

Working for a Living in America

Spring 2010

Professor: Andrew B. Arnold
Course: HIS247:010 Work & Workers

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Availability: Unofficial Office Hours:
Official Office Hours:

Between 6:00am and 6:00pm.
TH 12:00-12:00, W 12:30-1:30

Course Description:

What does it mean to work for a living? The answer, it seems, ought to be simple: Work is doing what you are told. As an employee, your employer sets the rules and you work within them. It's the boss's prerogative to do so, and your rights are limited to accepting those rules, or leaving. This logic applies to other similar roles: as students, a sports team member, or as a child. Your options are to obey your teacher, your coach, or your parents, or to leave.

But the histories of work and power have never been so simple as this. Employees, students, athletes, children, and even entrepreneurs have historically challenged this logic. Work has a history. The workplace has never been so simple as workers doing as they are told. Even slaves battled to negotiate the terms of their servitude.

This course examines work by particular human beings – yourselves included – within particular historical conditions when the rights and duties of employees and employers were being invented in law and in custom. After 1900, industrial society, large corporations, unions and government interference into employment come to be a more or less accepted part of work. In other words, increasingly, we see workers being forced to accept institutional, legal limitations on their freedom, and to act within those limits. To what extent do these limitations define the workplace? To what extent has there been room for culturally-negotiated space at work?

Class Objectives:

Students will develop an understanding of the history of work in America, from colonial times to the present. They will learn by participating in class, completing assigned readings, writing short analytical papers to be submitted online, engaging in individual research, and completing a substantial research paper.

Attendance:

This is a discussion-based class. If you're not there, you cannot participate. Therefore, if you miss class for any reason, your grade in the class will be endangered. You can make up a few absences. It's up to you. Tell me how you're going to do it. Do it. Tell me you did it. I don't need to know *why* you are absent. Excuses are not necessary or helpful.

Areas of Assessment:

1. Participation in class:

Anything you do to add energy to the class, and to cause you or your classmates to learn more. To pass, you must consistently show up to class prepared and show leadership. Laying back and letting everyone else do the work is not an option. Learning does not work only via transmission of information from prof to student. Every pedagogical study confirms it: Human beings learn through a variety of means: reading and listening, writing about what they've read and heard, and articulating your views to others on paper and verbally. It's simple: If you're an activist, I assume you'll learn more and therefore your grade ought to be higher.

How to help your Participation Grade:

Sit up straight. Make eye contact. Nod your head when you get something.
Tutor someone in class, or get tutored. Form a study group.
Go to Writing Center. Report on your experience on Blackboard.

How to hurt your Participation Grade:

Come to class late.
Disrupt the class.
Fall asleep in class.
Fail to be prepared for class.

Preparation For Class:

This is a discussion-based course. If you are prepared for class, it means you have done the work at home and are ready to contribute to our conversation. You have answered the questions developed in class in your notebook or computer, and can answer them in class.

In-Class Work

We will often do workshops in class where I will ask you to write out your answers course questions, or simply to give your take on the readings. Or I will ask you what you found in your online research. There may be a few times when you are not fully prepared for class. If it happens more than a few times, you will not pass class participation.

2. Online Participation:

Consistently put answers to study guide questions on Blackboard. Reply to other students. Your posts should cite the reading. It should feel like a paper. 200+ words or so.

Take advantage of the online resources available on the library website. A reasonable person would take it upon themselves to investigate the authors and to check out relevant footnotes.

3. Exams: Descriptive

The problem of work: Work should be as simple as understanding how people have done as they were told. But it isn't. To work for or with someone is almost inevitably to create a set of shared understandings and contested areas that are developed over time. How so?

You will develop many answers to this question over the course of the semester. You will have at least three opportunities to submit a draft for review in the class. It must cite a substantial proportion of readings and issues developed in class.

4. Analytical Skills:

The exam and most of the class will focus on questions of what happened. This section

focuses on questions of *why*. Over the course of the semester, please consistently develop your answers in this area. We will set aside specific class periods and assignments for you to show your analytical abilities.

5. Effort

Post 7 examples over the course of the semester. Or more.

Course Objectives:

- To appreciate and to understand the world's complexity. This course focuses the lens of history on the history of employed people.
- History is as much a mode of inquiry as a set of information. Therefore, while students will master a set of facts and concepts, they will also actively investigate the past.

Assessment:

- Students will be assessed based on the quality of their engagement with the historical mode of inquiry and expression as well as their mastery of historical facts.
- The in-class quizzes, midterm exam, and final exam assess mastery of historical information and ability to write clear explanations of historical phenomena.
- The research paper, participation, and some in-class work assess the quality of engagement with historical sources such as assigned readings, and searches in online journals and newspapers from the Kutztown University library website.
- Through these activities students will engage in questions to which there are no firm answers. They will therefore be assessed based on the energy, activism, and quality of their engagement with the historical mode of inquiry.

Mastery Learning and Grades:

You may choose the grade you wish to receive in this course.

If you do "B" level work in all four areas of assessment, you may receive an "A" for the course.

If you fall below the "B" level in any one area, you may receive a "B" for the course.

If you fall below the "B" level in any two areas, you may receive a "C" for the course.

If you fall below the "B" level in any three areas, you may receive a "D" for the course.

If you fall below the "B" level in all four areas, you may receive an "F" for the course.

Learning Categories:

1) Participation in class, 2) Online writing and research, 3) Essay Exams, 4) Research Paper

Course Schedule:

	The culture of work.
January 19 T	Introduction
January 21 TH	A history of working for a living in America. (Respect?) Check online websites: www.aboutmyjob.com , www.myjobsucks.com , www.workrant.com Post on Blackboard Discussion Board: Stories of your own jobs 200 words or so. Print out readings and bring to class.
26 T	"First Readings.doc" on Blackboard "Course Documents" Work Culture
28 H	Search through library website: New York Times Historical and www.jstor.org . Find articles about work culture and different jobs. Post findings and analysis on Blackboard Discussion Board.
February 2-23	Slavery
	Search: www.jstor.org for James Henry Hammond. Articles only. No reviews. David Brion Davis, "Problem of Slavery" Johnson, "Soul by Soul" www.jstor.org searches for articles on different aspects of slavery, to be developed class discussion
February 25 – March 18	Inventing Industrialism
	Alexis deTocqueville, Adam Smith, Abraham Lincoln Longfellow, "Village Blacksmith" Thomas Dublin, Lowell Millworkers Peter Way, Canal Workers David Brody, "Time and Work in Early Industrialism" www.jstor.org searches for articles on different aspects of this issue, to be developed class discussion.
9, 11	Spring Break
March 23-April 8	Iron and Coal
	David Montgomery, Iron Workers ("Workingman's Brains, I, II, III" on ER) David Brody, Uses of Power Keith Dix, "Work Relations in the Coal Industry" David Brody, "Industrial Unionism: Coal" www.jstor.org searches for articles on different aspects of this issue, to be developed class discussion.
April 13-22	Steel
	Homestead Jack Metzgar, "Striking Steel" www.jstor.org searches for articles on different aspects of this issue, to be developed class discussion.
April 27-29	Work, Culture, and Loyalty Today
	Lichtenstein, "Walmart" Searches in current sources and websites.
May 3-7	Final Exams

