

Working-Class Notes

The Newsletter of the Working-Class Studies Association

Volume 1, Issue 2

Spring 2007

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I hope to see many of you at the June 14-17 conference, "Class Matters: Working-Class Culture and Counter-Culture." Our local program committee has been reading, sifting, and organizing sessions out of the many wonderful proposals that you have sent in. More than 150 individuals have proposed papers, presentations, performances, roundtables, films, workshops, readings, tours, and more! Sessions will engage labor history, classroom pedagogy, working-class experiences on campus and in the world, labor and grassroots activism, representations of workers and self-representations by workers, and culture from bowling and baseball to poetry and music. Presenters will come from across the U.S., plus Canada, Great Britain, France, South Africa, Nigeria, Brazil, and Australia. The quality and breadth is stunning. Anyone who doubts that Working-Class Studies is emerging as a field of scholarship and activism need only look over our completed program, which will soon be available on the conference website: <http://www.macalester.edu/history/workingclass/index.html>. I feel very, very privileged to be President of this wonderful organization and to be in the catbird's seat as this year's conference comes together.

The local program committee, which Barb Jensen is co-chairing, is especially committed to building a local audience, from undergraduate and graduate students to trade unionists, cultural workers, and immigrant organizers. We

are building through a series of other events, such as this May's conference on Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed, which will be hosted by the University of Minnesota; immigrant rights rallies, marches, and protests; and the convention of the Organization of American Historians in Minneapolis at the end of March. We are not only casting our net to draw in social scientists, literary scholars, theorists and practitioners of pedagogy, memoirists and poets, filmmakers and musicians, but we are also constructing sessions which will bring them together, hopefully provoking particularly dynamic conversations.

At the risk of offending some of the presenters by not mentioning them, let me just share some information which gives an indication, from my seat, of the breadth of the conference. We will hold a memorial plenary session honoring and appreciating Tillie Olsen's lifetime of work. Janet Zandy is organizing this session and Tillie's daughter, Julie Olsen Edwards, is planning to be with us. Archie Green, the recognized founder of the field of labor folklore, will be part of a panel discussing the new book, *The Big Red Song Book*, which situates, contextualizes, and analyzes the IWW's use of music in its labor activism. Dedicated teachers from public schools and community colleges, liberal arts colleges and universities will share their classroom strategies and experiences. We will screen a

number of new and even unfinished films, engaging their producers and directors in discussions. There will be an unprecedented array of workshops, offering us opportunities to sharpen our skills in organizing, teaching, creating. The conference will also include rich sessions on labor history and literary and musical analysis. And there will be poetry, music, and theater, performed for us and by us, throughout the conference.

We have comfortable dormitory rooms reserved at very reasonable prices, ranging from \$25 to \$40 a night. Inexpensive on-campus meals will be available, too. We are working on plans for a banquet on Friday night. The college has wonderful facilities, all within easy walking distance. You can read more about the conference at our website: <http://www.macalester.edu/history/workingclass/index.html>. If you have questions please email me at rachleff at macalester.edu or call me at (651) 696-6371.

Please plan to join us June 14-17. This will not only be intellectually stimulating and politically inspiring, but it will also be community-building for the Working-Class Studies Association. It's a great chance to renew old friendships and to make new ones. Please come!

Love and Solidarity,
Peter Rachleff

President, WCSA

Working-Class Notes

Working-Class Notes is published twice a year, in fall and spring, by the Working-Class Studies Association. The deadline for submissions is October 1 for the fall issue and March 1 for the spring issue. Send submissions electronically to Sherry Linkon, sllinkon at ysu.edu. Issues are mailed to members and posted online in early December and early May.

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Membership Renewal Reminder

If you haven't already done so, *please renew* your WCSA membership. In order to vote at the WCSA meeting held at annual conferences and to vote in elections, a member must be in good standing as of April 15th in the year of the conference and election. Anyone who paid dues as of August 31, 2006, was a member through December 31, 2006, and will therefore need to renew their membership for 2007.

Go to <http://www.workingclass.sunysb.edu> to renew your membership online.

The WCSA listserv and membership database will be updated shortly and only actively enrolled members will receive online announcements and the biannual newsletter. If your contact information has changed since you joined, or if you have any questions about your membership, please email Michele Fazio at mfazio at ic.sunysb.edu.

*Thank you for your continued support
to the WCSA.*

Class Matters: Working-Class Culture and Counter-Culture

Annual Conference of the
Working-Class Studies Association
June 14-17, 2007
Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota

This year's conference will include sessions on labor history, classroom pedagogy, working-class experiences on campus and in the world, labor and grassroots activism, representations of workers and self-representations by workers, and culture from bowling and baseball to poetry and music. The conference will include undergraduate and graduate students, teachers and scholars, trade unionists, cultural workers, and immigrant organizers from across the U.S., plus Canada, Great Britain, France, South Africa, Nigeria, Brazil, and Australia.

Conference highlights:

- Pre-conference workshops, tours, and social/musical gatherings
- Plenary honoring and appreciating Tillie Olsen's lifetime of work
- Poetry readings and other performances
- Archie Green, David Roediger, and Sal Salerno speaking on their project, *The Big Red Songbook*
- Workshops on organizing
- Film screenings
- Working-class chorus, developed at the conference and led by Janet Stecher, the director of the Seattle Labor Chorus
- Friday banquet

Registration: \$100 for full-time employed academics
 \$90 for WCSA members
 \$50 for students, part-time employed, and non-academics

Registration fee includes continental breakfasts on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and afternoon refreshments. Lunches will be available at cost in the college cafeteria.

Dormitory housing: \$25 double occupancy
 \$34 single occupancy

Dorm rooms will have access to kitchenettes and microwaves.

For more information: Visit the conference website: <http://www.macalester.edu/history/workingclass/index.html> or contact Peter Rachleff, rachleff at macalester.edu, or (651) 696-6371.

Youngstown

The Center for Working-Class Studies (CWCS) at Youngstown State University (YSU) and its members have been hard at work advancing Working-Class Studies through various journalistic and cultural initiatives.

The CWCS sponsored a journalism fieldwork program to study the lives of working people in West Virginia. Center affiliate Alyssa Lenoff took fourteen journalism students on a one-week visit to West Virginia to write articles about the lives of working people in the wake of last year's series of mining accidents. Not only did the trip provide important journalistic experiences for students, it helped them understand the importance of covering working-class lives. Both the Youngstown media and papers in West Virginia such as the *Charleston Gazette* covered the visit.

The CWCS achieved some visibility in the national press this year as well, through several "Letters to the Editor" by Co-Directors Sherry Linkon and John Russo in *The New York Times* and *The Nation*. Russo also was interviewed frequently by both local and national media and began monthly appearances on talk radio on labor and working-class issues. Linkon continued to host Focus, a public affairs program on local public radio, and she was named book and arts editor for *New Labor Forum*.

In March, the Center opened a pair of exhibits at the Youngstown

Historical Center, aimed at making work and workers more visible. Worker Portraits: Faces of Strength features stories about Mahoning Valley workers written by YSU journalism students, augmented with photographs by Steve Cagan and Scott Stackhouse. The poster exhibit was paired with a showing of Cagan's photos of northeastern Ohio workers, Working Ohio.

Ohio Historical Society, and the Ford Foundation. Copies of the 35-page booklet from the exhibit, which includes a variety of Cagan and Stackhouse's photos and student stories, are available by sending \$5 (cash or check payable to YSU/CWCS) to the Center for Working-Class Studies, ATTN: Exhibit Booklet, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH 44555.

From the Centers

These projects were made possible through support from the Frances Schermer Charitable Trust, the Schwebel Family Foundation, the

This year, the CWCS Lecture Series featured Dr. Tong Xin, Director of the Center for Chinese Workers and a professor of Sociology at Peking University. She met with

Worker Portraits **Faces of Strength**

A joint project of the Center for Working-Class Studies and the Journalism Program at Youngstown State University





Professor Tong Xin, Director of the Center for Chinese Workers at Peking University meets with members of the Mahoning Valley press before her presentation at YSU.

YSU students and gave a public presentation on women and the changing economy in China. In April, Dr. Pepi Leistyna, professor, Applied Linguistics, University of Massachusetts at Boston, visited the Center, met with students in graduate courses in Working-Class Studies, and gave a presentation on “Laughing Matters: Entertainment Television’s Mockery of the Working Class.”

The CWCS continued its fundraising efforts this year by establishing a membership support group, the CWCS Consortium. Consortium member donations support the Center’s annual lecture series. If you would like to join the Consortium, contact CWCS administrative assistant, Patty LaPresta, at pmlapresta@ysu.edu or (330) 941-2978. The Center also redesigned its brochures, and work continues on the revamped website.

UK

The next event in the “Our Working-Class Lives” series will take place on June 22, 2007, at Newcastle University. This seminar series began as a follow up to the ESRC

funded ‘Working-Class Lives: Geographies and Sociologies’ series, with the aim of focusing on the work and ideas of ‘new researchers’ (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/niassh/workingclasslives/>). For information on the June event, contact Yvette Taylor at newcastle.ac.uk.

S tony Brook

The Center for Study of Working Class Life has issued its call for presentations for the How Class Works 2008 conference (see p. 10). A program committee of faculty and graduate students will review the submissions (due December 17, 2007) and construct the final program early next year. Please note two special focus areas for this conference within the broad range of topics welcome as part of the working class studies agenda: The Legacy of Theodore W. Allen (in the mosaic of class, race, and gender) and Class and Health (in class, public policy, and electoral politics).

The Center is pleased to announce that the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Stony Brook University has allocated funds for

the Center to hire a graduate student assistant for the academic year 2007-2008, for 20 hours per week. We will be hiring someone with the skills we need to build the Center’s work who will also benefit in their own intellectual development by this opportunity. We thank Dean James Staros for this significant increase in support for the Center’s work.

The Center has just released the international edition of the documentary film *Meeting Face to Face: the Iraq-U.S. Labor Solidarity Tour*, with subtitles in Spanish, French, and Arabic. The 27-minute film brings the voices of Iraqi working people into the debates about the war in this country, based on a tour of six senior Iraqi union leaders to 25 U.S. cities sponsored by U.S. Labor Against the War. The Iraqis stress that the first necessary condition for a resolution of the conflict raging in their country is the full and immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Iraq. Get more information and order the DVD at MeetingFaceToFace.org.

C hicago

In November 2006 CCWCS launched the online version of the Labor Trail: Chicago’s History of Working-Class Life and Struggle. This version is interactive and open for content contributions. Please visit it at www.labortrail.org. This spring, the CCWCS will hold its third (nearly annual) “Getting Paid to Cause Trouble: Careers in Social Justice” event on April 14. The program brings together college students from Chicago area campuses and young labor and community organizers.

Class Action

Class Action is prioritizing K-12 and higher education as strategic locations for working against classism and for greater equality. We have been working with a variety of institutions of higher education, through our Class on Campus effort to raise awareness about class and classism, and to help catalyze action to reduce the class/caste system that is at the core of the institution. In the last few months we have worked with faculty and staff at Keene State, Holyoke Community College, the University of Richmond, and Dartmouth College.

Think about bringing Class Action to your campus. We are also editing *Class*

and Education, a special issue of the journal *Equity and Excellence in Education*, as a resource for those who educate teachers. Finally we are exploring the possibility of launching a “Wealth Blind Admissions” campaign to focus public attention and action on the inequities in access to higher education.

On the K-12 front we are developing a curriculum to accompany the video, *Enough: A Kid's Perspective*, to encourage teachers to teach about class and economic differences. We will be compiling a toolbox for teachers, so if you know of any wonderful resources (books, AV materials, etc.) that would be appropriate to educate about class, please let us know.

To encourage folks to reach across the class divide and learn about the dynamics of class, we are

publishing a *Cross Class Dialogue Manual*. This guide will make it easy for folks to set up their own dialogue groups. We are also publishing a pamphlet, *Straight Talk About Class and Classism*, as an educational tool. You can learn more about all of these resources on our website, www.classism.org.

We will be launching our Race/Class Intersections Program to look at issues of class within communities of color and help to build cross-race coalitions within class. We are also working with Betsy Leondar-Wright (one of our Board members) to research class culture

being a Guest Editor email us!

If you'd like to receive our E-news or if you'd like to receive our print newsletter, please let us know at info@classism.org.

Michigan State

“Our Daily Work/ Our Daily Lives” is a cooperative project that focuses on the cultural traditions of workers, workplaces as contexts for the expression of workers culture and the diversity of historical and

artistic presentations of workers' lives.

Acting out of common interest, the Michigan Traditional

Arts Program (MSU Museum) and the Labor Education Program (MSU School of Labor and Industrial Relations) established “Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives” to explore and present the richness and diversity of worker experience and workers culture with exhibits, lectures and presentations; writing and research projects; and reunions, dialogues, demonstrations and discussions.

In its 12th year, Our Daily Work/ Our Daily Lives offers an exciting set of presentations that will take us through how Jacob Riis's use of flash photography was an intrusion on the lives of the working class, to the importance of the rhetoric of Joe Hill's labor martyrdom, then into protest knitting as a form of women's work and ending with a journey through the working class as caught in 20th century music.

From the Centers

clashes within different racial/ethnic communities.

Please contribute to our web resources, or consider being a Guest Editor for an E-news. Every month Class Action publishes an E-news on a different theme. In the past the themes have included: mental health, sports, the military, higher education, leisure, immigration, and television. As a Guest Editor you would choose a topic such as gender, literature, media, health care, or another of your choosing. Each E-news reviews a book or books, videos or other resources related to the topic, provides links to other articles on the topic and/or organizations working on the issues, a survey question related to the theme, and relevant actions that folks can take. You would provide the above content (or some portion of it). If you have a particular interest and are interested in the possibility of

The Fall 2008 Brown Bag Series

Stephen Rachman
MSU Department of English
“Flash!: Jacob Riis, Social Class,
and the Photography of Artificial
Illumination”
Friday, September 21

Thomas F. Marvin
English and American Studies De-
partments
Indiana University-Purdue Univer-
sity-Indianapolis
“Joe Hill and the Making of a La-
bor Martyr”
Monday, October 15

Heather E. Pristash
Department of English/Rhetoric
and Writing Program
Bowling Green State University
“Reclaiming Women’s Work: Femi-
nism and Protest Knitting”
Friday, November 9

Eugene Hayhoe
Independent Scholar
“Reflections of Working-Class Life
in 20th Century Music”
Monday, December 3

All presentations take place from
12:15 - 1:30 pm in the MSU Museum
Auditorium

**Invitation to
Participate in the
Tillie Olsen
Plenary**

Janet Zandy, Julie Olsen
Edwards, and Barbara Jensen
are organizing a plenary for
this year’s WCSA conference
to honor the legacy of Tillie
Olsen. If you would like to
participate, please contact
Janet Zandy at jnzgsl at rit.
edu.

Graduate Student News

by Michele Fazio, SUNY-Stony Brook

With the June conference fast approaching, I would like to announce that a graduate student “meet and greet” will be scheduled. The meeting will enable us to reconnect, exchange ideas, and, of course, socialize. Feel free to email me with any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

This issue’s graduate student profile introduces Alessandra Senzani. Alessandra earned her M.A. in English at Youngstown State University (YSU), where she also received the Working-Class Certificate from the Center for Working-Class Studies. Working with Sherry Linkon, John Russo, and Salvatore Attardo at YSU, Alessandra’s research focused on the intersections of class and ethnicity and the role humor plays in their negotiation. Currently, Alessandra is a Ph.D. Candidate at Florida Atlantic University. She has continued researching on class issues and their intersections with other articulations of identity in her course work, publications, and conferences. She has published articles in *Voices in Italian Americana*, *Quaderni del 900*, and in an edited volume on Italian-American cinema by Marsilio to mark the occasion of the 43rd Pesaro International Film Festival. Her work focuses on Italian-American writers’ and filmmakers’ reflections on ethnic and class conflicts in U.S. society. In her analyses, Alessandra looks at how these authors portray and dissect the different milieus in mostly metropolitan America and offer insights into our own prejudices and social conditioning. For her dissertation, Alessandra will focus on the work of Australian women filmmakers from different ethnic backgrounds and their uses of humor to challenge dominant discourses on class, race, gender, and sexuality, analyzing how identity and power shape the authors’ allegiances and aesthetic. Alessandra also tries to promote working-class studies in her community. With the graduate student association at FAU, she co-organized a conference last spring on intersections of class, race, and gender. Linkon and Russo participated in the conference, and Linkon presented on the difficulties of discussing class in public schools and academia. Their participation in the conference spurred much interest in the FAU community, reinforcing Alessandra’s conviction on the need to raise awareness on class issues in academia and beyond. She may be reached at asenzani at fau.edu. Please join me in wishing her continued success.

I encourage students to contact me (mfazio at ic.sunysb.edu) if they wish to be featured in an upcoming newsletter. It’s a great opportunity to showcase your work and invite others who share similar interests to exchange ideas.

Call for Papers

“Labouring Feminism and Feminist Working-Class History in Europe and Beyond”

**International Conference in Stockholm
August 28-31, 2008**

In September 2005 the first ‘Labouring Feminism Conference’ was held at the Munk Centre, University of Toronto. The planners invite you to participate in continuing this initiative to focus on labour and gender from a historical perspective in Stockholm in August 2008. The aim of the conference is to bring together a wide variety of feminist scholars working on various aspects of labour history, broadly defined, to share their research, to carry on a dialogue across generational, theoretical, national and disciplinary boundaries and to continue the debate on how to re-conceptualize working-class history in more inclusive ways.

The conference is structured around five overlapping and inter-related themes:

- Gendering working-class history
- Labour feminism and female activism
- Women and work--paid and unpaid
- Bodies--trade and consumption--local, regional, and international perspectives
- Cultural and ideological representations of gender related to the above topics

The planners prefer complete panels and sessions. They may take the liberty of rearranging proposed sessions in order to achieve an international mix. A panel should contain between two and four papers, a commentator and a chair. As a general rule no one may appear more than once on the program. Individual papers will be considered and they will try to arrange sessions and panels.

Please submit a copy of your proposal post marked by **June 15, 2007**, to the address listed below. You will be informed if your paper has been accepted at the latest by October 1. Your proposal should list a title and full contact information (address, phone, and e-mail) for panel organizers and participants. It must also include a title, a half-page abstract for each paper or presentation; a half-page with the most relevant publications and affiliation for each participant (including chair and commentator).

Send proposals by June 15, 2007 to: labouring.feminism@arbark.se

Call for Papers

Teaching About and With Alternative Media

Our media system, like our educational system, is in trouble. Indeed, an inescapable link may exist between the two. Information abounds through television, radio, the internet, magazines, and books, but the educational system often does little to help students or teachers interpret this media--to show how it influences our ideas and values, informs public opinion and debate, and shapes understanding of our political world.

By now many of us are familiar with the alarming list of statistics about the control and effects of the media on our students. The Media Education Foundation, for example, informs us that each year the average American youth spends 1,023 hours watching TV and only 900 hours in school. This average American child sees 200,000 violent acts on TV by age 18.

Efforts are afoot, however, to create an alternative media to offset the years of corporate media indoctrination to which we have grown accustomed. This new alternative media can be defined in many ways: newspapers and magazines which do not depend on corporate support; radio and television broadcasts free of sponsors and mainstream sources of information; websites critical of the Iraq War and foreign policy; listserves which encourage and inform the public about political activism at home and international politics abroad; and, new forms of sharing information like zines and blogs. But education will be essential both to create media reform and then to disseminate it to the growing number of students who distrust the mainstream media, yet urgently need reliable sources of relevant information in order to make sense of the often dangerous and upsetting world in which they live.

Radical Teacher is planning a cluster on Teaching About and With Alternative Media. Topics may include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- Classroom experiences using alternative media to teach current social or political events
- Introducing alternative media into the classroom and the response from students
- Using alternative media in teaching K-12 media literacy classes
- Strategies for and lessons about teaching students how to critically analyze forms of media
- The role of technology in using alternative media in the classroom
- The effects of student blogs on understanding and using alternative media
- What political or alternative media websites do your students use
- Teaching the politics of media ownership, including media merging and the concurrent loss of available information
- Examples of student activism organized and managed through the internet
- Teaching students to produce alternative media
- New educational venues for discovering, discussing and promoting media reform
- How the understanding of global education, such as the Oaxaca teachers' strike or the escalation of violence in the Middle East, is better understood through alternative media
- Studies illustrating the differences in information offered between alternative and mainstream media

Proposals of approximately 250 words are due by **June 15, 2007**, and complete essays by October 15, 2007. Send proposals or papers to Leonard Vogt at vogtle at lagcc.cuny.edu, Bob Rosen at rosenr at wpunj.edu, Pepi Leistyna at Pleistyna at hotmail.com, or Jackie Brady at jeb blonde at aol.com.

Call for Papers

How Class Works

**SUNY Stony Brook
June 5-7, 2008**

The conference seeks to explore ways in which an explicit recognition of class helps us understand the social world in which we live and ways in which analysis of society can deepen our understanding of class as a social relationship. Presentations should take as their point of reference the lived experience of class; proposed theoretical contributions should be rooted in and illuminate social realities. Presentations are welcome from people outside academic life when they sum up social experience in a way that contributes to the themes of the conference. Formal papers will be welcome but not required. All presentations should be accessible to an interdisciplinary audience.

The conference welcomes proposals for presentations that advance our understanding of any of the following themes (fuller descriptions of these themes are available on the conference website: <http://www.workingclass.sunysb.edu>):

The mosaic of class, race, and gender, with a special focus on the legacy of Theodore W. Allen's work on the invention of the white race and its implications in the new racial and ethnic mix of 21st century U.S. society:

- Class, power, and social structure
- Class and community
- Class in a global economy
- Middle class? Working class? What's the difference and why does it matter?
- Class, public policy, and electoral politics, with a special focus on class, health, and health care
- Class and culture
- Pedagogy of class

Proposals must include a) title; b) which of the eight conference themes will be addressed; c) a maximum 250 word summary of the main points, methodology, and slice of experience to be addressed; d) institutional affiliation (if any) and the training or experience the presenter brings to the proposal; e) presenter's name, address, telephone, fax, and email address. A person may present in at most two conference sessions. To allow time for discussion, sessions will be limited to three 20-minute or four 15-minute principal presentations. Sessions will not include official discussants. Proposals for poster sessions are welcome. Proposed presentations may be assigned to a poster session.

Proposals for sessions are welcome. Session proposals must include the information above for all presentations and an indication of willingness to participate from each presenter.

Submit proposals as hard copy by mail to the How Class Works 2008 Conference, Center for Study of Working Class Life, Department of Economics, SUNY, Stony Brook, NY 11794-4384 or as an email attachment to michael.zweig at stonybrook.edu. Proposals must be received by **December 17, 2007**. Notifications will be mailed on January 16, 2008.

Conference registration and housing reservations will be possible after February 15, 2008. Details and updates will be posted at <http://www.workingclass.sunysb.edu>.

For more information, contact Michael Zweig, Director of the Center for Study of Working Class Life, at the address or email listed above or at (631) 632-7536.

Youngstown State University (YSU) Student Journalists Visit West Virginia

While other students spent spring break relaxing, fourteen YSU journalism students travelled to West Virginia to hone their skills by reporting on life near the Sago mine a year after twelve miners were killed there. The trip, supported in part by the Center for Working-Class Studies (CWCS), was led by CWCS affiliate Alyssa Lenhoff, Director of YSU's Journalism Program, and Tim Francisco, YSU Journalism professor. The goal of the trip was for students to understand the importance of reporting on working-class stories. Here's one of their stories.

Class Stereotypes Alive and Well, by Sarah Sole

Renae Wilson said she knows the formula the news media uses for West Virginia. "It just seems to me like they'll get the worst-looking, ill-speaking people they can find," said Wilson, owner of the hair salon Lasting Impressions in Buckhannon, West Virginia, "They'll get the person that has no teeth."

A year after the Sago mining disaster put people like Wilson and her friends and neighbors in the national spotlight, she and others have had time to think about how Appalachians are stereotyped. Becky Crites has strong opinions. "We are portrayed as backwoods hillbillies," said Crites, circulation clerk at Upshur County Public Library.

Ronald Lewis, history professor at West Virginia University, said the Appalachian stereotype is still being perpetuated in current society. It's a long-term thing and people are all conscious of it. "In general, it's probably true," Lewis said of the stereotypical portrayal, "They have the template there. The stories all come out about the same. While it's well-written, it's grossly uninformed." Lewis said, "Appalachia is a social construct external to the region. The Appalachian stereotype means different things depending on who is using it and who is listening to it."

Appalachian people were traditionally described as fatalistic and family-oriented, Lewis said. "It's an occupational characteristic," said Lewis of fatalism. "It's like the military. There is a culture of mining that pulled people together. Often, we use Appalachian to mean coal."

Youngstown State University History Professor Diane Barnes said the Appalachian stereotype is a touchy subject. Originally from West Virginia, Barnes said that while it is not politically correct to stereotype in terms of gender or race, it is unfortunately still socially acceptable to stereotype Appalachians. Barnes said that the popular modern Appalachian stereotypes were often fueled by so-called "scholarly" research done by some sociologists. Barnes said that sociologist Jack Weber's book, *Yesterday's People*, was a perfect example of biased research. In his book, Weller uses the term, "mountain man" to collectively define people living in Appalachia. The book states, "The second-generation mountaineer, however, cannot experience this break with the old culture of his parents, since he may still live enmeshed in the traditional patterns that have molded his ancestors."

Catherine Pancake said she believes that these images are still present in society, though she hopes that new media focusing on West Virginia's locals will help change assumptions about Appalachia. "Anything that can be done to create images could really help," Pancake said. Presently, Pancake is creating some footage of her own in her film, *Black Diamonds: Mountaintop Removal & the Fight for Coalfield Justice*. Pancake said she hopes her film will help mitigate stereotypes with its focus on the negative effects that mountain-top mining has on the environment. Pancake said she was driven to create the documentary because of the people who were affected by mountain-top mining. "They were so inspired to try to fight," Pancake said, "It's rare in the U.S. that anyone goes out of their way to fight for what they believe in. I went down there and followed that passion. I got involved in their story and in their lives."

Others in West Virginia share Pancake's positive feelings about film coverage. Kay Holley said, "I think the world has become much smaller." Holley, owner of Modern Hair Designs in Buckhannon, West Virginia, said

(continued p. 12)

YSU Student Journalists Visit West Virginia (cont'd)

that live media gives people a chance to decide for themselves how they're going to view people. "I didn't have any problems of the way we were portrayed," Holley said, of the Sago news coverage.

In general, West Virginia is never seen as an educational center, said Holley, who counted a total of seven colleges within the state. Originally from Gallipolis, Ohio, Holley has strong feelings for West Virginia. "This is a wonderful place to raise my children. I want my kids to always be proud." Holley said that stereotyping is something that occurs everywhere. "They tend to let people make them feel like they are less and they are certainly not," Holley said of native West Virginians.

Crites, though, seems to understand the news media's thirst for human-interest stories. "Sensationalism sells," said Crites, "You see the raw emotion. You see pain. But we're more than that."

Notes on Teaching American Working-Class Literature

by Bill Boggs, Slippery Rock University

As I taught introduction to literature courses for over two decades, the same old offerings and the general "grammar of literature" corporate textbook apparatus tedium wore me down. My theoretical approach returned to Dave Demarest's course taken at Carnegie-Mellon nearly 30 years ago. In that course, we read Thomas Bell, William Attaway, and other working-class texts, most of them then out of print. Reflecting on my own writing that based on my background in agriculture and industry, I knew that most of my students are like me--first generation from working-class homes. I adapted working-class theory into my class presentations, and I selected authors who spoke to our shared experience--Raymond Carver, Bobbi Mason, Sherman Alexi, and others.

When Nicholas Coles and Janet Zandy's anthology *American Working-Class Literature* (Oxford, 2006) came out, it became an anchor, linking history, tradition, culture formation, and the literary arts. I've found that my students--who are not English majors--connect to this literature. From the opening chapters on, students discovered new insights into our national heritage. Most students are familiar with the oppression of African Americans in slavery; however, most were surprised to learn of indentured servitude and the numbers of working-class Europeans who came to America as bound and "owned" property. Issues of economic class have not been included in the students' other learning experiences. As we head toward the closing chapters, I know that these students have a handle on the tradition of working-class literature, an awareness of the ongoing struggle of economic class that is, if anything, more constricting today. We don't face Pinkertons; we face polite people in suits who will outsource and decapitalize our geographies, but the goal is the same as the old coal operator who hoped the miners' children had to eat the bark off the trees.

As we have worked through the Homestead Strike (I prefer the more accurate term Lockout) and the Triangle Fire, and the legacy of Joe Hill, the students have become more familiar with the contributions of past workers and more appreciative of the lives they enjoy today. For their first paper, I asked them to interview an older relative about working conditions in an earlier time. Most students interviewed a grandparent and expressed a keen appreciation for the better conditions of their own lives.

While my department leaders remain unwilling to allow me to label my sections of introduction to literature courses with the tag "Working-Class Literature," I make my perspective and content clear from the first class. I sense a closer relationship of the students to this reading than to the works available in mainstream anthologies, and they are expanding their concept of literature beyond the traditional canon. Perhaps most of all, I sense a greater satisfaction sharing this literature that unites all races, genders, and ethnic origins under one common struggle--economic justice.

**Book Review: John Bodnar, *Blue Collar Hollywood: Liberalism, Democracy, and Working People in American Film*,
(John Hopkins University Press)**

Reviewed by Tom Zaniello, Northern Kentucky University

Any book that discusses—with varying degrees of detail—more than 200 films in a context both historically compelling and important for working-class studies is a good thing. This book will help many readers, especially those unfamiliar with the importance of class analysis in American culture, to reconsider some of their biases and to recover some essential cinematic texts. It will also be of value to veterans of class analysis by offering a number of neglected films for inspection as well as some classic American themes in a new context.

John Bodnar, Chancellor's Professor of History at Indiana University, asserts what many members of the Working-Class Studies Association have known for years, that "serious political historians almost never [take] mass culture seriously." He has re-tooled his scholarly habits and teaching interests to tackle cinematic representations of "tensions that emanated from powerful political traditions like liberalism and democracy that continually shaped American life over a long period."

Each chapter focuses on the structure of feeling and thought of each decade from the 1930s through the 1980s. The most substantial chapters are reserved for the films in periods that challenged capitalism during the Depression, dramatized all-class unity during World War II, dismantled that unity after the war, and developed McCarthyite and related attacks on progressive working-class institutions (like unions). The only chapter that seems rushed is the last, on the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, with too many big issues illustrated by too few films.

I have some problems with his analyses of a number of the classics. Bodnar rightly celebrates *The Mollie Maguires* for its portrayal of "solidarity and class consciousness," for example, but he only scratches the surface when he asserts that the "the Mollies are betrayed by one of their own." James McKenna, whose last name was really McParlan, was not an "informer," but a class traitor and Pinkerton spy. Bodnar sees Hitchcock's *Lifeboat* as an exemplar of the idea that the "emotions of the lowborn" cannot "be integrated into an American society that is harmonious." In fact, it is not just the working-class men—as Bodnar suggests—who "beat the Nazi captain to death," but all the men and women on the lifeboat, regardless of class (with the notable exception of the African-American steward). It is a classic of Hitchcockian ambivalence (and a very fine film too) because the film questions the fluidity of class in America.

I am also worried about his tendency not to treat films as films, as artifacts with powerful codes that often determine how influential a film can be. No one would underestimate the thematic intensity of *On the Waterfront*, for example, but a discussion of the film that mentions location shooting in Hoboken but doesn't touch on the powerful shots of Father Barry in the ship's hold, or the composition of the final shape-up on the docks, or even the legendary "I could've been a contender" speech of Marlon Brando's Terry will miss why the film has been so influential on people's thinking about corrupt unions.

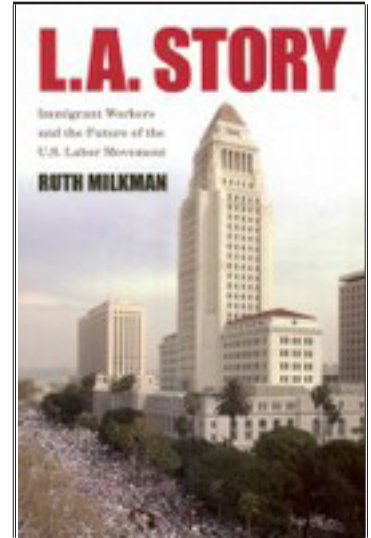
Readers of this book will inevitably find neglected gems about which Bodnar offers more than enough convincing analysis to make us feel like we have been missing something. I didn't know about Martin Ritt's *No Down Payment*, for example, about couples in California participating in the post-World War II suburban housing boom, and its pairing with the notorious *Peyton Place* was illuminating.

Blue-Collar Hollywood will not replace an earlier classic of retrieval and analysis, Peter Hoffman's and Jim Purdy's *The Hollywood Social Problem Film* (Indiana, 1981), with its wonderful subtitle *Madness, Despair, and Politics from the Depression to the Fifties*. But it is a very helpful update and supplement nonetheless.

BOOK NOTES

L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement (Russell Sage Foundation), Ruth Milkman

Sociologist and labor educator Ruth Milkman has a good story to tell – the resurgence of a progressive labor movement in 1990s Los Angeles – and she frames that story within a high-stakes question: might it augur and provide a national model for “the possibility that labor might become an agent of social transformation once again.” The result is both a richly nuanced portrait of working-class L.A., “where inequality by both class and nativity is so stark that the city is routinely compared to the Third World,” and a cogent analysis of what it will take to get labor “on the march” again. Immigrant workers, the conditions they face, and the traditions of struggle they bring are at the heart of both the story and the analysis. But Milkman probes other thorny issues concerning the revitalization of the American labor movement, with often surprising insights like the advantages of AFL union traditions in today’s service economy. The Los Angeles example is not directly relevant to many locations that lack the leavening presence of immigrants because they have been bleeding jobs and people for decades. But L.A.’s labor movement started its resurgence by taking advantage of what had previously been seen as overwhelming historical disadvantages. Milkman’s careful disentangling of the various social forces, traditions and human ingenuities that reshuffled power relations in L.A. routinely throws off and stimulates insights into other American locations, some of which may have their own very specific mojos beginning to stir themselves.

**Class and News (Rowman & Littlefield), Don Heider, ed.**

Seventeen essays from various scholarly disciplines reflect on how the news media represent and misrepresent class in the U.S., the influence this has on the audience’s ideas about social structure, and what the possibilities for change are. Covering both print and television (but not radio), the collection includes sections on “Constructing Class Groups” and “Labor, Workers, and News.” Highlights include Laura Hapke’s “Writing the Workers’ World Trade Center: An Analysis of Reportage on Ground Zero in the Aftermath of September 11” and Christopher Martin’s “UPS Strike Coverage and the Future of Labor in Corporate News.”

Communities Without Borders: Images and Voices from the World of Migration (Cornell University Press), David Bacon

In pictures and words, veteran labor journalist David Bacon provides an artful forum for migrant workers from Huehuetenango and Oaxaca to California and Nebraska to reveal their experience and their reflections on it. Emphasizing the social movements migrants have organized for themselves, Bacon’s unintrusive thesis is: “Today’s indigenous migrants don’t simply move from one point to another but create new [transnational] communities all along the northern road from Guatemala through Mexico into the United States.”

Who Says? Working-Class Rhetoric, Class Consciousness, and Community (University of Pittsburgh Press), William DeGenaro, ed.

Fourteen essays by scholars of rhetoric, composition, and communications are introduced by DeGenaro’s “What are Working-Class Rhetorics?” and concluded by Julie Lindquist’s “Working-Class Rhetoric as Ethnographic Subject.” The aim of the volume is to undermine the elitist notion of “the rhetorical tradition” by analyzing a wide range of working-class rhetorics in mines, mills, farms, strikes, settlement houses, construction sites and other workplaces, as well in popular culture, including CIO comic books, the “transgressive fatness of Roseanne,” hip-hop, and reality TV.

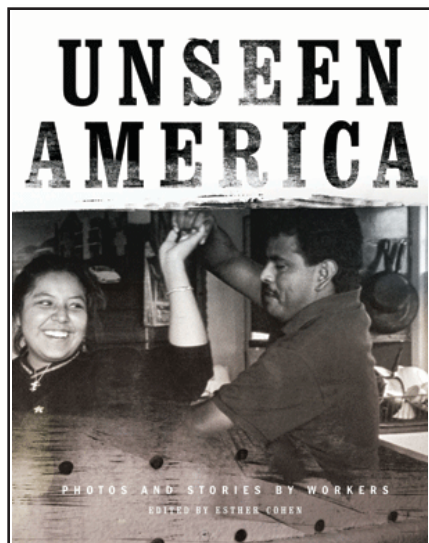
BOOK NOTES

***Depression Days On an Appalachian Farm: Poems* (Bottom Dog Press), Robert L. Tener**

The latest from Larry Smith's Bottom Dog Press is this collection of poems by Robert Tener, about which Steven DaGama says: "Tener's early years on a farm in southern Ohio and his later years of teaching, travel, and deep-hearted living turned him into a poet whose best work is muscular and tender and bursting with life. Tener builds poems the same way he once built a house for his family – with his own two hands, one brick and one board at a time."

***Late to Class: Social Class and Schooling in the New Economy* (SUNY Press), Jane Van Galen and George Noblit, eds.**

This collection looks at the educational experiences of poor, working-class and middle-class students against the backdrop of complicated class stratifications generated by a shifting global economy.



***No Country for Old Men* (Vintage), Cormac McCarthy**

Hailed as one of the finest novelists working today, Cormac McCarthy's latest book is a bleak and disheartening portrait of blue-collar life in general and of Texans in particular, and for that reason, a valuable aid in understanding what is bothering a vast segment of the working class. The main figure, Sheriff Ed Tom Bell, shares a stream-of-consciousness that tells more than 10 doctoral dissertations can about the angst that is eating away at his soul and, by easy extrapolation, at the innards of millions of American working men and women. Too honest to offer band-aids for our mental and spiritual ills, the novel is one troublesome read -- definitely not for waifs or pollyannas. Mature change agents, however, will recognize in the thesis a fundamental vexation: Evil has its own claim on time and our affairs, a claim not to be denied. Mitigated, yes, by any and every means at our disposal; denied, no. This is something so many blue-collarites know deep-down, and so many in the chattering classes have yet to grasp. (Note by Art Shostak, Labor Educator & Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Drexel University)

***From Wiseguys to Wise Men: The Gangster and Italian-American Masculinities* (Routledge), Fred Gardaphe**

According to Fred Gardaphe, you need double vision to understand the public fascination with the Italian-American gangster, a literary and cinematic figure that reflects both the autobiography of an immigrant group and the fantasy of a native population. Is the gangster a trickster against whom we should be on guard or an American success story we should try to emulate? Focused on core literary and cinematic texts, Gardaphe examines the gangster through the lenses of class, race, ethnicity and, above all, gender – producing new insights into even the most well-known icons. For example, the dynamics of how Coppola's fatherly decision-maker created a template of behavior for the Italian-American male, while Scorsese's gangsters are "men trapped forever in an immature stage."

***Unseen America: Photos and Stories by Workers* (Regan Books), Esther Cohen**

Give workers cameras and a bit of training in how to use them, and what you get are vivid pieces of a world, at work, at home and in between, that we usually don't see – an unseen America. This collection selects from the photos of janitors, bellhops, clothing workers, and others who have participated in the Unseen America program offered over the past five years by Bread and Roses (B&R), the cultural arm of Local 1199 of the Service Employees International Union. The brainchild of Esther Cohen, B&R executive director, Unseen has produced extraordinary images of working-class life, along with brief statements of what these images mean to the photographer-workers who produced them.

BOOK NOTES***Vanishing Moments: Class and American Literature* (University of Michigan Press), Eric Schocket**

Focused on American classics from 1850 to the early 1940s – Melville, Howells, London, Rebecca Harding Davis and Langston Hughes, among them – Schocket “demonstrates how deeply America’s desire to deny the presence of class has marked even its most labor-conscious cultural texts.”

***Understanding Social Inequality* (Sage Publications), Tim Butler and Paul Watt**

The starting point for Butler and Watt is that the world has become and is becoming more unequal after a brief but important spurt of equalizing in the mid-20th Century. Combining sociology and geography, they examine “how place has become an increasingly important focus for understanding new trends in social inequality” and how new work and new workers affect working-class identity.

***Howard Zinn: You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train* (First Run/Icarus Films), 78-minute DVD directed by Deb Ellis, with narration by Matt Damon**

This inspiring profile of the civil rights and antiwar activist, historian and author of *A People’s History of the United States* is told through interviews with Zinn, Marian Wright Edelman, Tom Hayden, Alice Walker and other famous 1960s activists and writers.

***The Natural Survival of Work: Job Creation and Job Destruction in a Growing Economy* (MIT Press), Pierre Cahuc and Andre Zylberberg**

French edition won the 2004 European Economics Book Award for arguing that economists now know a lot more about the dynamics of labor markets than is reflected in national policies based on guesses. Increasing the minimum wage, for example, can increase employment, and unemployment insurance systems need dramatic overhauls to manage the pain of a globalizing economy.

***A Race Against Death: A Lenny Moss Mystery* (Five Star Publishing), Timothy Sheard**

Lenny Moss is a custodian in a Philadelphia hospital, where he is also a union shop steward and, as displayed in two previous mystery novels, quite a good homicide detective. The case in this installment is the death of a young black woman from a botched abortion performed by Dr. Leslie Odom. Hospital workers and medical students tell Lenny that this was murder, not an accident. At first Lenny is too busy to investigate because Philadelphia is in the midst of a deadly heat wave, and the hospital’s antiquated air conditioning system is putting laundry and kitchen workers at risk, which Lenny is fighting with grievances and labor-management meetings. That’s the first “race against death” of the title. With the help of medical student Kate Palmer, Lenny eventually uncovers a series of disturbing facts not only about the botched abortion, but about all the women under Dr. Odom’s care. Just as they are about to go public with their findings, however, another death distracts them, and according to the novel’s dust jacket, “forces them to cast a cold eye on the very people they thought to help.”

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