

HIST 152: US History Since 1877

Spring 2026- Online Asynchronous

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Office Hours: By appointment on Zoom

Course Description: This course examines the United States from 1877 to the present through the lens of labor and social transformation of the United States. We will explore how the shift from agrarian to industrial to post-industrial capitalism fundamentally reshaped American society, work, and everyday life. Central questions include: How did different groups of people experience and respond to major transformation? How did the relationship between labor and capital evolve? What role did the state play in mediating changes and conflicts? How did race, gender, immigration status, and geography shape peoples' experiences?

Rather than a traditional political narrative, this course emphasizes the social and economic forces that structured American life: the rise of industrial capitalism in the Gilded Age, the mass production economy of the early 20th century, the New Deal's labor compact and social promises, postwar deindustrialization, and the emergence of neoliberalism. We will pay particular attention to how ordinary people—workers, farmers, immigrants, migrants—navigated, contested, and shaped these transformations.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Trace the political and social trajectory of people in the United States—their articulations and aspirations, the conditions and experiences of their lives, and how they strove to shape the society we live in today
- Analyze the major transformations in American society from 1877 to present
- Understand the relationship between labor movements and broader social movements
- Critically assess primary sources documenting everyday experiences of the people of US

Required Texts

- **Michael McGerr, Camilla Townsend, et al.**, *Of the People: A History of the United States, Volume II: Since 1865 with Sources, 5th Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2021) : primary textbook
Ebook purchase (\$33.29) from <https://global.oup.com/ushe/product/of-the-people-9780197586150?cc=us&lang=en&ebook=STUDENT26&period=6M>
- **Melvyn Dubofsky, Joseph McCartin**, *Labor in America: A History, 10th Edition* (Wiley Blackwell, 2025) : secondary survey text
Ebook purchase from <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Labor+in+America%3A+A+History%2C+10th+Edition-p-9781394208265>

Recommended/Additional Readings:

- **Who Built America?**—Open educational resource
In case it is hard to find the secondary survey text by Melvyn Dubofsky, this website and the open resource textbook is an excellent substitute!
- **Eileen Boris, Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers, 2nd Edition*** (Cengage, 2003): primary source reader
- **James R. Green, *The World of the Worker: Labor in Twentieth Century America*** (University of Illinois Press, 1998).

Course Requirements

This course includes ten primary source assignments, from which **you must complete and submit five written responses of your choosing**, in addition to a final essay.

Weekly Assignments (75% of final grade) You are required to submit **any five of the ten weekly assignments**. Each assignment is worth 15 points, for a total of 75 points toward your final grade.

Final Essay (25% of final grade) The final essay is worth 25 points and must be submitted by the specified due date.

Expectations All assignment responses should incorporate content from the uploaded lectures, referenced materials, and assigned course books to provide appropriate context and historical analysis.

Submission Deadlines Given the asynchronous nature of this online course, you may submit your five weekly assignments at any time before the April 21st deadline on Brightspace without penalty. However, the final essay must be submitted on its designated due date.

Grading Scale:

A+ = 96.5 – 100%

A = 92.5 – 96.5%

A- = 89.5 – 92.5%

B+ = 86.5 – 89.5%

B = 82.5 - 86.5%

B- = 79.5 – 82.5%

C+ = 76.5 – 79.5%

C = 72.5 - 76.5%

C- = 69.5 – 72.5%

D+ = 66.5 – 69.5%

D = 62.5 - 66.5%

D- = 59.5 – 62.5

Please note that FERPA (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) prohibits me from discussing students' grades via email. You are welcome to reach me for non-grade related inquiries at my email, sduttach@purdue.edu.

This syllabus is subject to change as required. All updates to assignments will accompany a corresponding notification on Brightspace.

Syllabus and Lecture Timeline:

MODULE 1: Rise of Industrial Capitalism (1865-1914)

Week 1.1: Course Introduction and Thematic Outline

Week 1.2: The Compromise of 1877/The Wormley Agreement and The Great Railroad Strike of 1877

TBA Assignment: Primary Source Analysis

Week 2.1: Industrializing Work- From craftsmanship to mass production

TBA Assignment: Primary Source Analysis

Week 2.2: Big Business vs Labor Unions

TBA Assignment: Primary Source Analysis

Week 3.1: The Gilded Era State, Corporations and the “labor problem”

TBA Assignment: Primary Source Analysis

Week 3.2: Progressivism and the Struggle for Civil Liberties

TBA Assignment: Primary Source Analysis

MODULE 2: Checks in the Monopoly of Capital (1914-1942)

Week 4.1: WWI and the Great Migration

TBA Assignment: Primary Source Analysis

Week 4.2: Wilsonian democracy

Week 5.1: Consumer America and the Immigrant Act of 1924

TBA Assignment: Primary Source Analysis

Week 5.2: The Great Depression and the New Deal

TBA Assignment: Primary Source Analysis

MODULE 3: A New World Order Impacts Labor Futures (the 1940s)

Week 6.1: WWII and Concessions by Organized Labor

Week 6.2: Industrial Strikes and the GI Bill of Rights in Lieu of a “New Bill of Rights”

Week 7.1: Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 and the AFL-CIO merger

TBA Assignment: Primary Source Analysis

MODULE 4: New Solidarities and Differences (1950-1980)

Week 7.2: Post-war Liberalism and Civil Rights

TBA Assignment: Primary Source Analysis

Week 8.1: A Country Newly Divided: The New Right and the New Left in the 1960s

Week 8.2: Recession Politics to the Advent of Neoliberalism

TBA Assignment: Final Essay

University Policies

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism—reproducing another’s words or ideas without proper attribution—and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses. You are expected to produce your own work and cite all sources accurately. Any instances of cheating, plagiarism, or academic dishonesty will result in severe consequences, likely including a failing grade for the course and referral to the Dean of Students Office. Familiarize yourself with Purdue’s academic integrity policies at: <https://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academic-integrity/undergraduate.html>

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USE POLICY

You may not submit AI-generated text as your own work or use AI to complete assignments. Submitting AI-generated work as your own constitutes plagiarism and will be subject to the consequences outlined in the Academic Integrity section.

GRIEF ABSENCE POLICY

Purdue recognizes that bereavement is difficult for students. Under the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS), you will be excused from classes for funeral leave following the death of a family member and given the opportunity to complete any missed assignments or assessments.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Purdue is committed to providing equal access to all students. If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodation, please schedule an appointment with me within the first three weeks of the semester. You must also contact the Disability Resource Center (Young Hall 830, 765-494-1247, drc@purdue.edu) to request academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, or services.

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

Purdue is committed to fostering a diverse community that values the dignity of every person. The University prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status. All programs, services, and activities are conducted in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws.

VIOLENT BEHAVIOR POLICY

Purdue is committed to maintaining a safe campus environment. Violent behavior interferes with educational and career goals and is therefore prohibited in all university facilities and activities.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Purdue University is committed to supporting the mental health and well-being of all students. If you are feeling overwhelmed, depressed, or in need of mental health support, help is available. Contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 765-494-6995. CAPS provides services during regular hours, after hours, on weekends, and on holidays. You may also visit CAPS offices in West Lafayette or Indianapolis. Please reach out if you or someone you know needs support.