STPEC 493-H-01 Syllabus  
*American Labor: Theory, Work and Movements*  
(Spire # 58425)  
SPRING SEMESTER 2014

Instructor: Dr. Robert E. Weir ("Rob")  
Phone: 586-4075 (H); 567-0621 X274 (W)  
Office Hours: By Appointment and Tuesday 1-2:15 & others TBA.

Class Meetings: Tues. 2:30-5 pm in Dickinson 209.

Books:  
The following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore. Most are available for rental, several are available as e-books, and I will place whatever we own on reserve. Used copies are fine.

Larson & Nissen, eds. *Theories of the Labor Movement*  
Rees & Pollack, eds. *The Voice of the People*  
Dubofsky & Dulles, *Labor in America: A History* 8th ed. (7th is fine)  
Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution*

Course Overview:  
STPEC 493: The United States is a middle-class society. Except that it isn’t! Today, as in the past, the majority of Americans are members of the working class. This course looks at the changing nature of work, the rise of labor unions, social movement models, theories of the labor movement, class culture, the articulation of capitalism, the impact of industrialization, and the emergence of a global and postindustrial economy. Its major focus will be on the period from 1870 to the present, with a heavy emphasis on the political and social intersections of ethnicity, race, gender, and social class. The class structure will be a blend of lecture, class discussion, and audio-visual material. It is reading and research intensive.

In general, each class will feature one of more major theories of the labor movement, a discussion of work and social movements within a time period, student reports, and AV materials.
Course Moodle Site:
I use Moodle to post all information and details pertaining to assignments. I also use Moodle to past handouts, supplemental reading, and course news. You should check this each week.

Course Requirements:

STPEC 493 is a seminar-based course that depends on student involvement for success. As such, students are expected to attend all classes unless important circumstances dictate otherwise. The final grade will be based on the following criteria:

1. An oral report not to exceed 20 minutes in length on a topic listed below. This will involve extensive outside reading. You will familiarize yourself with a topic and survey some of the major works on the topic. (See below “How to Read for Oral Reports.”) You will then relay some of those findings to the class.

You should structure the report along the lines of the questions to answer prefacing the bibliography for the topic. Seek to give an overview, present some of the major findings from the authors you sampled, and venture a few conclusions of your own. You should approach this as if you were giving a conference paper, though you may opt for a less formal presentation style if you so desire. You must be selective; I will cut off presentations that run too long. You should also be prepared to field questions and to direct the discussion that ensues.

I do not expect your research to be complete at the time of the presentation.

2. This is a seminar-based course, thus a large percentage of your grade will be based on the quantity and quality of your contributions to the class. It goes without saying, though, that you cannot contribute if you are not present. Put another way, every class you miss deducts 3 points from the 30 that could possibly obtain for participation.

3. There will be two short writing assignments that are designed to give you some practical experience in the kind of writing graduate students are often asked to produce. Both are review essays. This is a skill you will need no matter what graduate field you pursue. It is also one used in the workforce, though it is often called things such as “literature survey,” “executive summary,” “background,” etc.

The first essay is will a review of any one of the books you used while preparing your oral report. You should approach this as if you were reviewing this book for a professional journal, and I would recommend you consult several for style and content. This paper should be between 750-1000 words (the average journal submission). Most reviews give a quick summary of the work, identify its major findings, critique the research and conclusions, and locate the book within other literature on the subject (which you will know from having prepared your oral.) This is due one week after you give your oral, unless you choose a later report. Those giving oral reports after April 15 should hand in the review the day they present.

The final paper for this course will be a professional review essay. This paper of approximately 10 pages will survey key materials you consulted while preparing your
oral, and those you read after (and in more detail) your oral report. It should also build upon one or more of the major theories we analyzed during the semester.

4. There is also a “fun” project on labor cartoons. More information will be placed on Moodle but, in essence, each student will find a cartoon relating to some period of labor history. They will attach this cartoon to a Word document along with a one-page explanation of the cartoon. These will then be posted on the course Moodle site.

How to Write Review Essays:

There is a format/trick to writing these. I will teach it to you and I will also post tips on the class Moodle site.

Late Policy:

Students are expected to meet deadlines. Class meetings will be structured around reports, and you must be here when you are scheduled to give one. Under no circumstances short of a major health problem will I consider extensions within 48 hours of a class meeting.

How to Read for Oral Reports:

First, you absolutely, positively cannot prepare for presentations or the final project by examining only online sources—don’t even try it! The Internet did not go viral until 1993 and labor history is a very old field. Many of the touchstone works were published long before the Internet. You will be able to track down journal articles online, but you are going to need to use the library (and interlibrary loan) to secure many of the books you will need.

Don’t be alarmed about the amount of reading listed under each oral report. You are in training for graduate school reading, a task that often involves ‘reading “into” and “around” major works. Your goal is to gain an understanding of what the authors argue and say, not retain all the minutiae of their research. Prefaces and introductions often lay out the major theoretical thrust of the work. You should organize your presentation around a theme (usually given in the assignment) and read enough to get what the author is arguing and mine an example of two to develop the theme.

Grading Breakdown/Due Dates:

I reserve the right to alter these percentages slightly, but the approximate breakdown of grading will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral report</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Due per syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First review essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Due: one week after oral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoon assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Due: midnight March 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Due each week!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final review essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Due: Friday May 2 by noon in my office</td>
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</tbody>
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TOPICS AND READINGS

All readings should be done prior to the class for which it is listed. Key: Larson= *Theories of the Labor Movement.* (Each reading is numbered and the syllabus numbers correspond to the reading number, *not* a page number.) Rees= *The Voice of the People.* (Numbers also correspond with reading numbers, *not* page numbers) Text= Dulles and Dubofsky, *Labor in America.* The numbers on syllabus correspond to chapter numbers. Lichtenstein = *Retail Revolution.* This can be read straight through.

This syllabus also lists possible reports, and a partial reading list for those topics. Works marked with * are considered essential. Students are not confined to the list on the syllabus. NOTE: Be careful which journal is referenced; the two prominent publications have similar names, *Labor History* and *Labor.*

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** *In the interests of saving paper, I’ve removed the bibliographical information under each of the topics. Once you have chosen a topic, you should go to the online version of the syllabus as it appears on Moodle to see readings for your topic.*

**January 21**
**INTRODUCTION/TRANSFORMING LABORERS and MARKETS**

**January 28**
**PRE-CIVIL WAR FREE LABOR/AVENUES OF POWER**

Read: Larson, 2-5 and 19-21; Rees, 2, 4, 6-14; Text, 3-5 (can be skimmed for understanding)

Major Theories: Marxism, Household Economy, Family Wage, Journeymen Into Unions

Report 1: Artisans Into Workers:
Key Question: *How did the changing nature of work effect workers and their organizations?*

Report # 2: Gendering Work
Key Question: *Work has long been gendered, but how did industrial labor alter traditional gender roles (or not)?*

**February 4**
**ORGANIZATION EFFORTS AND THE UPRISING OF 1877**
**THE LESSONS OF 1877**

Read: Larson, 24-25; Rees, 11-17; Text, 6-7

Major Theories: Immigrant cycle, Workplace cultures, Limits of Trade Unionism?

Report 1: Working Class Culture in the Mid-19th Century
Key Questions: *What was distinct about working-class culture in the mid-19th century? Does this constitute a ‘class interest’ in ways that matter?*
Report 2: Great Strike of 1877 and Its Context
Key Questions: How did 1877 magnify class issues in America? Is there a difference between anger and class consciousness?

Report 3: Immigration
Key Questions: Is there any such thing as a working class (singular)? Was immigration one of capital's greatest tools to fragment labor?

Report 4: Premature Direct Action–The Molly Maguires
Key Question: Militancy is romantic, but how well did it serve workers? Were there positive spillover effects?

February 11  THE ERA OF THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR
Read: Larson, 26-28, 32-33; Rees, 19-20; Text, 8

Major Theory: Movement Culture

Report 1: The Nature of the Knights
Key Questions: How can workers imagine organizations beyond trade unions? Do such organizations make sense? What forces unite and fragment?

Report 2: Working Class Cultures:
Key Questions: Is it possible to create counter-hegemonic culture? Can culture be a substitute/supplement for the material foundations of class?

February 18  No Class--follow Monday class schedule

Read: Larson, 6-7, 19-23, 27-31; Text, 9-10

Major Theories: “Prudential unionism;” craft vs. class consciousness

Report 1: The American Federation of Labor
Key Questions: Is prudential unionism a useful construct? Does it serve workers well? Who is included/excluded?

Report 2: Radical Alternatives/Expanded Imaginations
Key Questions: What are the promises/limits of radical action? Why does it appeal seem to be limited?

March 4  PROGRESSIVES AND WOBBLIES/ MIDDLE CLASS ORDER OR WORKING-CLASS CONTROL
Read: Larson, 8-16, 36-37; Rees, 21-27; Text, 11-12

Major Theories: Anarcho-syndicalism; Popular culture as control; Gutman Thesis

Report 1: How Progressive was Progressivism?
Key Question: Were capitalists collectively more class conscious than workers
Report 2: The Nature of the IWW
Key Questions: Was the IWW by nature a heroic, but flawed organization? Do historians romanticize it?

Report 3: Leaders of the IWW
Key Questions: The IWW wanted to be leaderless yet gave rise to extremely colorful individuals others followed. Wrestle with that contradiction.

Report 4: Capital Backlash
Key Questions: How did capitalists avoid the implications of the Great Upheaval? What were the various tools at its disposal?

March 11 WORLD WAR I AND CAPITAL’S BACKLASH IN THE 1920S

Read: Larson, 26-31 (review); Rees, 28-35; Text, 13-14

Major Theories: Welfare capitalism; Irony of war and immigration restriction; Taylorism and Fordism; Segmentation, fragmentation, and solidarity

Report 1: Repression and Division
Key Questions: Is repression an effective tool in smashing social movements? Was it more or less effective than alternative methods by the 1920s?

William Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Role
Thai Jones, More Powerful Than Dynamite
*Chad Pearson, Making the City of Prosperity…Worcester 1900-25, Labor History 45:1
Stephen Robertson, The Companies’ Voice in the Workplace—Labor Spies, Labor 10:3
Donna Haverty-Stocke, Creative Opposition to Radical America, Labor 4:3

Report 2: Triumph of the Corporate Capitalism?
Key Questions: Unions posit that the workplace is an arena of struggle. In what ways did management agree and what was its response? How can loyalty be manufactured?

Report 3: The Rise of the Black Pullman Brotherhood
Key Questions: Did race complicate welfare capitalism? In what ways did black organizations help? What were the limitations?

March 18 SPRING BREAK

March 25 DEPRESSION AND NEW DEAL

Read: Larson, 24-25, 37 (review) plus 34; Rees, 36-39; 15-17; Begin Lichtenstein

Major Theories: Industrial unionism; Social unionism; Statism

Report 1: The Promise and Limits of Craft Unionism
Key Questions: Revisit ‘prudential unionism.’ Was the idea still valid by the 1930s? Is it the antithesis of class consciousness?
**Report 2: The Resurgence of the Left:**
**Key Questions:** *In what ways did 30s radicals expose the illogic of welfare capitalism? Has the 30s Old Left been romanticized?*

**Report 3: Rise of Industrial Unionism**
**Key Questions:** *Was industrial unionism more appropriate than craft unionism? What were its strengths? What were its weaknesses?*

**Report 4: New Deal Reform—Benevolent State or Destructive Paternalism?**
**Key Questions:** *Did the State become the new leader of welfare capitalism? Should workers have trusted the State? (Be careful—you must address the question of whether workers could have done better on their own.)*

**April 1**

**SAME OLD SONG: WORLD WAR II TO BUSINESS UNIONISM**

Read: Larson, 38-44; Rees, 40-43, 46-47; Text, 18-19; Continue Lichtenstein

Major Theories: Business unionism; Cold War unionism; Return of freedom of contract

**Report 1: WW II and the Labor Movement**
**Key Questions:** *No-strike pledges were patriotic, but were they wise? What limits of State support of labor emerged?*

**Report 2: Race and Gender in WW II**
**Key Questions:** *World War II offered both opportunities and limits for women and black workers; discuss. Where did these workers go when the war ended? What are the long-term implications of wartime employment?*

**Report 3: Purge of the Left**
**Key Questions:** *Assess the decision to purge radicals from organized labor (positives and negatives)? Did organized labor exchange short-term gain for long-term problems?*

**Report 4: Labor and the Cold War Economy**
**Key Questions:** *What was the ‘cost’ of labor’s cooperation with the State? Some have argued that labor gained unprecedented power in the late 40s and into the 1950s. Was organized labor naïve?*

**April 8**

**THE LIMITS OF AFFLUENCE: WORKERS AND THE LONG SIXTIES**

Read: Larson, 39, 44 (review), 45; Rees, 48-52; Text, 20; Continue Lichtenstein

Major Theories: Cultures and countercultures; Institutionalization: flexibility vs. calcification; Can movement culture cross bridges

**Report 1: Business Unionism, Liberalism, and Affluence**
**Key Questions:** *This is seldom asked, but was it reasonable for workers to trade militancy for affluence? Was affluence real or apparent? Who says workers ought to revolutionaries?*
Report 2: Latino Workers
Key Questions: Why should few people have been surprised by Latino militancy in the Long Sixties? What (if anything) was unique about Latino organizing? Comment on the uses of religion and morality. What was learned? What has been forgotten?

Report 3: Pink and Blue-Collar Culture/Blue-Collar Blues & Future Neo-Cons
Key Questions: George Meany argued that blue-collar workers were becoming conservative. Was he right? How do we account for the conservatism and sexism of some blue-collar men?

Report 4: Worker Militancy
Key Questions: Was militancy doomed from the outset? In what ways was feminism compatible/incompatible with black workplace militancy? What was transformative about the militancy of the Long Sixties?

April 15 CONSERVATIVES AND EARLY POSTINDUSTRIALIZATION

Read: Rees, Text 21; Finish Lichtenstein for next week

Major Theories: the 4Ds and organized labor

Report 1: Dissatisfaction and Deindustrialization
Key Questions: Weight in on the supposition that organized labor responded poorly to changes in the American economy. How did the 70s/80s expose limitations in labor/State coalitions? Sketch the differences between a late industrial regime and an early deindustrialized society.

Report 2: Attacking the Poor
Key Questions: Comment on the long-standing question of why America’s poor have seldom managed to coalesce as a potent social movement. What long-term trends contribute to this?

April 22: WORKING IN A POSTINDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

Read: Discussion of Lichtenstein

Report 1: Women and Changing Labor Markets
Key Questions: How did feminism translate and/or fail to translate to the workplace? Is feminism too ‘middle class’?

Report 2: Unions and the Democratic Party—Time for a Divorce:
Key Questions: Is organized labor holding onto an outmoded dream in supporting the Democratic Party? Should labor evolve a new political strategy?
April 28  FIGHTING BACK IN A POST INDUSTRIAL WORLD

Read: Moodle file documents in Handouts labeled “Postindustrialism,” “Is the New Social Movement Paradigm Obsolete?”

Major Theories: World systems; Resource mobilization theory; International division of labor; Transregional organizing; Future of business unionism; Movable capital; Systems of accumulation; Corporate campaigns

Report: Movable Capital/Changing Labor Markets/New Paradigms:
Key Questions: Should organized labor abandon blue-collar workers? Can unions adapt to the new labor market? Are there sections of postindustrial America that are unlikely to be salvaged? Is trade unionism hopelessly outmoded?

Open free-for-all discussion of labor’s challenges and future