Course Description and Objectives

It is axiomatic, perhaps even redundant to note that we are living in the midst of a vast economic reorganization more fundamental and far-reaching in scope than anything experienced since late 19th-century industrialization. The impact of this transformation has magnified a series of structural problems being experienced by the trade union movement in the United States, which is in the midst of its most profound crisis in a century. Private sector unionization rates have dipped below 10 per cent (the lowest of any industrialized country in the world), to levels not seen since the early 1900s. Once-strong unions such as the United Automobile Workers have been forced by employers into a never-ending string of concessions. For most workers, job security—decent pay and benefits—let alone basic fair treatment at work are simply unattainable. There are important "why" questions—how did we get here? There are also important "how" questions—what will it take to change this situation?

This course is concerned with the many theoretical perspectives aimed at understanding and defining the goals and purposes of the U.S. labor movement. For our purposes, the word "theory" simply means the attempt we will make to explain the "why" and "how" of labor movements, in addition to giving a description of labor movements and the way they function.

During the semester, we will analyze the labor movement from a variety of perspectives. By the end of the course you should be able to (a) understand and apply these different perspectives on organized labor; (2) recognize from which perspective writers on contemporary labor issues are writing; and (3) develop your own theory of the labor movement in the U.S. In all cases, you will be expected to think critically and probe the strengths and weaknesses of the theories being considered.

You are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class, and to be prepared to discuss them critically. Your class participation is important, especially in a class like this where we will be discussing difficult questions with no easy answers. Class participation will count 10% toward your final grade. There will also be five (5) "reaction papers" or written assignments, of 3 to 5 pages length, each worth 10% of your grade (total of 50% of final grade). When written assignments are made they will be due at the next class session. A final examination will be given at the end of the semester. It will be a take-home exam asking you to apply the theories in the book to questions facing the labor movement today, or to writings on the present U.S. labor movement. It will test your ability to apply the theories, and to develop your own theory of the labor movement. This examination will account for the final 40% of your final grade.

The following text is required reading for the course, and is available at Amherst Books in Amherst, as well as other (new and used) bookstores throughout the valley:

### Syllabus:

#### SESSION: TOPOICS AND READINGS

**WEEK ONE**  
Course Overview; Discussion: "what is a theory". Discuss topics in the book’s introduction, plus Chapter 1: *Establishing the Framework: What is a Theory of the Labor Movement and What Questions Should It Answer?* (This class covers pp. 1-22 of the book.)

**WEEK TWO**  
*Theories*, pp. 24-47. Introduction to Chapter 2, plus articles by and about Marx and Engels. *The Labor Movement as an Agent of Revolution.*

**WEEK THREE**  
*(REACTION PAPER DUE ON MARX & ENGELS OR ON LENIN)*

**WEEK FOUR**  
*Theories*, pp. 63-99. Articles by and about the I.W.W. and Syndicalist Movements

**WEEK FIVE**  

**WEEK SIX**  
*Theories*, pp. 117-128. Article by S. Aronowitz. *An American "New Left" Theory.* *(REACTION PAPER DUE ON IWW, GORZ, OR ARONOWITZ)*

**WEEK SEVEN**  
*Theories*, pp. 131-160. Introduction to Chapter 3, plus articles by Commons and Dawley. *The Labor Movement as "Pure and Simple Business Unionism"*

**WEEK EIGHT**  
*Theories*, pp. 161-184. Articles by S. Perlman, Gulick and Bers.  
*(REACTION PAPER DUE ON THE COMMONS AND/OR PERLMAN THEORIES)*

**WEEK NINE**  
*Theories*, pp. 186-206. Introduction to Chapter 4 and articles by the Webbs. *The Labor Movement as an Agent of Efficiency and Social Reform.*

**WEEK TEN**  
*Theories*, pp. 208-224, 239-249. Introduction to Chapter 5, plus articles by Parker, Hoxie, and Veblen. *(Optional reading, if you want to: pp. 225-235 - Tannenbaum). The Labor Movement as a Psychological Reaction to Industrialism.* *(REACTION PAPER DUE ON THE WEBBS, OR ON ONE OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES)*

**WEEK ELEVEN**  

**WEEK TWELVE**  

**WEEK THIRTEEN**  
*Theories*, pp. 312-356. Introduction to Chapter 8, plus articles by Kerr, Dunlop, Harbison, and Myers; Chamberlain; Mann; Galbraith; Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer, and Platt. *The Labor Movement as Part of a Post-Industrial Society.*

**WEEK FOURTEEN**  
Final Class. Theories: final chapter. Final exam to be handed out in this class due last day of the exam period.
Course Description and Objectives

It is axiomatic, perhaps even redundant to note that we are living in the midst of a vast economic reorganization more fundamental and far-reaching in scope than anything experienced since late 19th-century industrialization. The impact of this transformation has magnified a series of structural problems being experienced by the trade union movement in the United States, which is in the midst of its most profound crisis in a century. Private sector unionization rates have dipped below 10 per cent (the lowest of any industrialized country in the world), to levels not seen since the early 1900s. Once-strong unions such as the United Automobile Workers have been forced by employers into a never-ending string of concessions. For most workers, job security—decent pay and benefits—let alone basic fair treatment at work are simply unattainable. There are important "why" questions—how did we get here? There are also important "how" questions—what will it take to change this situation?

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The following text is required reading for the course, and is available at Amherst Books in Amherst, as well as other (new and used) bookstores throughout the valley:

CALENDAR

CLASS ONE: September 7

Introduction to Course, What are the goals for this course; Syllabus, Readings and Course Requirements. Discussion: "what is a theory". Discuss topics in the book's introduction, plus Chapter 1: Establishing the Framework: What is a Theory of the Labor Movement and What Questions Should it Answer? (This class covers pp. 1-22 of the book.)

CLASS TWO: September 14

Theories, pp. 24-47. Introduction to Chapter 2, plus articles by and about Marx and Engels. The Labor Movement as an Agent of Revolution.

CLASS THREE: September 21

Theories, pp. 48-62. Articles by V.I. Lenin and T. T. Hammond. (REACTION PAPER DUE ON MARX & ENGELS OR ON LENIN)

CLASS FOUR: September 28

Theories, pp. 63-99. Articles by and about the I.W.W. and Syndicalist Movements

CLASS FIVE: October 5

Theories, pp. 100-116. Article by A. Gorz. A French "New Left" theory.

CLASS SIX: October 12 NO CLASS

CLASS SEVEN: October 19

Theories, pp. 117-128. Article by S. Aronowitz. An American "New Left" Theory. (REACTION PAPER DUE ON IWW, GORZ, OR ARONOWITZ)

CLASS EIGHT: October 26

Theories, pp. 161-184. Articles by S. Perlman, Gulick and Bers. (REACTION PAPER DUE ON THE COMMONS AND/OR PERLMAN THEORIES)

CLASS NINE: November 2

Theories, pp. 186-206. Introduction to Chapter 4 and articles by the Webbs. The Labor Movement as an Agent of Efficiency and Social Reform.
CLASS TEN: November 9

Theories, pp. 208-224, 236-249. Introduction to Chapter 5, plus articles by Parker, Hoxie, and Veblen. (Optional reading, if you want to: pp. 225-235 - Tannenbaum). The Labor Movement as a Psychological Reaction to Industrialism. (REACTION PAPER DUE ON THE WEBBS, OR ON ONE OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES)

CLASS ELEVEN: November 16

Theories, pp. 252-281. Introduction to Chapter 6 and articles by R. Ely, and various Papal Encyclicals. The Labor Movement as a Moral Force.

CLASS TWELVE: November 23


CLASS THIRTEEN: November 30

Theories, pp. 312-356. Introduction to Chapter 8, plus articles by Kerr, Dunlop, Harbison, and Myers; Chamberlain; Mann; Galbraith; Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer, and Platt. The Labor Movement as Part of a Post-Industrial Society.

CLASS FOURTEEN: December 7  (Last Day of Classes)

Final Class. Theories: final chapter. Final exam to be handed out in this class due last day of the exam period..
Course Format and Responsibilities:

You are expected to:

- Attend each class.
- Obtain access to all required books and materials needed to complete the course successfully.
- Complete all assignments and turn them in on time.
- Complete any assignment you miss due to unavoidable and excused absences.
- Be aware that assignments are based on reading and in-class discussions and presentations. Students who miss class will not be able to duplicate the learning experience.
- Participate constructively in class — which is defined as participation that encourages the participation of learning of others.

Course Requirements: Written work:

- Informal, in-class writing assignments based on assigned readings, films, and class discussions.
- Five formal writing assignments. The formal papers must be typewritten and double spaced.
- All assignments are due at the beginning of each class. Late work will negatively affect your final grade.

Grading Policy:

- 30% Class participation
- 50% Five Reaction Papers
- 20% Take-Home Final Exam. Final handed out on 12/7/2010 and due on Friday 12/17/2010