

Work & Society, Spring 2008

**WORK AND SOCIETY - 43.380**  
**Spring 2008**  
**Professor Robert Farrant**

Class: Tuesday and Thursday: 11:00-12:15  
Office: 500A O'Leary Library  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-10:45, 12:30-1:30; Thursday 3:00-5:45PM; and by appointment  
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**Class Requirements:** I do not test and quiz 'to find out what you don't know'! My job is to help you learn the course material and your job is to put the time and effort in to make this happen. You are expected to attend class because lecture notes will be part of any exam. Your reading should be completed before the first class in the week it is assigned so we can discuss it.

**Grading:** There is one in-class exam on March 11 a take home final essay and short writing assignments. The in-class exam is worth 30% of your grade; attendance, participation and completion of short writing assignments (on time) is worth 25%; the final essay is worth 45% of your semester grade.

**Important Dates: In class exam on March 11.** I will distribute review questions for the exam on **March 4**. I will pass out the final essay question on **Tuesday May 6**. It is due no later than **Tuesday May 20 at noon**.

**Required Books:**

Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work*, Columbia University Press, 1979.  
Tom Juravich, ed., *The Future of Work in Massachusetts*, University of Massachusetts Press, 2007.  
Bruce Watson, *Bread & Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream*, Viking paperback, 2006.  
Louis Uchitelle, *The Disposable American*, Vintage paperback edition.  
James Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, Anchor paperback edition.  
Liza Featherstone & United Students Against Sweatshops, *Students Against Sweatshops*, Verso, 2002.

**Week 1: Introduction: The State of Working America**

Jan. 29 - Introduction - The State of Working America  
Jan. 31 – The State of Working America, continued

For Thursday's class visit [www.aflcio.org/corporateamerica/paywatch/](http://www.aflcio.org/corporateamerica/paywatch/); make three observations on executive pay from the site, write them down and bring them to class. Also, for Thursday read the Introduction in Uchitelle's *The Disposable American* titled 'Myths That Bind'; be prepared to discuss the myths he refers to. And, read McCabe,

Work & Society, Spring 2008

'Workers Mourn Closing of North Andover Plant' (handout). Write three questions you might be asking if you were once a worker at the factory in question.

### **Week 2: What Should We Do: Flip Burgers?**

February 5 - What Has Happened to Jobs?

February 7 - What Might the Future Look Like?

Uchitelle, *The Disposable American*, chs. 1-3.

Juravich, *The Future of Work in Massachusetts*, ch. 1, Brenner, "The Economy."

NINA BERNSTEIN, 'Groceries on the Computer, and Immigrants in the Cold', *The New York Times*, December 22, 2007 (handout).

BOB HERBERT, 'Nightmare Before Christmas', *The New York Times*, December 22, 2007 (handout).

For Thursday's class (Feb. 7) write a 500-word essay using the assigned readings to react to the following: "Job loss is simply part of what happens in any economy and people should just 'suck it up and get on with their lives'. The federal government has no role to play in solving problems associated with such economic restructuring."

### **Week 3: The 'Mills Revolution in Lowell'**

We have been too long subjected to the odious, cruel, unjust, and tyrannical system which compels the operative Mechanic to exhaust his physical and mental powers by excessive toil, until he has no desire but to eat and sleep, and in many cases he has no power to do either from extreme debility... We cannot, we will not, longer be mere slaves to inhuman, insatiable and unpitying avarice.

- Seth Luther, *Ten-Hour Circular*, 1835

Feb. 12 - Craft Production and the Factory System: The Country Debates Having a 'Permanent' Working Class

Feb. 14 - The Mill Girls of Lowell

Dublin, chs. 1-5.

'To the Working Men of New England' – (Handout) We will discuss this in class

February 12.

For class on February 12, please write 200-250 words discussing what you believe that the author of 'To the Working Men of New England' is worried about and what he wants his readers to do.

**Week 4: Industrialization and Wage Labor: “just wages as a just reward for hard labor”**

“They are an ardent race and are fully possessed with that hatred of labor, which is the principle of progress in the human race, as any other people. They must and will have the enjoyment without the sweat. So they buy slaves where the women will permit it; where they will not, they make the wind, the tide, the waterfall, the steam, the cloud, the lightening, do the work, by every art and device their cunningest brain can achieve.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson on mill owners

Let me now present the facts I learned by observation or inquiry on the spot. I was there in mid-winter, and every morning I was awakened at five, by the bells calling to labor. The time allowed for dressing and breakfast was so short, as many told me, that both were performed hurriedly, and then the work was begun at the mill by lamplight, and prosecuted without remission till twelve, and chiefly in a standing position. Then half an hour only allowed for dinner, from which the time for going and returning was deducted. Then back to the mills to work till seven o'clock... . It must be remembered that all the hours of labor are spent in rooms where oil lamps, together with from 40 to 80 persons, are exhausting the healthful principle of the air and where the air is loaded with particles of cotton thrown from thousands of cards, spindles, and looms.

-Catharine Beecher, early 1840s describing mill work in Lowell

The division of society into the producing and the non-producing classes, and the fact of the unequal distribution of value between the two, introduces us at once to another distinction—that of capital and labor.... labor now becomes a commodity... . Antagonism and opposition of interest is introduced in the community; capital and labor stand opposed.

- *The Awl*, 1844; *The Awl* was a shoe workers’ newspaper published in Lynn, MA

Feb. 19 – Monday Schedule, no class

Feb. 21 – Women Organize—Mill Owners Respond

Dublin, chs. 6 - 12.

Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, chs. 1-2.

**Week 5: Big Business, the Changing Nature of Work and Attempts to Organize**

Between the Civil War and World War I the modern American economy emerged. In the 1870s Germany and Britain were the economic and technological leaders of the world; this was changing, and changing fast. How did this happen? In 1800 approximately 74% of the labor force was engaged in farming, while by the early 1900s this had fallen to 30%. Iron, steel, mills and factories spread out over the nation. Nineteenth-century industrialization had created a permanent class of factory workers: in 1900 15.9 million people labored in industry and 11 million on farms. Between 1880 and 1900 the proportion of women in the labor force jumped from 15 percent to 25 percent, almost 7 million workers. Major industrial cities like Chicago, Pittsburgh, Youngstown, and

Detroit were in place, a national transportation and communications network was established, and industry ran on electrical power, not waterpower. Railroads, turnpikes, urban growth, immigration, and the organization of trade unions occurred.

Between 1840 and 1880 the U.S. urban population grew from 11 percent of the total population in the United States to 28 percent and by 1900 had reached 40 percent of the total. Fourteen million immigrants entered the country between 1865 and 1900. After 1900, they continued to arrive at the rate of one million a year, many to populate industrial cities and join the ranks of factory workers. In actual numbers the rural population was 36 million in 1880 and the urban population 14.1 million. These figures were 45.8 million and 30.2 million respectively in 1900. Factory output and distribution networks expanded to satisfy the demands of this burgeoning urban market for food, household goods, and numerous new appliances. Pioneering department stores like Macy's, Lord and Taylor, and Jordan Marsh, and the two mail-order houses, Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck dominated retail sales. National beer breweries came on the scene to slowly squeeze out local ones. Typewriters transformed office work. National grocery store chains, with the ability to buy and distribute in large quantities, offered cheaper food than neighborhood markets and transformed the ways people purchased food.

Feb. 26 – Strikes and Violence in the Gilded Age

Feb. 28 – From the Pemberton Mill Collapse to Haymarket Square

Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, chs. 3–9.

Before February 28 class visit:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA01/Davis/photography/slideshows/slideshows.html>

There, take a look at the Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine photo slide shows. Write a 200-word reaction to both men's photos to hand in. Print the two photos that you feel best depicts what Riis and Hine tell us about immigrant and working class life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century United States. We will work with your photos in class.

### **Week 6: Do People Have to Die for Things to Change?**

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes, a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.

- Preamble to the Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1908

March 4 – Strikes, Turmoil and Despair

March 6 – Do People Have to Die for Things to Change?

Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, chs. 13 – 16, Epilogue.

Before the March 6 class visit [www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire) Be ready to describe what happened on March 25, 1911. Under 'Fire' read the newspaper accounts *141 Men and Girls* and *New York Fire Kills 148*. Under 'Investigation, Trial and Reform' read *Blame Shifted* and *Stories of Survivors*. Check out the photos and illustrations section of the web site too. How did this tragedy influence the politics of reform?

Review questions for exam distributed.

### **Week 7: 'Days of Reckoning' Approach**

March 11 – Exam

March 13 - Can the Industrial System be Reformed: What Lawrence Tells Us?

Watson, *Bread & Roses*, chs 1-6.

### **SPRING BREAK WEEK!!! HAVE FUN – BUT BE SAFE!!!!**

### **Week 8: The Lawrence Strike and Beyond**

March 25 – 'Bread and Roses'

March 27 – Post-World War I Labor Stirrings

Watson, *Bread & Roses*, chs. 7-11 and Epilogue.

### **Week 9: Great Depression**

In Lowell I saw shabby men leaning against walls and lamp-posts and standing on street corners singly or in twos or threes; pathetic, silent, middle-aged men in torn, frayed overcoats or even without overcoats, broken shoes on their feet, slumped in postures of hopeless discontent, their faces sunken and their eyes shifty and bewildered.... (In Lawrence) I happened to arrive before daybreak on a Monday morning and, walking about, saw hundreds of shabby, silent, hollow-eyed men and women, native and foreign born, going toward the immense, dark mills. I discovered later that very few of them were going to work; most were seeking work. On Mondays they usually went to the mills to learn from the employment managers if any help would be needed during the week. Many of them had been making these Monday-morning pilgrimages for months, some of them for years, getting only a day's or two days' work now and then.

-Louis Adamic, *My America*, 1938

'If I was a worker, I'd join a union.' -President Franklin D. Roosevelt

April 1 – The Economy Collapses

April 3 – The Social Safety Net Gets Built

Work & Society, Spring 2008

Before class on April 3 visit this Dorothea Lange site and check out her photos of Depression-era people trying to make do. Print your favorite and bring it to class so that we can discuss what life was like during the 1930s for many people.

<http://www.masters-of-photography.com/L/lange/lange.html>

### **Week 10: Labor's Brief High Tide**

April 8 – Closing the Income Gap in the 1950s and 1960s

April 10 – What's Happening to Family Income Today?

Uchitelle, chs. 4-5.

Julia Isaacs, "Economic Mobility of Families Across Generations," The Brookings Institution, [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/11\\_generations\\_isaacs.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/11_generations_isaacs.aspx)

At the link click on the pdf file to read the paper. Write 250 words on the premise and conclusion of the report to hand in.

### **Week 11: The Global Economy Takes Shape**

April 15 - Where Did the Work Go and Why?

April 17 – Free Trade-Fair Trade?

Featherstone, *Students Against Sweatshops*, all.

Uchitelle, ch. 7.

### **Week 12: Reversal of Fortune**

Economic restructuring was catastrophic for industrial unions; the percentage of the unionized manufacturing labour declined from almost 50% in 1970 to approximately 18 percent in the early 1990s. In 1996 about three-quarters of all employed Americans worked in service industries, up from two-thirds in 1979. Today, General Electric generates more than half its revenues from financial and other services. General Motors, Ford, Boeing and General Electric collectively eliminated 208,500 jobs from 1990 and 1995. Income inequality has grown as well-paying jobs disappear. Adjusted for inflation, the median income of American employees in the mid 1990s was roughly five percent lower than it was in the late 1970s.

April 22 - Industrial Job Loss in New England and its Affects

April 24 - Undemocratic Springfield: A Finance Control Board in Charge

Juravich, ch. 3.

Uchitelle, ch. 6.

Farrant, 'Greater Springfield Deindustrialization' (handout).

### **Week 13: What's Left for Jobs?**

April 29 - Services, Services Everywhere, But Not a Living Wage!

May 1 - Presidential Candidates and the Economy

Uchitelle, ch. 8.

Juravich, chs. 2, 5, 6.

Select one of the presidential candidates, your choice here, and prepare a 250 word essay on how they are proposing to deal with the current national economic situation.

### **Week 14: Where Are the Good Jobs?**

The Great Depression two world wars, numerous smaller military conflicts, massive federal defense expenditures, the rise of a mass consumer society, have shaped the jobs many of you have held and will eventually hold, along with the global economy we live and work in. In the 1970s and 1980s a new phenomenon, deindustrialization, took place and many major industrial centers lost their entire stock of manufacturing jobs. In Massachusetts the economy was transformed as industrial communities like Worcester, Springfield, Lynn, Lawrence, and Lowell shed most of their major manufacturing jobs. Industrial waste and pollution, large, old factory buildings, and poor and unemployed workers were left behind as the golden age of industry ended and the 'Golden Arches' offered only low wage work for once well paid factory workers.

May 6 – The Harvard University Living Wage Campaign: What About the Merrimack Valley?

May 8 – What's Up with Upward Mobility?

Bernstein, "Waking Up From the American Dream," *BusinessWeek*, December 2003, (handout).

Juravich, ch. 8.

STEVEN GREENHOUSE, 'Tomato Pickers' Wages Fight Faces Obstacles' *The New York Times*, December 24, 2007, A10 (handout).

**Pass out final exam question May 6.**

### **Week 15: Last Call**

May 13 – Final Discussion: What Did We Learn?

Uchitelle, ch. 9.

**Final essay due by 3:00, Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>.**

***Have a great summer!!! GO RED SOX!!!!***