

# Rethinking Class and Contemporary Working Class Studies

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## Abstract

The field of working class studies is forming in the context of dramatic changes in the labor process and crises in capitalist economies. Workers have historically been slow to adjust to such changes with new organizing strategies. As we seek our bearings among the changes in order to develop the field in ways that enhance the organizational and intellectual capacity of working people, we should hold onto a key point of continuity: whatever the new labor processes or changes in the economy, the working class continues to exist in capitalist societies, within capitalist class dynamics, in which the organization of production underlies material, cultural, and political experience. Race and class continue to be mutually determined. While each is distinct, neither can be properly understood or challenged in isolation from the other.

## Keywords

Working class, labor organizing, union participation, capitalism, racism, labor process, labor history, populism, Bernie Sanders

Without doubt, the working class in the United States is undergoing dramatic structural changes. Since the 1990s these have involved, most importantly, the spread of contingent labor in its many forms and the growth of global supply chains. Each development has fragmented the labor force compared with earlier, more coherent organization within single employers, most of whom afforded long-term employment to a largely full-time workforce.

These changes have unfolded as the neo-liberal economic agenda, enforced by the U.S. and its G7 allies, has come to dominate the United States and much of the rest of the world. In the process, the working classes in most countries have undergone significant structural transformations. In the developing world of 'emerging markets,' these have reflected the dynamics Marx long ago identified as the process of primitive accumulation.

In the U.S. and most of the industrialized world, these changes have been accompanied by the weakening of unions, labor and socialist parties, and other forms of collective working class power. The result has been a long-term decline in working class living standards and a sharp increase in economic inequality, now so widely recognized around the world. All in all, the working class has suffered for decades as the balance of class forces has swung decisively in favor of capital.

# Working Class Studies

**H Kauffman**



## **Working Class Studies:**

Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies Michele Fazio, Christie Launius, Tim Strangleman, 2020-12-30

The Routledge International Handbook of Working Class Studies is a timely volume that provides an overview of this interdisciplinary field that emerged in the 1990s in the context of deindustrialization the rise of the service economy and economic and cultural globalization The Handbook brings together scholars teachers activists and organizers from across three continents to focus on the study of working class peoples cultures and politics in all their complexity and diversity The Handbook maps the current state of the field and presents a visionary agenda for future research by mingling the voices and perspectives of founding and emerging scholars In addition to a framing Introduction and Conclusion written by the co editors the volume is divided into six sections Methods and principles of research in working class studies Class and education Work and community Working class cultures Representations and Activism and collective action Each of the six sections opens with an overview that synthesizes research in the area and briefly summarizes each of the chapters in the section Throughout the volume contributors from various disciplines explore the ways in which experiences and understandings of class have shifted rapidly as a result of economic and cultural globalization social and political changes and global financial crises of the past two decades Written in a clear and accessible style the Handbook is a comprehensive interdisciplinary anthology for this young but maturing field foregrounding transnational and intersectional perspectives on working class people and issues and focusing on teaching and activism in addition to scholarly research It is a valuable resource for activists as well as working class studies researchers and teachers across the social sciences arts and humanities and it can also be used as a textbook for advanced undergraduate or graduate courses

New Working-Class Studies John Russo, Sherry Lee Linkon, 2018-08-06 We put the working class in all its varieties at the center of our work The new working class studies is not only about the labor movement or about workers of any particular kind or workers in any particular place even in the workplace Instead we ask questions about how class works for people at work at home and in the community We explore how class both unites and divides working class people which highlights the importance of understanding how class shapes and is shaped by race gender ethnicity and place We reflect on the common interests as well as the divisions between the most commonly imagined version of the working class industrial blue collar workers and workers in the new economy whose work and personal lives seem at first glance to place them solidly in the middle class from the Introduction In John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon s book contributors trace the origins of the new working class studies explore how it is being developed both within and across fields and identify key themes and issues Historians economists geographers sociologists and scholars of literature and cultural studies introduce many and varied aspects of this emerging field Throughout they consider how the study of working class life transforms traditional disciplines and stress the importance of popular and artistic representations of working class life

Working-Class Comic Book Heroes Marc

DiPaolo,2018-04-19 Contributions by Phil Bevin Blair Davis Marc DiPaolo Michele Fazio James Gifford Kelly Kanayama Orion Ussner Kidder Christina M Knopf Kevin Michael Scott Andrew Alan Smith and Terrence R Wandtke In comic books superhero stories often depict working class characters who struggle to make ends meet lead fulfilling lives and remain faithful to themselves and their own personal code of ethics Working Class Comic Book Heroes Class Conflict and Populist Politics in Comics examines working class superheroes and other protagonists who populate heroic narratives in serialized comic books Essayists analyze and deconstruct these figures viewing their roles as fictional stand ins for real world blue collar characters Informed by new working class studies the book also discusses how often working class writers and artists created these characters Notably Jack Kirby a working class Jewish artist created several of the most recognizable working class superheroes including Captain America and the Thing Contributors weigh industry histories and marketing concerns as well as the fan community s changing attitudes towards class signifiers in superhero adventures The often financially strapped Spider Man proves to be a touchstone figure in many of these essays Grant Morrison s Superman Marvel s Shamrock Alan Moore and David Lloyd s V for Vendetta and The Walking Dead receive thoughtful treatment While there have been many scholarly works concerned with issues of race and gender in comics this book stands as the first to deal explicitly with issues of class cultural capital and economics as its main themes *A History of American Working-Class Literature* Nicholas Coles,Paul Lauter,2017-03-02 A History of American Working Class Literature sheds light not only on the lived experience of class but the enormously varied creativity of working class people throughout the history of what is now the United States By charting a chronology of working class experience as the conditions of work have changed over time this volume shows how the practice of organizing economic competition place and time shape opportunity and desire The subjects range from transportation narratives and slave songs to the literature of deindustrialization and globalization Among the literary forms discussed are memoir journalism film drama poetry speeches fiction and song Essays focus on plantation prison factory and farm as well as on labor unions workers theaters and innovative publishing ventures Chapters spotlight the intersections of class with race gender and place The variety depth and many provocations of this History are certain to enrich the study and teaching of American literature What We Hold in Common Janet Zandy,2001 Restored to print in an expanded edition the pivotal text in working class studies Studies in Labour and Capital Labour Research Department,1922 **Civic Labors** Dennis A. Deslippe,Eric Fure-Slocum,John W. McKerley,2016-10-17 Labor studies scholars and working class historians have long worked at the crossroads of academia and activism The essays in this collection examine the challenges and opportunities for engaged scholarship in the United States and abroad A diverse roster of contributors discuss how participation in current labor and social struggles guides their campus and community organizing public history initiatives teaching mentoring and other activities They also explore the role of research and scholarship in social change while acknowledging that intellectual labor complements but never replaces collective action and movement building Contributors

Kristen Anderson Daniel E Atkinson James R Barrett Susan Roth Breitzer Susan Chandler Sam Davies Dennis Deslippe Eric Fure Slocum Colin Gordon Michael Innis Jim nez Stephanie Luce Joseph A McCartin John W McKerley Matthew M Mettler Stephen Meyer David Montgomery Kim E Nielsen Peter Rachleff Ralph Scharnau Jennifer Sherer Shelton Stromquist Emily E LB Twarog and John Williams Searle **Studies in History, Economics and Public Law** ,1913 *The International Quarterly* ,1906 Welfare Work Emily Dorothea Proud,1916 **Research Report** ,1921 Studies and Reports International Labour Office,1922 Hearings Before the Committee on Internal Security, Ninety-first Congress, First Session. 1969 Estados Unidos. Congress. House. Committee on Internal Security,1969 **The W.E.A. Education Year Book** Workers' Educational Association,1918 The Labour Monthly ,1922 Includes section Book reviews **Report on the Nutrition of Miners and Their Families** Medical Research Council (Great Britain). Committee upon quantitative problems in human nutrition,1924 *The Parliamentary Debates (official Report)*. Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons,1929 *The Spectator* ,1907 A weekly review of politics literature theology and art **Catalogue of the Library of the Boston Athenæum** Boston Athenæum,1878 **Camera Craft** ,1911

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