Introduction This course will provide advanced undergraduate students with an introduction to some of the key issues and debates in the history of American workers during the United States’ industrial era. The course will examine in depth five different but related workplaces: the needle trades in New York City’s Lower East Side, the Packinghouses of Chicago, the coal mines of West Virginia, the steel mills of Pittsburgh and Braddock, Pennsylvania, and the cotton textile mills of the New South. We will explore these places and the people who inhabited them through a variety of sources, including historical scholarship, literature, film, oral history, memoir, journalism, and other sources contemporary to the period.

Course Objectives The course is designed to achieve five major objectives. **Content:** Students will gain a familiarity with the major events, themes, personalities and issues in American labor history. **Chronology:** Students will understand the importance of change and continuity over time, including the importance of cause and effect in history and the significance of historical context. **Collection:** Students will know how to collect historical evidence using bibliographic materials available in printed, electronic and computerized formats. **Analysis:** Students will understand the different methods employed by historians in approaching evidence and how historical perspectives have changed over time. Central to the analysis of evidence is its critical evaluation, including: thesis, sources, conclusions, perspective, bias and reliability. **Synthesis:** As the culmination of the critical thinking process, students will be able to produce a final written and/or oral synthesis of evidence with a thesis and conclusion based on a responsible use of that evidence.

Reading List The following books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore. All books are required reading.


**Class Format** This is a reading intensive seminar. I place a premium on developing intense, analytical, lively (and fun) discussions. Hence, completion of each day’s reading assignment is essential to the class’s success. Each week you will be responsible for knowing and discussing on average about 200 pages. For readings drawn from outside the required books, I have indicated on the syllabus those articles and chapters that you can access through Blackboard or download through JSTOR. I have also included full bibliographic information for all the readings on the syllabus so that you can retrieve the journals off the shelf and make your own photocopies, or in cases in which the library does not own a copy, order the article through interlibrary loan. Some of the material is also on reserve.

One of the principle goals of this seminar is to provide students with the opportunity to develop and advance their skills as effective speakers and debaters. We will accomplish this through a class-discussion format. Therefore, completion of all assigned readings, full attendance, and participation in every discussion are essential. If I determine that students are not completing the assigned reading, I reserve the right to initiate pop quizzes or other daily writing assignments.

**Assignments** There are no exams in this class. Instead you will have four papers based on the required reading, a discussion-leading exercise, and a semester-long research paper.

**Unit Papers** There will be one paper assignment for each unit of the course. These papers will be four to five pages in length and ask you to develop a critical analysis or comparison of the works that we have read for the unit. Each student must complete the paper for units one and five. Students must complete two additional unit papers. Topics will be announced well in advance of the due date, giving you ample time to complete the assignments. All papers are due on the date indicated in the syllabus.

**Discussion Leading** Each student is required to lead one class discussion. Discussants are expected to focus classroom discussion by highlighting the themes of the day’s readings, raising analytical and comparative problems, and posing questions for debate. Students are expected to shape the conversation as they see fit, regularly challenging the assertions of the readings, of the instructor, and of each other. Discussion leaders should meet with me in advance to review the readings and to set an agenda for class. I have provided guidelines for conducting an effective class discussion on Blackboard.
**Research Paper** In lieu of a final exam, each student will complete a focused research paper of about 10–12 pages in length. The paper will take as its starting point a labor history Web site of your choice. You will then conduct an extended analysis of that topic through the primary sources available on that Web site. You are expected to inform your analysis with additional reading in other secondary and primary sources that you collect. I shall circulate a list of labor history Web sites by September 8. Your research must then adhere to the following schedule:

**September 22** Submit your topic for approval. You must identify the Web site that you will use, define a preliminary focus of your topic, and list four specific historical questions you intend to explore.

**October 13** First Status Report due, including a statement of the paper’s focus and an annotated bibliography of relevant additional readings and sources. Students will then meet with me during the week of October 18 to review the First Status Report.

**November 12** Second Status Report due, including a thesis statement and draft of the opening paragraph. Students will then meet with me during the week of November 15 to review the Second Status Report.

**December 6** Research Paper due at 4:00 in Cleveland 307

**Attendance Policy, Make-ups, and Late Work**

**Attendance** Attendance at every class is expected. Without attending, you cannot participate in class dialogue and hence earn a class participation grade. Class discussion generates ideas and insights that will be critical for writing successful unit papers. Unexcused absences are thus not tolerated. Failure to attend class means failure in course. This course also follows the College of Arts and Letters first-week attendance policy, which is described on the history department’s web page [http://www.jmu.edu/history/](http://www.jmu.edu/history/)

**Make-ups and Extensions** Papers are due in class on the day indicated in the syllabus. A late paper will be penalized ONE FULL GRADE for each calendar day that it is overdue without an approved extension. Extensions on papers and arrangements for make-up midterms will be granted only with my prior approval or in the event of a verifiable emergency. If you develop an extended illness during the semester that forces you to miss class for more than one week, please inform me as soon as possible. In such cases, we will develop a mutually agreeable and realistic make-up schedule.

**Evaluation** Your final grade will be broken down as follows

- Unit Paper One ..................................................................................................................................10 percent
- Unit Paper Two, Three, and Four (choose two @ 12.5 percent each)..................................................25 percent
- Unit Paper Five ..................................................................................................................................20 percent
- Research Paper ...................................................................................................................................25 percent
- Discussion Leading ..............................................................................................................................10 percent
- Class Participation .............................................................................................................................10 percent

Class participation will be evaluated on the following criteria:

**A-range:** You are always in class and show evidence of having completed the assignment and thought about it ahead of time. You listen well, and you regularly add thoughtful comments and questions to discussion.

**B-range:** You are almost always in class, and you participate in an informed manner.
C-range: You come to class regularly, but rarely contribute. Or you are active in discussions, but come to class only irregularly. Or you participate, but it is clear that you have not done the reading or thought much about it before class.

D-range: You attend irregularly, and you show signs of not having done or not having thought about the assignment before class.

F: You miss many classes, speak rarely when you are there, and you show no signs of having done the reading.

### Grading Scale

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<th>Letter Grade</th>
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For more information on the grading guidelines for this course, please consult the History Department web page [http://www.jmu.edu/history/](http://www.jmu.edu/history/)

### Withdrawals

A statement about the procedures for withdrawing from this course will be posted to Blackboard by the end of the first week of the semester.

### Plagiarism and the Honor Code

You are expected to adhere fully to the JMU Honor Code for all work performed in this class. The penalty for cheating on quizzes and midterms or turning in a plagiarized paper is F in course in addition to any other penalties that the university and the Honor Council may impose. You are responsible for knowing and understanding what constitutes a violation of the JMU Honor Code. If you have questions, visit the JMU Honor System web site at: [http://www.jmu.edu/honor/](http://www.jmu.edu/honor/). If you need further clarification as you are working on an assignment, please do not hesitate to consult with me.

All work that you submit for a grade in this class must contain the following pledge followed by your signature: “This work complies with the JMU Honor Code.”

### Statement on Academic Freedom

This class will be conducted under the aegis of the AAUP 1940 statement of Academic Freedom, the essence and spirit of which is affirmed in the current JMU Faculty Handbook. For more, visit the history department web page, [http://www.jmu.edu/history/](http://www.jmu.edu/history/)

****NOTE****

This syllabus is subject to change with notice. You are responsible for all announcements made either in class or posted on the Blackboard page for this course.

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Class Calendar

August 23  Introduction

Unit One

Immigrant Women and the Needle Trades
on the Lower East Side of Manhattan

August 25  Susan Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 1–49

August 27  Cohen, *Out of the Shadow*, 69–145

August 30  Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 90–166

September 1  Cohen, *Out of the Shadow*, 149–207
Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 50–89

September 3  Cohen, *Out of the Shadow*, 211–313

September 6  Film: *Hester Street*
Abraham Cahan, “A Sweatshop Romance” (BB)
Recommended: Abraham Cahan, *Yekl* (BB), the novella on which the film *Hester Street* is based

September 8  Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*, 167–206

Web Resources on the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire

Unit Two

Life and Labor in the Jungle:
Chicago and the Meatpacking Industry

September 13  Contemporary Perspectives on the Meatpacking Industry in *The Jungle* [Norton Critical Edition], 357–387

UNIT ONE PAPER DUE


**RESEARCH TOPIC PROPOSAL DUE**

September 27  Film: *The Killing Floor*  

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**Unite Three**  
**Coal Mining in Appalachia and the West Virginia Mine Wars**

September 29  Barbara Freese, “Rise and Fall of King Coal,” in *Coal: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 129–61 (BB)  

Corbin, “Class over Caste: Interracial Solidarity in the Company Town,” in *Life, Work, and Rebellion*, 61–86

October 4 Corbin, *West Virginia Mine Wars*, 13–66
**UNIT TWO PAPER DUE**

October 6 Film: *Matewan*
Corbin, *West Virginia Mine Wars*, 71–78

October 8 Denise Giardina, *Storming Heaven*, 1–115

Corbin, *West Virginia Mine Wars*, 79–93

October 13 Giardina, *Storming Heaven*, 235–93
Corbin, *West Virginia Mine Wars*, 95–141
**FIRST RESEARCH PAPER STATUS REPORT DUE**

October 15 Fall Semester Holiday—No Class

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**Unit Four**
**Race and Ethnicity in Steel**

**UNIT THREE PAPER DUE**

October 20 William Attaway, *Blood on the Forge*, 1–74

October 22 Attaway, *Blood on the Forge*, 74–189


October 27 Dickerson, *Out of the Crucible*, 85–100 (BB)
Mary Heaton Vorse, “Steel” (BB)
Vorse, “The Great Steel Strike” (BB)

Thomas Bell, *Out of this Furnace*, Part One

November 1 Bell, *Out of this Furnace*, Part Two
November 3  Bell, *Out of this Furnace*, Part Three

November 5  Bell, *Out of this Furnace*, Part Four

**Unite Five**

*Cotton Textiles in the South*


**UNIT FOUR PAPER DUE**

November 10  Hall, *Like a Family*, 44–113

November 12  Hall, *Like a Family*, 114–80

**SECOND RESEARCH PAPER STATUS REPORT DUE**

November 15  Grace Lumpkin, *To Make My Bread* (pages TBA)

November 17  Lumpkin, *To Make My Bread* (pages TBA)

November 19  Hall, *Like a Family*, 183–236

November 22  Lumpkin, *To Make My Bread* (pages TBA)
Mary Heaton Vorse, “Gastonia” (BB)

November 29  Hall, *Like a Family*, 289–363

December 1  Film: *Uprising of ’34*
Mary Heaton Vorse, “Textile Trouble” (BB)

December 3  Conclusion

**UNIT FIVE PAPER DUE**

December 6  No Final Exam. Research Paper Due at 4:00 PM