Description
How have workers created social and political change in the United States? What counts as work? What can workers do today to maintain and build power? This course explores these three thematic questions through an exploration of the history of workers and their organizations in American history after emancipation. We will explore the history and meaning of class and work and the relationship of work to the state through reading, discussion, and film. We will pay special attention to the ways in which these understandings of class are shaped by gender. Readings include David von Drehle, Bethany Moreton, John dos Passos, and Beverly Gage.

Note that this description has changed slightly from the one in the course catalogue.

Learning goals
The primary purpose of this course is to teach you how to write and think like college students. More specifically, the goals of this course are:

- To familiarize students with ideas about how people have worked, how they have imagined freedom, and how they have changed society in the United States.
- To think especially about how gender has shaped, and been shaped by, work.
- To sharpen students’ analytic and critical thinking skills
- To practice students’ academic writing

Required texts
In general, books in which we will be reading at least 100 pages are listed below, are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore, and are on reserve at Bobst. Books in which we will be reading less than 100 pages will be scanned and available on NYU Classes. If you are concerned about spending too much on books, I encourage you to (a) shop around for used books, and (b) consider relying on the library for books of which we are reading only excerpts.

Assignments and grading

Writing Assignment 1: How have workers made social and political change? – 20%
Using the readings in the class so far (that is, up to October 11), write a five-page essay about how workers in the United States have made social and political change. Make sure you talk about the themes we've discussed in class. Make your own argument, backed up by facts and arguments from the readings. You may, but need not, refer to readings from outside of class. Make sure cite your sources: that is, say where you know things from, and where you got your ideas.
- A first draft is due to the classmates in your workshopping group on Sunday, October 9.
- You may optionally submit a second draft to me (on paper) in class by Tuesday, October 18. If you chose to submit a draft, you must have first made changes based on the comments you got from your classmates.
- A final version is due (on paper) in class on Tuesday, October 25.

Writing Assignment 2: What counts as work, and why does it matter? – 20%
Using the readings in the class so far (that is, up to November 10), write a five-page essay about what counts and has counted as “work” and “skilled work,” and why that matters. Make sure you talk about the themes we’ve discussed in class. Make your own argument, backed up by facts and arguments from the readings. You may, but need not, refer to readings from outside of class. Make sure cite your sources: that is, say where you know things from, and where you got your ideas.
- A first draft is due to the classmates in your workshopping group on Tuesday, November 8.
- You may optionally submit a second draft to me (on paper) in class by Tuesday, November 15. If you chose to submit a draft, you must have first made changes based on the comments you got from your classmates.
- A final version is due (on paper) in class on Tuesday, November 22.

Writing Assignment 3: What can we learn from 1984-86? – 25%
The Yale strike in On Strike for Respect and the Hormel strike in “American Dream” both happened at about the same time, and both these works contain arguments by labor intellectuals about what the labor movement should do in the face of Reagan and what we now call the neoliberal assault on labor. Write an argumentative essay
answering the question, “What can we learn from the Yale and Hormel strikes, and the works coming out of them, after 30 years?” You can choose to answer that question in one of a variety of ways, including (but not limited to) focusing on the labor market, on feminism and the role of women in unions and the workforce, on the status of the labor movement, or on the role of intellectuals in working-class politics. Most importantly, you will make an argument and defend it with evidence. Make reference not only to On Strike for Respect and “American Dream” but also the other books we’ve read; you will also need to do some outside research for this paper. Your paper should be about 1500 words and include footnotes to show me your sources.

- A first draft is due to the classmates in your workshopping group on Tuesday, December 13.
- A final version is due to me by email on Monday, December 19.

Workshopping your classmates’ papers – 9%
Each paper you write will be workshopped with other students. Then, when you turn in your final drafts, you’ll also give a grade to the students who helped you with your paper. How helpful were their comments? Your work helping your classmates will be worth 3% for each paper, for a total of 9%.

Reading responses – 10%
Each day for which you have a reading assignment, you will also bring to class a short (approximately 250 words, or one page) reading response. This isn’t a paper, and it won’t be graded as a paper. It’s a way to make you think about the reading before you come to class, to get your intellectual juices flowing, and to practice writing. In each reading response, you should think about the argument of what you have just read and assess its success. These papers will be graded check-plus (10/10), check (9/10), or check-minus (8/10). This means that the only way you can get less than an 8 out of the 10 possible points in this section is by failing to turn in your reading responses.

Class participation and discussion – 16%
The purpose of class participation is not only to show that you have done the reading assigned, but also to help yourself and your classmates better understand the readings and the issues discussed in them. In addition, class participation provides practice for the skill of engaging in honest, respectful, and thoughtful intellectual discussion. The point of discussion is quality, not quantity; you don’t get points each time you open your mouth, and the person who talks once but says something brilliant that moves the discussion forward is more appreciated than the person who talks every five minutes but never says anything useful. That said, you can’t participate well if you never participate, so you can’t be silent; if I don’t know the sound of your voice by the end of the term, you’re unlikely to get a good class participation grade. Likewise, you can’t participate if you’re not in class, so please prioritize attendance.
Course schedule
Each day below is listed with readings and assignments. In each class session, we will talk about the readings listed for that day, which means it is essential that you have completed that day’s reading before class. On days marked “Workshopping” your reading assignment is the papers by your classmates for which you are responsible. On days with no reading listed, we will continue the discussion of the reading of the previous session.

N.B. There will be two evening film showings for this class, of “Salt of the Earth” and “American Dream.” I hope you’ll be able to make these showings (which are not yet scheduled but which will be announced), but if you are not able to, you are still responsible for seeing the films on your own time.

Introduction – Thinking about work, class, and freedom
Tues., Sept. 6 – No reading

Thurs., Sept. 8 – Different ideas about work:
• Genesis 1-4 (Creation, Eden, and Cain and Abel) on work
• The Industrial Workers of the World’s Manifesto (1905) and Preamble to the Constitution (1908)
• “Solidarity Forever”

Tues., Sept. 13 – Emancipation

Unit 1: Workers, Power and the State

Thurs., Sept. 15 – “Legislation”

Tues., Sept. 20 – Violence
• Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1-122. If you have time and interest, feel free to read or at least skim the remainder of the book.

Thurs., Sept 22 –

Tues., Sept. 27 – Who has access to what sort of politics?
* Unless it’s raining, we’ll meet at the corner of Washington Place and Greene Street.

Thurs., Sept 29 –

Tues., Oct. 4 – State and Labor
* This is the second day of Rosh Hashanah. If your religious observance requires you to miss class, please let me know ahead of time.

Thurs., Oct. 6 – The 1930s

Tues., Oct. 11 – Workshopping
** Email your draft paper to your group by Sunday, October 9. You and your group can decide the time by which you need to receive each other’s papers in order to have read and commented on them by class on Tuesday. **
[N.B. Office hours will be cancelled on Wednesday, Oct. 12 for Yom Kippur.]

Thurs., Oct 13 – Pausing for a novel

Tues., Oct 18 –
*** Optional second draft due to me if you want comments. ***

**Unit 2: Gender, Skill, and Work**

Thurs, Oct. 20 – Salt of the Earth

Tues. Oct. 25 – Work and Gender in the 19th Century
*** First paper due in class. ***

Thurs. Oct. 27 – Care work, paid and unpaid

Tues. Nov. 1 –

Thurs. Nov. 3 –

Tues., Nov 8 – No class – Election Day.
I encourage you to volunteer at the polls or for the candidate of your choice.
Email your draft paper to your group by Tuesday, November 8. You and your group can decide the time by which you need to receive each other’s papers in order to have read and commented on them by class on Tuesday.

Thurs., Nov. 10 – Workshopping

**Unit 3: The Labor Movement under Neoliberalism**

Tues., Nov. 15 – What happened to the labor movement?

***Optional second draft of second paper due to me if you want comments.***

Thurs., Nov. 17 –

Tues., Nov. 22 – Neoliberalism

***Second paper due in class.***

[N.B. Office hours cancelled Nov. 23 for Thanksgiving.]

Thurs., Nov. 24 – No class – Thanksgiving Day

Tues., Nov. 29 –

Thurs., Dec. 1 – American Dream

Tues., Dec. 6 – Whither the Labor Movement?
Thursday, Dec 8 –

[N.B. no class on Tues., Dec. 13, because you’ll be going to Monday classes that day.]

Thursday, Dec. 15 – Workshopping

** Email your draft paper to your group by Tuesday, December 13. You and your group can decide the time by which you need to receive each other's papers in order to have read and commented on them by class on Thursday. **

Course policies

Attendance. As described elsewhere in this syllabus, participation in class discussion is a key thing we do in this class. You can't participate if you're not in class. Therefore, attendance is required. Absences will be factored into your participation grade. It is always better to come than not to come, if you can. If an absence is unavoidable, please email me ahead of time; depending on the circumstances, I will excuse your absence.

Electronic devices. Electronic devices can sometimes help and sometimes hinder active participation. They can be resources for looking things up; they might have your text on them; and they can be essential to students with disabilities. But they can also be distracting to you and to your classmates (and your professor!). Texting, IMing, or otherwise playing on your devices shows a lack of respect for the others in the room. (So too, for that matter, do things that do not require electronics, like reading the newspaper or sitting at the table reading a novel.) While you are welcome to have your computer or other device for class related work while in class, please refrain from checking your email, IMing, texting, playing games, tweeting, or otherwise using your screens for non-class purposes. The general rule is, Don't be rude.

Academic integrity. As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the university. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (http://gallatin.nyu.edu/about/bulletin/undergrad/policies/integrity.html).

Beyond the above boilerplate warning, the best rule is: When in doubt, cite. This admonition is not just about following the rules. To be convincing, arguments must be based in fact, and in order to assess facts the reader must know from whence
they came. Academic dishonesty also robs you of the education you’re here for; if you don’t do the work you’re supposed to do, you don’t get the educational experiences you’re supposed to get. If you have questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, ask.

**Deadlines and extensions.** Written work must be turned in on time. Reading responses will not be accepted late under any circumstances; all other work that is turned in late will be marked down a third of a grade per day; that is, a paper turned in a day late that would otherwise have gotten an A- will get a B+. If a legitimate delay is unavoidable, you can ask for an extension, but you must ask for one no less than 24 hours before the deadline.

**Office hours and help.** I encourage you to come to my office and chat about labor history, the class, or about anything else. No appointment is necessary during office hours. If you want to meet outside my office hours, feel free to email me for an appointment and we’ll make something work. You’re also welcome to email me about anything else at jacob.remes@nyu.edu (but please don’t expect a fast response on weekends). Always, the rule is, if you don’t understand something, or if you’re having trouble, ask for help, whether in class, by email, or in office hours.

**Academic assistance.** This is a first-year course, so everybody in this class is reading, writing, thinking at the college level for the first time. It’s hard! If it weren’t you wouldn’t need to take this special first year course on writing. Teaching writing is my job. But I’m not the only one you can turn to for help. I strongly encourage you to make use of the Gallatin Writing Center at every stage of your writing, from conceiving of your paper to your final revisions. See http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/undergraduate/writing/writingcenterappointments.html for more details, or email Syma Mohammed at sm5845@nyu.edu. The general rule, whether for reading or writing, is, *If you're having trouble, ask for help.* That’s what I’m here for.

**Disabilities.** New York University is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. It is the University’s policy that no qualified student with a disability be excluded from participating in any University program or activity, denied the benefits of any University program or activity, or otherwise subjected to discrimination with regard to any University program or activity. If you have a disability and need accommodation, the first step is to talk to the Moses Center for Students for Disabilities. You can contact them at 212-998-4980 or email mosescsd@nyu.edu; see http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities.html for more information. Before or after you speak with the Moses Center, I am happy to talk to you about accommodating you.