

**Department of Sociology  
Dartmouth College  
Fall 2008**

**Labor Movements: Historical and Contemporary Challenges (Sociology 79)**

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*Course Information:*  
TR 2-3:50, 214 Carson  
X-period: W 4:15-5:05  
Office hours: MW 1-3 or by appointment

**Course Description**

Welcome to Sociology 79! This class will expose students to an exciting range of intellectual debates and research on labor movements. In short, the course is about collective responses to work and the various forms they have taken over the last century in the United States. Readings and discussion will focus on important historical developments among labor unions, from militant beginnings through an accommodationist phase after World War II and a deep decline, to recent attempts at revitalization. Students will also consider the impacts of labor movements on social inequality, politics, and on a range of cross-cutting issues around gender, immigration and race. We conclude by examining the prospects for labor in light of the rapid and profound changes in the world of work and economic activity in the contemporary period.

**Evaluation:**

Seminar grades are based on daily participation, a book review, group presentation, and final paper. The composition of final grades and grading scale are as follows:

<u>Course Requirements</u>	<u>Grading Scale</u>
Participation – 20%	A 93-100
Book Review – 20%	A- 90-92.99
Group Presentation – 20%	B+ 87-89.99
Final Paper & Presentation – 40%	B 83-86.99
	B- 80-82.99
	C+ 77-79.99
	C 73-76.99
	Etc.

Class Participation: Enthusiastic and intellectually rigorous discussion is the core of any seminar. While I will typically provide introductory comments and put the day's materials in context, I will not lecture the entire course period. I expect you to attend each class, having done the reading ahead of time and ready to contribute. If discussion does not emerge spontaneously, I'll ask you to answer questions directly and push for your point of view. I suggest that you come to class each day armed with at least one question for class discussion on the assigned readings and topic. I take roll at each class meeting, mainly for the purpose of learning students' names and assessing students' participation. However, if you miss more than one class, I begin to deduct points from your grade.

Book Review:

Students will select a book from the list on blackboard, write a 4 page review, and provide a brief (approximately 5 minute) overview in class. The review should take a form similar to that found in academic journals. For a good example, browse an issue of *Contemporary Sociology* or the *American Journal of Sociology* (reviews are at the end). Reviews include both a summary of a book's central argument and approach, and a discussion of the book's contributions and shortcomings. If you want to review something that is not on the list, clear it with me first. Scheduling and details for the reviews will be covered during the first full week of class.

Group Presentation:

Once during the semester you will be responsible for leading a seminar discussion with at least one other student on a particular reading(s) and course topic. The teams will have the responsibility of explaining and elaborating course material (theory, debate, reading, group of ideas, etc.), and then delving into a specific topic in greater detail. For example, if your group is presenting on postwar union decline, you may wish to provide data on union membership by industry (or place) over time in order to assess various explanations of union decline. The format for the presentation is a 10 – 15 minute talk on the topic, followed by a discussion that you facilitate on certain key points. There is certainly flexibility in how to present – the key is to be effective, rigorous and interesting. I encourage teams to run ideas by me for their presentation. Scheduling and details for the presentation will be covered during the first full week of class.

Final Project and Presentation:

Students will write a twelve-page term paper and give short (no more than 10 minute) presentation on their topic in class on Tuesday, December 2. Papers are due at the beginning of class on 12/2. Students are free to choose a topic within the admittedly broad confines of parts II & III of the course. The purpose of the paper is to give you the chance to spend some time thinking about something of relevance to labor that interests you. Students will meet with me during the first two weeks of the course to discuss their interests, and will submit a written description of the project on Thursday, 10/23. Details on paper requirements will be provided on blackboard.

\*\*Extra Credit\*\*Labor in Film:

Students can watch one of the movies from the list available on blackboard and write a 2-3 page (double-spaced) review/analysis of the movie. The write-up should first provide a concise synopsis of the movie (about two paragraphs), and then should take one of two approaches:

- 1) Tie the movie to a topic we cover in class. Does the movie illustrate concepts we discussed in class? How? Does the movie contradict/challenge ideas covered in class? How?
- 2) Discuss how the movie raises an issue that we do not cover in class. Discuss this issue and why it is important.

Since I haven't watched all of these movies myself, you should write your paper so that the reader can understand it without having seen the movie. Also, if the movie is fictional, you may want to consider whether the movie is an accurate portrayal of reality or whether it represents popular notions/stereotypes about labor. Unfortunately, not all of the movies on the list are available in the library. If you have a particular interest in a movie I can try to help locate a copy.

You may also use a movie not on this list with my permission. This extra credit paper will be graded out of 15 points and can add up to 1.5 points to your final grade. You may rewrite the paper for a higher grade. Film reviews should be turned in no later than 12/2.

### **Required Readings:**

Students will want to purchase the following books, which are available at the Dartmouth bookstore.

Kimeldorf, Howard. 1999 (Paperback). *Battling for American Labor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lichtenstein, Nelson. 2003 (Paperback edition). *State of the Union*. Princeton University Press.

Fantasia, Rick. 1988. *Cultures of Solidarity* (Paperback edition). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lopez, Steven Henry. 2004 (Paperback edition). *Reorganizing the Rust Belt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Milkman, Ruth. 2006 (Paperback edition). *LA Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement*. Russell Sage Foundation Publications.

Blackboard: Additional required readings are posted on the course blackboard site (marked by BB in the course schedule). In general, students should do the readings in the order they are listed. I will occasionally update readings or place other documents and announcements on Blackboard for your edification. Check the blackboard course site often.

### **Course Policies:**

Honor Principle: Examinations and assignments will be conducted in accord with the principles of academic honor detailed in the Dartmouth Organization, Regulations and Courses. I also encourage students to read Dartmouth's statement on Sources and Citations:

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/sources/>

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

Religious Holidays: Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Electronic Devices: I understand that students are increasingly using laptops to take notes, but the internet is also a formidable distraction. I will allow laptops in class, but be warned that I have a pet peeve about students surfing the web in class. If I feel like you are spending most of your time on the internet, your class participation grade will suffer considerably. So, if you can't resist responding to blitzmail, you're probably best off leaving your laptop at home. Also, please turn off your cell phones while in class.

### Classroom Etiquette:

I expect everyone to show up to class on time. It is crucial for our class sessions to be comfortable and conducive to learning for all participants. This means listening while other people are talking and taking their ideas seriously. Personal attacks, yelling, or other threatening behaviors are not acceptable. Anyone who violates these guidelines may be asked to leave the classroom and/or drop the course.

### **Course Schedule & Assigned Readings:**

#### **Part I. Early Labor Activism and Union Allegiance**

In this section we consider the trajectory of worker protest organized labor during the early twentieth century. We take up questions such as: What shaped union allegiance among workers? Which types of unions proved most successful? What repertoires of collective action did workers and unions draw upon? And, how did race and ethnic divisions among workers shape early unionism?

1 (9-25) *Course Introduction and Overview*

Readings:

Skim Richard Freeman and James Medoff, "A New Portrait of U.S. Unionism" (BB)

2 (9-30) Readings:

Howard Kimeldorf, *Battling for American Labor*, Chapters 1-4

3 (10-2) Readings:

Continue Kimeldorf Book

Film: Matewan

4 (10-7) Readings:

Finish Kimeldorf

Cliff Brown, "Racial Conflict and Split Labor Markets." (BB)

*Group Presentation on Race and the Early American Labor Movement*

#### **Part II. The New Deal Union Upsurge and Postwar Decline**

This tumultuous period witnessed the birth of the modern industrial union movement and the legal framework which continues to regulate most collective bargaining and union election activity to this day. Just what did the Wagner Act entail? How did employers respond? And, what were the sources of unions' long postwar decline?

5 (10-9) Readings:

Nelson Lichtenstein, Introduction and Chapters 1-2

Vincent Roscigno and William Danaher, "Media and Mobilization" (BB)

6 (10-14) Readings:  
Continue Lichtenstein, Chapters 3-4  
Skim Marc Dixon, "Limiting Labor" (BB)

7 (10-16) Readings:  
Lichtenstein, Chapter 6  
Begin Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity* (Skim Intro & Chapters 1-2)

*Group Presentation on Union Decline in the Postwar Era*

8 (10-21) Readings:  
Fantasia, Chapters 3-5  
Film: American Dream

9 (10-23) Readings:  
Finish Fantasia  
Kate Bronfenbrenner, "The Role of Union Strategies in NLRB Certification Elections."(BB)  
John Logan, "The Union Avoidance Industry in the United States."(BB)

*\*Paper description due in class*

### **Part III. Union Decline & Revitalization in the Contemporary Period**

At the end of the twentieth century certain segments of the American labor movement confronted the long postwar decline with a host of revitalization strategies, from new organizing tactics to cultivating new constituencies, including students. We evaluate these efforts and ask which unions and strategies appear most effective in the contemporary period. Questions like these are the source of much debate within and around organized labor, underlying successive shake-ups at the top of the American labor movement.

10(10-28) Readings:  
Lichtenstein, Chapter 7  
Kim Voss and Rachel Sherman, "Breaking the Iron Law of Oligarchy." (BB)  
Begin Steven Lopez, *Reorganizing the Rustbelt*, (Intro)

11 (10-30) Readings:  
Continue Lopez, Chapters 1-3

*Group Presentation on New Labor Constituencies*

12 (11-4) Readings:  
Finish Lopez

13 (11-6) Readings:  
Marick Masters & Ray Gibney, "The AFL-CIO v. CTW" (BB)  
*Note:* We will spend some time debriefing the election, the role of labor, and what we might expect on the labor policy front.

14 (11-11) Readings:

Ruth Milkman, *LA Story*, Introduction & Chapters 1 -3 (you can skim 1&2)

Film clip: Bread and Roses

15 (11-13) Readings:

Finish Milkman

Film Clip: Made in L.A.

16 (11-18) Readings (all on BB):

Andrew Martin, "The Institutional Logic of Union Organizing and the Effectiveness of Social Movement Repertoires."

Marc Dixon and Andrew Martin, "Can the Labor Movement Succeed Without the Strike?"

17 (11-20) Readings: TBA

Guest Speaker

Project Updates & Discussion

18 (11/25) Readings (on BB):

Tamara Kay, "Labor Transnationalism and Global Governance."

Stephen Lerner, "Global Corporations, Global Unions."

19 (12-2) Class Presentations & Discussion

**Final paper due in class**