed, May 6
Last Class
Second Presentation cont.
Research Paper Due