

History 608/CRN: 34985
Race and Labor in the U.S.
Spring 2003; Tuesday, 3:00-5:50pm
McKenzie 373

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Office Hours: Thursday, 12:30pm-
3:30pm

Matt Garcia



--“Those of us committed to writing working-class history must look way, way below, to the places where the noble and heroic tradition of labor militancy is not as evident.”

Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels*

Description

This class explores how race and race relationships have been articulated through labor struggle and the formation of the U.S. working-class. Our central focus will be on working women and men of color, or as Robin D. G. Kelley likes to say, labor history from “way, way below.” Kelley’s characterization of, and approach to this history signals the invisibility of race and people of color in traditional labor history and the complicated relationship of non-white laborers to mainstream labor organizations and movements. Readings, discussions, and assignments will reveal how race and racialization has been (and continues to be) a pivotal force in the construction and division of the U.S. working-class throughout the nation’s history. Some readings explore the construction of “white” labor subjectivities as their primary focus, and most readings examine the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, and class.

The class is organized by theme, not by chronology, though we will be reading books about the nineteenth century first, followed by several books that explore race and labor in the 20th Century. The class is restricted to graduate students. Specific requirements are listed below, though you are welcome and encouraged to come see me during my office hours for more details.

Requirements

Everyone is responsible for reading the primary book (📖) each week. All primary books can be purchased at the University of Oregon Bookstore.

There will be four components to your grade: Discussion, book introduction, book précis, and the historiographical essay. Each is described below:

Discussion 20%

I expect students to arrive on time and ready to discuss the primary book for the week. This is admittedly a subjective grade, but I will let you know if I think your participation needs improvement mid-way through the term.

Book Introduction 20%

You will be responsible for introducing one primary book for one week of the term. In the event that we have more than one student per book, we will double-up in some weeks. In your presentation you will be responsible for three things: 1) present the main thesis of the primary book; 2) discuss how it relates to other books in the field; 3) present at least three questions that challenge the class to think critically about the relationship between race and labor as it is articulated in the primary book (this can include a criticism of the author's approach and/or interpretation). In discussing how the book relates to the field, I have provided an additional book or books (📖) for you to look at. I strongly recommend that you, as the presenter, read some or all of these books, and find book reviews for the primary and additional book. Book introductions begin April 15 and end May 20. They will be assigned on April 8th.

Book Précis 20%

You are responsible for writing a book précis (or book review) for **at least five** primary books. The précis **must** be single spaced, and limited to one page. Your precise will consist of three paragraphs. In the first paragraph you will describe the thesis of the book. In the second paragraph you will describe the methodology used by the author. In the third (and longest) paragraph, you will state your informed opinion of the book, comparing it to the field and critically evaluating the author's interpretation and use of sources. This exercise should be done for all books, but I am requiring that you hand in only five précis. This is a good habit to get into, especially for history graduate students who can use these précis later in preparation for preliminary exams.

Historiographical Essay 40%

You are responsible for writing an essay discussing at least five books within a particular field of labor history (e.g. Chicana/o Labor History). The essay must discuss the books comparatively, and argue how they individually and collectively define and/or revise their field of study. You may choose no more than two books from the list of primary books in this syllabus to discuss in your essay. Your essay should be 18 to 20 pages long, double-spaced. It is due on or before 1pm, Tuesday, June 10th in my box in Ethnic Studies, 201 McKenzie Hall.

Schedule

All readings must be finished on the date they appear.

April 1 Working-Class History from Way, Way Below

📖 Introduction, Kelley, Robin D. G. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York: The Free Press, 1994.

April 8 Why the U.S. Working Class Is Different

📖 Davis, Mike. *Prisoners of the American Dream*. London: Verso, 1986.

April 15 Working-Class & Racial Formation in the White Republic

📖 Roediger, David R. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. London: Verso, 1991.

📖 Arnesen, Eric. "Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (2001): 3-32.

📖 Saxton, Alexander. *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Verso, 1990.

April 22 Post-bellum Labor in the U.S. South

📖 Hunter, Tera W. *To 'joy my freedom: southern Black women's lives and labors after the Civil War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

📖 Foner, Eric. *A Short History of Reconstruction, 1863-1877*. New York: Perennial Library, 1990.

April 29 Race and Labor in the Borderlands

📖 Foley, Neil. *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

📖 Zamora, Emilio. *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993.

📖 Peck, Gunther. *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

May 5 Race and Labor on the Pacific Rim

📖 Fujita-Rony, Dorothy B. *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

📖 Takaki, Ronald T. *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawai'i, 1835-1920*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983.

May 13 World War II

📖 Lipsitz, George. *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s*. 359 vols. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994.

📖 Daniel, Cletus. *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness: The FEPC in the Southwest, 1941-1945*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.

📖 González, Gilbert. *Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Worker Villages in a Southern California County, 1900-1950*. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1994.

May 20 Race, Gender, and Labor

📖 Green, Venus. *Race on the Line: Gender, Labor, and Technology in the Bell System, 1880-1980*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.

📖 Ruiz, Vicki. *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987.

May 27 Native American Wage Labor

📖 "Native American Labor: Retrieving History, Rethinking Theory," in Littlefield, Alice, and Martha C. Knack, ed. *Native Americans and Wage Labor: Ethnohistorical Perspectives*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996.

📖 Campbell, Robert B. "Newlands, Old Lands: Native American Labor, Agrarian Ideology, and the Progressive-Era State in the Making of the Newlands Reclamation Project, 1902-1926." *Pacific Historical Review* 71, no. 2 (2002): 203-238.

📖 O'Neill, Colleen. "The "Making" of the Navajo Worker: Navajo Households, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Off-Reservation Wage Work, 1948-1960." *New Mexico Historical Review* 74, no. 4 (1999): 375-405.

June 3 A Century of Struggle

 Boggs, Grace Lee. *Living for Change: An Autobiography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

June 10 Historiographical Essay Due 1pm, my box, 201 McKenzie Hall