

The Clash of Capital and Class in America

HIST 297 / CIVT 204

Fall 2011

Tuesday/Thursday, 1:00-2:20, Center for Western Studies Building 108

PROFESSORS: Matthew Pehl, Department of History and *Robert E. Wright, Nef Family Chair of Political Economy*

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OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday, 10-12 and Thursday, 9-12; and *Tuesdays and Thursdays 10 to 11 a.m. or by appointment* (check Wright's online calendar at <http://faculty.augie.edu/~rwright/> first).

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COURSE WEBSITE: Moodle

Course Description:

In this discussion seminar, students will work together with the professors via a wiki to explore the relative degrees of freedom enjoyed by capitalists and workers throughout American history. Particular emphasis will be placed on the Lawrence, Massachusetts textile strike and dynamite plot of 1912, a key moment in the history of American capitalism that pitted a capitalist seemingly straight out of an Horatio Alger novel, the "Wool King" William Madison Wood, against the nation's most radical labor union, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies). **Due to labor unrest at Lawrence and elsewhere, employers increasingly came to see their workers as "human capital" rather than mere "hired hands" and governments, especially in the Northeast, began to show more support for workers and their unions. Globally, similar improvements in working conditions are palpable but by no means universal.**

Course Objectives:

The course discussions and the wiki project will provide tentative answers to the following questions:

Is it even possible to act freely? Specifically, was Wood truly free to run his "Wool Trust" as he saw fit or was he constrained by forces outside of his control (competition, regulations, his own immigrant background)? Were workers truly free to work for Wood or not, or were they also constrained by outside forces (availability of other jobs or opportunities to qualify for other types of employment).

To what degree is freedom a universal ideal? How have perspectives on freedom varied over time, academic discipline (especially economics and history), and culture?

Specifically, which side, capital or labor, possessed more freedom in 1912? According to whom? What about in 1812 or 2011? **What about in other nations, rich, middling, or poor?**

Do those who possess more freedom have any duties towards those who have less freedom? Specifically, could Wood or the Wobblies' leadership have behaved differently and maintained control of his or their enterprises? If so, should they have behaved differently? Under what moral or religious code? Would the answers to those questions be different today? **In another culture (and if so, which and why)?**

How does one balance individual freedom against social responsibility? Specifically, what was Wood's social responsibility? Was it to his workers, his customers, his shareholders, or all three? What was the Wobblies' social responsibility? Was it to their members, the purchasers of the goods they produced, the employers that paid their members' wages (which were ostensibly at least as good as those available elsewhere), or all three?

Is freedom the highest good or should freedom be sacrificed for other goods like security or profit? Specifically, should Wood's or the Wobblies' social responsibilities trump the exercise and enjoyment of their own freedom, however expansive or limited that may have been? Or should they have ceded some freedom under some circumstances? If so, which circumstances?

Is there a divergence or even a conflict between economic categories of freedom and political categories of freedom? Did the essential elements of 19th century capitalism—such as private property, contract law, limited liability, and individual self-interest—compliment or challenge such essential elements of American democracy as representative rule, consent of the governed, and the “public interest”? Has this situation changed? **Is the situation different in other nations at different stages of socioeconomic development?**

Required Reading List:

Argersiner, Jo Ann E., *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009).

Rauchway, Eric. *Murdering McKinley: The Making of Theodore Roosevelt's America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2004).

Watson, Bruce. *Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants, and the Struggle for the American Dream* (New York: Viking, 2005).

Additional readings have been posted on Moodle. Others may be added as the semester progresses.

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1: Course Overview

Week 2: Labor History: late 18th century – early 19th century

Tuesday: Textiles and the Female Domestic Economy

Moodle Reading: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun*, pp. 175-207

Thursday: Textiles and the Female Industrial Economy

Moodle Reading: “The Onset of Industry: The Lowell Venture,” in *The Way We Live*, pp. 133-149

Week 3: Free Labor, Slave Labor

Tuesday: Labor Types

Moodle Reading: David Galenson, “The Rise and Fall of Indentured Servitude.”

Thursday: Modeling Labor Choice

Moodle Reading: Robert E. Wright, *Fubarnomics*, chapter 4.

Week 4: The Question of Freedom in the Corporation Nation

Tuesday: “Liberty of Contract” in the Gilded Age

Moodle Reading: Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract*, pp. 60-97

Thursday: Rise of the Corporation Nation

Moodle Reading: Robert E. Wright, “Rise of the Corporation Nation,” chapters 1, 4, and 5.

Week 5: Does Economic Concentration Imperil Freedom?

Tuesday: Trusts, Capital, and the Question of Freedom

Moodle Reading: Hal Bridges, “The Robber Baron Concept in American History.”

Thursday: “Wage Slavery,” “Labor Trusts,” and the Question of Freedom

Moodle Reading: E. Springs Steele, “Henry George on Chattel and Wage Slavery.”

Week 6: Late 19th century – early 20th Century: Tumultuous Times

Tuesday: Radical visions of Freedom

Reading: Rauchway, “Murdering McKinley,” part one

Thursday: The Question of Violence and Industrial Freedom

Reading: “Murdering McKinley,” part two

Week 7: The “Wool King” of Lawrence

Tuesday: Wood Arises Horatio Alger-like

Moodle Reading: Edward Roddy, *Mills, Mansions and Mergers*, chapter 1; Bernard Sarachek, “American Entrepreneurs and the Horatio Alger Myth.”

Thursday: Wood Declines Roman Empire-like
 Reading (on reserve in library): Edward Roddy, *Mills, Mansions and Mergers*,
 rest of the chapters.

Week 8: Labor Reform in the Progressive Era

Tuesday: The “New Immigrant” Working Class

Reading: Jo Ann Argersinger, *The Triangle Fire: A Brief History with Documents*,
 part one

Thursday: Women, Reformers, and the State

Reading: *Triangle Fire*, part two

Week 9: The Lawrence Strike

Reading: Watson, *Bread and Roses*, chapters 1 through 4

Week 10: The Dynamite Plot

Reading: Watson, *Bread and Roses*, chapters 5 through 12

Week 11: In the Wake of Lawrence: The Pursuit of “Industrial Democracy”

Tuesday: “Industrial Democracy” at the End of the Progressive Era

Moodle Reading: Joseph McCartin, “‘An American Feeling’: Workers, Managers,
 and the Struggle over Industrial Democracy in the World War I Era”

Thursday: The Sacco-Vanzetti Case and the Decline of Immigrant Radicalism

Week 12: The Shifting Ground of Textile Production

Tuesday: The “Southernization” of the Textile Industry

Moodle Reading: Pam Edwards, “Southern Industrialization.”

Thursday: Industrial Democracy and the New Deal....A Goal Attained, or a Dream
 Denied?

Moodle Reading: Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, pp. 54-97

Week 13:

Tuesday: Fashion, Culture, and Consumer Freedom

Thursday: The “Globalization” of the Textile Industry

Moodle Reading: Cynthia Anderson et al, “Globalization and Uncertainty.”

Week 14: Freedom Questioned

Tuesday: American Business in the Early 21st Century

Thursday: American Labor in the Early 21st Century

The Wiki Writing Project

Students will collaborate on the creation and initial maintenance of three Wikipedia entries:

U.S. Industrial History to 1912

The Lawrence Strike of 1912

U.S. Industrial History Since 1912

As defined in this course, industrial history combines the sources, methodologies, and insights of both business and labor history into a single, cohesive view of the development and devolution of manufacturing enterprises from the formation of the Republic to the present.

The goal of the assignment is to produce three entries that Wikipedia will accept in its online encyclopedia for subsequent viewing and editing by the global English-speaking community. We chose Wikipedia as a publication outlet because it is free as in gratis, free as in free from formal barriers to entry, and free as in not controlled by a government or other hierarchical authority.

To write each entry, students should use the primary and secondary sources read and discussed in class and also identify, procure, analyze, and incorporate into the entries additional primary and secondary source material. Every sentence should contain at least one attribution that includes the source's author, title, publisher, date and place of publication, and page numbers or full URL, as appropriate.

Students should contribute to each of the three entries by:

- proposing or modifying a thesis;
- creating or modifying an outline of section headings or main topics;
- providing evidence or details in support of the thesis and/or outline;
- arranging headings, paragraphs, and sentences in logical or chronological order;
- editing text for style, grammar, and other mechanics;
- creating links to related Wikipedia content;
- deleting irrelevant or erroneous sections, interpretations, or citations.

At a bare minimum, each student must contribute the equivalent of 5 pages of original text, or 1,750 words, to each entry. The instructors also expect that each student will make at least 20 edits (deletions, corrections, or amendments) to each entry.

For the Wiki to be successful, students must work on it at least a little (almost) every day, not in batches near the end of the semester. Writing, especially collaboratively, is an iterative process, not a do-it-and-you-are-done activity. If you are not actively engaged each week, you will be hearing from us and, we hope, from fellow students.

Grading Guidelines:

Grades will be a function of:

- In-class presentation of research: 20%
- Attendance & in-class participation: 20%
- Wiki project (Pehl): 20%
- Wiki project (Wright): 20%
- Wiki project (peer): 20%

A+ \geq 97.5; A \geq 95; A- \geq 90; B+ \geq 87.5; B \geq 85; B- \geq 80 and so forth ...

Honor Code:

As a community of scholars, the students and faculty at Augustana College commit to the highest standards of excellence by mutually embracing an Honor Code. The Honor Code requires that examinations and selected assignments contain the following pledge statement to which students are expected to sign:

On my honor, I pledge that I have upheld the Honor Code, and that the work I have done on this assignment has been honest, and that the work of others in this class has, to the best of my knowledge, been honest as well.

Faculty members are responsible for investigating all instances involving any student who does not sign the Honor Pledge or who bring forward an academic integrity concern. The complete Honor Code can be found at www.augie.edu/admin/acadaff/.

Disability Services:

Any student who feels that he or she may need to discuss reasonable accommodations for a disability, please see the instructor during office hours. Students with questions regarding disability services including appropriate documentation and coordination of reasonable accommodations are welcome to contact Susan Bies at the Student Academic Support Service Office located in the Career Center Suite, Room 100. The office phone number is 274-4403 and her e-mail is susan.bies@augie.edu.