



Dedicated to furthering the understanding of working-class life and culture

Working-Class Notes

Volume 9, Issue 1

Fall 2005

The Directors' Report . . .

Last May, the Center for Working-Class Studies celebrated its 10th anniversary with a conference on the “past, present, and future” of the field. The conference brought together old friends and new faces, for a full schedule of panels, readings, keynote talks, workshops, and tours. This year, participants came from 28 states and 5 countries. Our thanks to all of those who helped make this year’s conference such a success. As we announced at the conference, we’re going to take a break from conference organizing, but the new Working-Class Studies Association will continue the tradition. See page 12 for the call for papers for the June 2006 “How Class Works” conference.

Americans have had to pay more attention to the working class, the complex relationship between class and race, and economic struggle.

Within the US, the past year has been an especially interesting one for public discussions of class. From the 2004 elections to recent hurricanes, major newspaper series to recent restructuring in the labor movement, Americans have had to pay more attention to the working class, the complex relationship between class and race, and economic struggle. At the CWCS, we’re trying to shape the emerging discussion.

Another part of that work is research on class and politics. The CWCS and the Chicago Center for Working-Class Studies have begun a joint research project on working-class voting patterns. The project involves tracking voting behavior by four factors – class, race, gender and union households – and analyzing the proportion and interconnections of these factors in the electorate. This process will update the research done by Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers in their book, *The Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working-Class Still Matters*, to include 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. A research team led by Dorian Warren, Jack Metzgar, and John Russo will evaluate trends and organize the data in

a form that will be useable by political organizations and the public.

We’ve also been increasingly interested in how the media covers class issues, looking for opportunities to influence journalists and editors. To that end, we’re planning a symposium for journalists and journalism professors to encourage critical reflection on how the media represents the working class. One of our faculty affiliates, Alyssa Lenhoff, is

pursuing individual research on the subject and developing grants to fund the symposium. Lenhoff has also moved into a new role at the CWCS, coordinating our efforts in grant writing and fund raising. She will continue to direct YSU’s

Journalism Program and spend the other half of her time working with us at the Center.

This year the CWCS will also continue its work on class and education with two new projects. The Community Engagement Network brings together secondary and college teachers from across the Mahoning Valley who are developing community-based projects in their courses. The group will meet once a month to discuss readings and their own experiences incorporating local history and culture in courses on writing, literature, history, environmental studies, and anthropology.

We are also sponsoring a one-week summer institute on teaching about class, open to college fac-

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Working-Class Notes

Working-Class Notes is published by the Center for Working-Class Studies at Youngstown State University twice during the academic year—once in the fall, and again in the spring. Deadline for submissions is October 1 for the Fall newsletter and March 1 for Spring.

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Artes Unidas de Michigan Website

Artes Unidas de Michigan is happy to announce the latest release of its website: www.artesunidas.org. The site includes an on-line Announcements Calendar, as well as a Calendar of Historical Events, an interactive database of over 2,000 historic events that chronicle Latino contributions to Michigan's art, music and media, political, literary, civic, business, and athletic realms dating from the Spanish conquest of Fort Niles in 1782. The site also provides information on ordering the full-color print edition of *El Calendario de Michigan 2006: The Artes Unidas Calendar of Michigan Latino History, Arts, and Culture*.

Guinness Brewery Website

Tim Strangleman and Bridget Henderson, from the Working Lives Research Institute at London Metropolitan University, have completed an oral history and photographic study based on the life and closure of the Guinness brewery at Park Royal in West London. Working with photographer David McCairley they have created a website, <http://www.workinglives.org/guinness.html>, that shows a selection of images from the Guinness plant. They have also produced a DVD from the project, with copies distributed to Guinness workers and others who were involved in the brewery and the research project.



Workers at the Guinness Plant in London.

Directors, continued

ulty and graduate students. Sherry Linkon is working with Renny Christopher, from California State University-Channel Islands, and Mary Romero, from Arizona State University, to plan the institute. They hope that the week-long gathering will yield a collection of teaching strategies that can be published on the CWCS website as well as critical essays for a book. For more information on the institute, see page 8.

Last spring, we announced the publication of our edited collection, *New Working-Class Studies* (Cornell UP), and the latest reports and reviews show that the book is being well-received. The first hard-cover printing is already sold out. Of course this is good news for us, but we also see this as a sign of growing interest in the field. We hope you'll find the book useful for your classes and research.

Another sign of interest in working-class studies is the number of invitations we've received to speak. We've met with groups that are already involved with working-class studies, such as the British seminar series, Working-Class Lives, which concluded its two-year project with a terrific two-day meeting in October. We also led workshops on teaching working-class students at three universities last year and gave presentations on working-class studies, deindustrialization, organized labor, and public memory at half a dozen conferences. We've also spoken to community college faculty as part of an NEH institute on steel towns, discussed

deindustrialization with a delegation of visiting scholars from China, and given presentations about Youngstown's working-class identity for a number of local groups.

Our lecture series this year will explore the "Walmartization" of work in America, the ethics of globalization, news reporting on issues of class and work, and the relationship between art and memory, in both poetry and public art. For the first time, this year's series will feature not only nationally-known visitors but also some of our own affiliates, whose research reflects the CWCS's original scholarship and creative work. For a full schedule, see page 5.

We're pleased to see the new Working-Class Studies Association moving ahead. At the YSU conference in May, the WCSA held its first business meeting, and members have recently approved a constitution and elected an initial slate of officers. Perhaps most important for regular readers of this newsletter, the WCSA will take over responsibility for publishing the newsletter in about a year. At that time, only members of the WCSA will receive the newsletter. If you appreciate receiving a regular update of events, conferences, and publications in working-class studies, it's time to join the WCSA. See pages 10 and 14 for details.

*In unity,
Sherry Linkon and John Russo*

Listserv Update

The Working-Class Studies Association and the Center for Working-Class Studies are sponsoring a listserv to facilitate discussion of working-class issues and working-class studies. Working-class-studies has 800 members from around the world, and online discussions range from questions about how to define "working-class art" to critical analysis of current events. To join the list, go to <http://lists.ysu.edu/mailman/listinfo.cgi/working-class-studies>.

The Center also maintains a regional listserv, cwcs-l, which posts announcements of events in the region (defined loosely as the area within a few hours drive from Youngstown). If you live in that region and want to hear about lectures, exhibits, and meetings related to working-class studies, you can join the cwcs-l list by visiting this website: <http://lists.ysu.edu/mailman/listinfo.cgi/cwcs-l>.

Our Daily Work/ Our Daily Lives

Michigan State University

December 2, 2005

12:15 - 1:30 pm

MSU Museum Auditorium

"Whacking the Wobblies: The Michigan State Police vs. the IWW, 1917-1922"

Phil Schertzing

MSU School of Criminal Justice

Note: The October Brown Bag will be re-scheduled at a later date:

"'1913 Massacre': The Woody Guthrie Song and the Michigan Copper Strike Tragedy that Inspired It"

Ken Ross and Louis Galdieri

Documentary Filmmakers

For more information, contact John Beck at **beckj at msu.edu**.

New Faculty Community Affiliates

The Center for Working-Class Studies is pleased to welcome its newest faculty affiliate, Robert Weaver, and Community Affiliates Senator Marc Dann and Diane Gilliam Fisher.

Robert Weaver is a Professor of Sociology at Youngstown State University. He has a longstanding interest in issues related to class, race, stratification, and inequality. He has published a book and numerous articles on matters related to health and pedagogy. Professor Weaver is currently Vice-President of the YSU faculty union.

Senator Marc Dann, who has served in the Ohio Senate since 2003, is a graduate of the University of Michigan and the Case Western Reserve University School of Law. He has a law practice where he represents working- and middle-class consumers. Dann has helped expose massive problems in the Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation and has sued Governor Bob Taft.

Diane Gilliam Fisher is the author of three collections of poetry: *Kettle Bottom*, *One of Everything*, and *A Recipe for Blackberry Cake*. *Kettle Bottom* won the Ohioana Library Association Book of the Year Award in poetry (2005), a Pushcart Prize, and was used as a Freshman Reader at Smith College (2005). She lives and works in Northeast Ohio and specializes in Appalachian poetry, life, and culture.

Conference Announcement

Writing Class:

Representations of Working-Class Spaces in Modern Britain

The University of Warwick will host a one-day interdisciplinary conference, May 6, 2006, to consider how certain spaces are designated as "working class." The conference will examine ways in which working-class spaces are written, represented, and inhabited by British working class as well as the writers, historians, literary critics, sociologists, and geographers who study working-class life. Speakers will include Beverly Skeggs, Valerie Walkerdine, Carolyn Steedman, and others. For more information, contact Sue Dibben, **hrc at warwick.ac.uk**, or Nicola Wilson, **n.l.wilson at warwick.ac.uk**.

Reports from the Field

Chicago Center for Working-Class Studies

The Labor Trail map produced by the Chicago Center for Working-Class Studies last fall has been selling briskly, both within the city and for national conventions and conferences held in Chicago. Focused on 11 working-class neighborhoods, the Labor Trail traces walking tours that highlight both labor struggles and working-class institutions, from churches to beer halls and community centers, across the city. Initially funded by a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council, a second printing has been ordered with the assistance of the Chicago Federation of Labor. You can see the map at www.labortrail.org and order copies from Jamie Daniel at **orders at labortrail.org**.

In September, the Chicago Center hosted an evening with Betsy Leondar-Wright, communications director of United for a Fair Economy, focused on her new book, *Class Matters: Cross-Class Alliance Building for Middle-Activists*. The Center will also organize a series of events with other Chicago-area groups to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the publication of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. Designed around the theme "The New Jungle and the New Progressivism," these events will compare and contrast the powers and struggles of the early 20th and 21st centuries. The Center also plans to reprise its now annual workshop, "Getting Paid to Cause Trouble: Careers in Organizing for Social Justice," at which more than a dozen young labor and community organizers speak with college student activists about organizing as a job and a way of life.

The Chicago Center has elected Nancy MacLean of Northwestern University and Liesl Orenic of Dominican University as co-chairs. The Center's steering committee now has members from nine area universities, two unions, and two non-profit community organizations. For more about the Center, see www.workingclassstudies.org.

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Youngstown State University Center for Working-Class Studies 11th Annual Lecture Series 2005-2006

November 15, 2005, Tuesday, 7:30 pm

Wal-Mart and the Wal-Martization of American Industry

Thomas Palley, former chief economist, US-China Economic and Security Commission and author of *Plenty of Nothing: The Downsizing of the American Dream and the Case for Structural Keynesianism*
In conjunction with the showing of *Wal-Mart: The Hidden Costs of Low Prices*

Presidential Suites, Kilcawley Center/YSU

Co-sponsored by YSU's Economics Department and Williamson College of Business Administration

January 25, 2006, Wednesday, 6:00 pm

Memorializing Steelwork: Public Art in Youngstown

Greg Moring, Art Department and Sherry Linkon, American Studies

Lecture Hall, McDonough Museum

Co-sponsored by YSU's Art Department and the McDonough Museum

February 16, 2006, Thursday, 7:30 pm

Poetry Reading

Diane Gilliam Fisher, CWCS community affiliate, author of *Kettle Bottom* and *One of Everything*

Presidential Suite, Kilcawley Center/YSU

Co-sponsored by YSU's English Department

March 30, 2006, Thursday, 12:00 noon

The Ethical Challenges of Globalization

John Coleman, SJ, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, Professor of Social Values

Chestnut Room, Kilcawley Center/YSU

Co-sponsored by YSU's Philosophy and Religious Studies Department

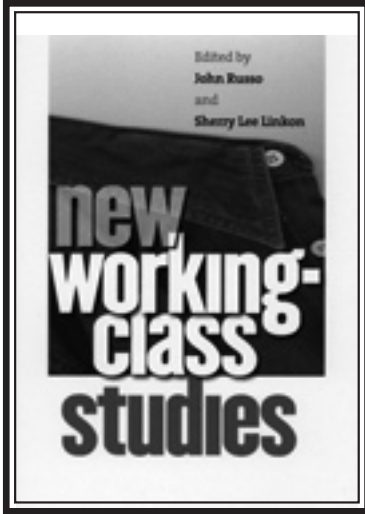
April 25, 2006, Tuesday, 7:30 pm

Journalism of Work and Class

Paul Nyden, Senior reporter, Charleston Gazette

Presidential Suite, Kilcawley Center/YSU

Co-sponsored by the Journalism Program



New Working-Class Studies

Edited by John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon

“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.

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Reports from the Field continued

Center for Study of Working-Class Life

The Center for Study of Working Class Life at SUNY Stony Brook is producing a documentary video, directed by Jonathan Levin, *Meeting Face to Face: Iraqi Labor Leaders Tour the US - June 2005*. The video captures the energy and emotions of the tour and emphasizes the important substantive message Iraqi workers want to convey to all Americans: end the occupation of Iraq; oppose the privatization of Iraqi national resources; and support the right of all Iraqi workers to organize free and independent trade unions. The documentary takes the story beyond the tour to the AFL-CIO national convention in July 2005 where delegates voted to support the rapid withdrawal of US forces from Iraq, for the first time in history opposing an on-going US war.

A trailer and more information are available online, at <http://naples.cc.stonybrook.edu/CAS/wcm.nsf/pages/tv>. The website also has a link for you to donate funds to support the completion of the project. Anyone contributing \$100 will receive a copy of the finished documentary as soon as it is complete. Any contribution of \$500 or more will receive on-screen credit as well as the documentary (DVD unless VHS requested). For more information, contact Michael Zweig, michael.zweig@stonybrook.edu.

Working-Lives Research Institute at London Metropolitan University

This year, the Working-Lives Research Institute at London Metropolitan University has secured many new projects and the number of staff has grown to 40. Due to rapid expansion, the Institute has relocated to the University's City campus right in the heart of the City of London. It has also hosted visiting scholars from the US, Sweden, France, and Spain. Institute staff are currently researching a range of issues reflecting class, race, gender and their intersections with the world of work.

In February the Institute began working on a major ESRC project, "Does Work Still Shape Social Identities and Action?" The project, which is part of the Research Council's major identities program, will involve a research team including Tim Strangleman,

Steve Jefferys, Jane Martin, John Kirk, and Chris Wall. The aim is to understand the importance of work in contemporary society as well as gauging its historical role. For more information, visit <http://www.workinglives.org/Identities.html>.

Working Lives researcher Chris Wall and filmmaker Karen Livesey have gained Lottery funding to make a documentary film on the working lives of the women involved in the construction Waterloo Bridge. Designed by the architect Giles Gilbert Scott, this historic London landmark was built during the Second World War by a largely female workforce, hence its nickname "The Ladies' Bridge."

For more information on the Institute and its projects see the Working Lives website: www.workinglives.org.



Larry Smith led an evening of readings by Appalachian Poets at the closing event of this year's Youngstown conference in May.

***Class in the Classroom:
Strategies and Resources for Teaching about
Working-Class Life and Culture
Summer Institute
July 24-28, 2006***

While class seems to be gaining new attention in American culture, it often remains on the sidelines in the classroom, even in courses that focus on diversity and inequality. Social class is a complex, challenging topic to address in the classroom. In a culture that so often ignores class, students (and often faculty) find the idea of class confusing, or they rely on stereotypes and myths about upward mobility and equal opportunity. As teachers, we struggle to find the right balance among race, gender, sexuality, and other aspects of culture and inequality, and even basic definitions of class are not clear. Often, class is subsumed into discussions of race, making it even more difficult to address. In teaching about difference and inequality, class is both an essential piece of the puzzle and the most confusing issue to discuss.

In order to develop more effective ways of teaching about working-class culture in the humanities and social sciences, we need to consider the following questions:

- Where does class fit in the curriculum?
- What core ideas about social class should we teach?
- What resources and strategies work well?
- How do students' backgrounds affect their responses to teaching about class?
- How does the teacher's identity shape classroom discussions about class?
- How can we integrate class into discussions of race, gender, and sexuality?

In July, the Center for Working-Class Studies will host a one-week institute for graduate students and faculty interested in strategies for teaching about social class, especially in the context of courses that address other cultural categories and ideas about inequality. Participants will discuss readings, presentations, and resources; share their own experiences and strategies; and develop assignments, syllabi, classroom activities, and/or research plans. The organizers hope to gather a diverse group, including faculty and students from different academic fields, geographical areas, and kinds of institutions.

The Institute will be led by Sherry Linkon, Professor of English and American Studies and Co-Director of the CWCS; Renny Christopher, Professor of English and Special Assistant to the Provost at California State University Channel Islands; and Mary Romero, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the School of Justice Studies and Social Inquiry at Arizona State University.

The institute will meet at the CWCS, with housing in the YSU dorms. Institute registration fee is \$575 for full-time faculty, \$300 for graduate students and part-time faculty. The registration fee covers housing in residence halls on campus and most meals. A few scholarships are also available. The institute is supported by funding from the Ford Foundation. More information and application materials are available on the CWCS website, www.as.ysu.edu/~cwcs.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: March 15, 2006

WCSA Graduate Student Column

As *Working-Class Notes* becomes the newsletter for the new Working-Class Studies Association, we've added a space for and about graduate students. This column will provide opportunities to highlight information specific to the needs of graduate students, such as announcements of dissertation fellowships and upcoming conferences, and keep organization members informed about the field's up-and-coming members and their research interests. More importantly, I hope this space will foster networking among graduate students and other members of the organization and mentoring between graduate students and professors in their related fields.

To this end, I would like to introduce Sarah Attfeld, a Ph.D. student at the University of Technology, Sydney, whose dissertation project is entitled, "The Working-Class Voice in Contemporary Australian Poetry." Her interests include representations of working-class people, the marginalization of working-class poetry by the literary mainstream, working-class women's poetry, and the position of working-class academics in Australia. Sarah has presented papers at a number of conferences including the Cultural Studies Association of Australia and the Working-Class Studies conference at Youngstown. Her articles "Working Class Heroes? Les Murray vs Pi O" and "Invisible Force: Australian Working Class Poetry in Contemporary Australia" were published in *Overland* and "Not Enough Class" appeared in *Blue Dog Australian Poetry*. Her own collection of poems, *Hope in Hell*, was published in 2000. Sarah recently started a listserv for people interested in Australian working-class studies in an attempt to bring together isolated scholars in the field and to open the dialogue between the US-based WCSA and working-class studies in Australia. Those interested in joining the list can e-mail Sarah at **Sarah.J.Attfield at student.uts.edu.au**.

Please send announcements and suggestions for this column to my e-mail address listed below. I'm also compiling a list of graduate students in working-class studies, in order to distribute information easily, so please be in touch so I can add you to the list.

Michele Fazio
English Department, SUNY - Stony Brook
mfazio at ic.sunysb.edu



Michele Fazio, Tim Strangleman, Sherry Linkon, and Dorian Warren offered comments on the future of working-class studies at a plenary at the conference, Working-Class Studies: Past, Present, and Future.

Working-Class Studies Association Moves Ahead

Members of the Working-Class Studies Association have approved a constitution and elected a Steering Committee for the 2005-2006 academic year. The constitution outlines the responsibilities of Steering Committee members and several core committees, and it includes procedures for proposing and passing resolutions. The constitution and slate of representations were presented at the first business meeting of the Working-Class Studies Association, held during the Youngstown conference in May 2005. Ballots were distributed to all members in June, and voters approved both the constitution and the Steering Committee.

This year's Steering Committee includes President Sherry Linkon, President-Elect Peter Rachleff, Secretary Jamie Daniel, and Treasurer Michael Zweig. At-large representatives include Tim Strangleman, Michele Fazio, Mary Romero, and Andrew Ross.

The WCSA reached this stage in its work thanks to the efforts of a small planning group, including Linkon, Daniel, Zweig, Strangleman, and Fazio, together with Renny Christopher, Sandi Dahlberg, Tami Gold, Kitty Krupat, Paul Lauter, and Dorian Warren. They met in person and held extensive on-line discussions over the course of a year.

The WCSA is pursuing several core projects this year. The Outreach Committee has developed a brochure to help promote membership. Please help promote the WCSA by giving brochures to friends and colleagues who you think would be interested. Personal contacts are the most effective. To request copies of the brochure, contact Patty LaPresta (**pmlapresta at ysu.edu**). The Communications Committee is developing a set of guidelines for the WCSA's listserv **working-class-studies@lists.ysu.edu**, and the committee has begun work on creating a separate WCSA website and planning for a journal.

The next business meeting of the WCSA will take place as part of the "How Class Works" conference at SUNY Stony Brook in June. See page 11 for more information on that conference. Note, too, that the 2007 conference will be held in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Changes in Working-Class Notes

As of next fall, the Working-Class Studies Association will take over as publisher of this newsletter. Already, you can see evidence of the WCSA's involvement, in the WCSA update, the addition of regular reports on graduate students and projects in the field, and the presence of Jamie Daniel as the newsletter's new book editor (a move that begins to distribute responsibility for the newsletter beyond YSU). Please address announcements of new books to Jamie (**educateagitatororganize at hotmail.com**).

A more important change is on the way: as of Spring, 2007, the newsletter will be mailed only to members of the WCSA, who will receive it as part of their membership. If you want to continue to receive the newsletter, you must join the WCSA. A membership form is available on page 14 for your convenience.

CALLS FOR PAPERS

Special Issue of Qualitative Sociology on "Constructing Workers"

"Constructing Workers" will focus on efforts to organize workers in contingent labor contracts who are often not considered employees. Increasing numbers of workers fit this description, and both unions and community organizations have sought, in various efforts, to help them organize for rights and benefits due workers with employee status. How do these groups organize? With what models? With what resources? How do they construct "workers" in such a way as to make contingent workers and contingent work less contingent? How do workers see themselves and their work? We would be interested in articles dealing with any of the following topics, or other related ones.

- * migrant and day labor
- * domestic worker organizing
- * sex worker organizing
- * workfare organizing
- * sweatshop organizing
- * worker centers
- * unemployed workers
- * retail worker organizing
- * organizing in industries that have become or are becoming more contingent
- * transnational labor identities (i.e., transposition of labor politics from home to host countries by immigrant laborers)
- * gender, race, ethnicity, and their intersections with organizing appeals
- * the negotiation of union-community relations
- * contingent workers' encounters with the state

Deadline: January 10, 2006

Manuscript submission guidelines available at:
www.Springeronline.com

Send papers to:

John Krinsky, Guest Editor
Department of Political Science, NAC 4/126
City College, City University of New York
Convent Avenue at 138th Street
New York, NY 10031

[jkrinsky at ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:jkrinsky@ccny.cuny.edu)

212-650-5236

Steel Cities Conference: Tradition, Transition and Transformation June 29 - July 2, 2006

"Steel Cities" will bring together academics from a range of disciplines, professionals from the museum, heritage and creative industries, and members of industrial and community groups to explore the continuing legacy of the steel industry. It will take place in Sheffield, England's most famous "Steel City," and will be led by the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University in collaboration with a number of partners interested in sharing and disseminating good practice.

"Steel Cities" aims to:

- * bring together representatives from steel cities across the world to discuss common issues
- * open up a dialogue between academics, community groups, and representatives of industry addressing both the heritage of steel and its current contribution to local life
- * explore how the history of the steel industry is represented in academic texts, museums and heritage sites, and 'popular' media
- * share and disseminate good practice in the regeneration of "Steel Cities" in a post-industrial age

The conference will explore how the legacy of the steel industry is managed, expressed and celebrated in post-industrial cities, and consider issues of identity in cities (like Sheffield and Pittsburgh) where steel is iconic.

Submit 500 word abstracts, by **December 31** to:

Professor Joan Beal

National Centre for English Cultural Tradition

University of Sheffield

9, Shearwood Road

Sheffield S10 2TD

UK

Abstracts can be emailed, if desired, to **[j.c.beal at shef.ac.uk](mailto:j.c.beal@shef.ac.uk)**. To be included on our email distribution list contact Joan Beal at the email address above. Further details and registration info will appear on our future website **<http://www.shef.ac.uk/english/nat-lect/steelcities>**.

See Calls, 12

CALLS FOR PAPERS

**2006 East Central Writing Centers
Association (ECWCA) Conference
March 9 - 11, 2006
Mount Union College
Alliance, Ohio**

This conference is designed to engage teachers, writers, and tutors of all levels and interests; the conference theme both appreciates the rich diversity of the greater writing and language arts community and provides a “contact zone” for our collective work. In keeping with Mike Rose’s recent *Mind at Work*, this is an opportunity for participants to investigate more deeply the intelligence of the work inside and outside of their own areas while deepening our collective commitment to and appreciation of the multivalence of writing and writing education.

Potential conference topics should interest tutors as well as others, and can include but are not limited to:

- * assessment
- * writing center research work
- * making tutoring work with your course load/major
- * keeping work as a tutor manageable
- * working with specific groups
- * working with challenging peers/colleagues/writers
- * the intra-institutional work of the writing center
- * integrating the working responsibilities/roles of the writing center Director
- * working out (of) the history of (the) writing center(s)
- * importing/exporting writing center work
- * best practices/what works
- * working with technology
- * the labor and workers in writing centers

Deadlines:

Proposals - extended to December 15, 2005

Early Registration - ends February 1, 2006

Please visit www.ecwca.org for further details.

**How Class Works
June 8 - 10, 2006
State University of New York
at Stony Brook**

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. 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:

- * the mosaic of class, race, and gender
- * 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
- * pedagogy of class

Submit proposals as hard copy, postmarked by **December 15** to:

Michael Zweig, Director
How Class Works -- 2006 Conference
Center for Study of Working-Class Life
Department of Economics/SUNY
Stony Brook, NY 11794-4384
(631) 632-7536

or as an e-mail attachment to michael.zweig@stonybrook.edu.

Guidelines for presentation and session proposals can be found at the conference website: www.working-class.sunysb.edu

Book Review: Todd Vogel, *Rewriting White: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in 19th Century America* (Rutgers University Press, 2004).

Reviewed by Stephen L. Sniderman, Retired Professor of English, Youngstown

Todd Vogel's premise in this intriguing but ultimately unsatisfying book is that several "racial aliens" (2) in 19th-century America used "standard" English to resist and protest the culture which that language represented. He focuses on non-mainstream writers: several free black newspaper editors, especially William Wells Brown; William Apess, "the Pequot essayist and Indian rebellion leader" (40); Anna Julia Cooper, a black feminist; and Edith Eaton, a half-Chinese advocate for Asian Americans who wrote under the pen name Sui Sin Far. He says his goal in this book is to "look at how people of color write themselves into the national discourse, to ask why they use the discourses they use, and to question how they intended those audiences to read those discourses" (3).

As its title suggests, *ReWriting White* reflects many of the current trends in literary and cultural studies. Vogel looks at the "intersection" of race, class, and gender. He uses cutting-edge concepts borrowed from sociology and semiotics, like "Cultural Capital" and the notion of "rewriting" one's life. His choice of writers not only includes representatives of both genders and of three distinct non-white groups but is calculatedly non-canonical, or, as he would undoubtedly argue, pre-canonical (since he continually implies that these writers deserve to be studied by English majors). William Apess, hardly a household name, has been in the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* only since the 1990s. Sui Sin Far was not added to that canon-making collection until 2003, and William Wells Brown and Anna Julia Cooper still haven't made it (at least not in the "shorter sixth edition"), although they both appear in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*.

For me, his attempt to be trendy and "inclusive" ends up undermining much of what he claims. He is examining writers who were supposedly trying to gain "Cultural Capital" through their writing, but, as he readily admits, none of them succeeded. Their "strategy" of gaining power by following rhetorical rules laid down by John Bascom (in *Aesthetics*; or, *The Science of Beauty*) and others did not make them memorable writers, so a detailed discussion of

the cultural and political context in which they wrote, as interesting as it may be for its own sake, has little resonance for me. Few of us read Anna Julia Cooper, but we do read Ida B. Wells, another 19th-century black woman writer whose "fiery tone" (136), style, energy, facts, and indignation still make her writing appealing and "relevant" to 21st-century readers. We do still read Brown, but mostly for his novels (such as *Clotel*), not for his newspaper work. Vogel convinces me that his way of reading these writers is reasonable, but he doesn't convince me that it's significant or useful.

In addition, the book does not hold together particularly well. Vogel's broad claims about language and power are obviously intended to unify the various discussion of these disparate writers, but the authors' lives are so different and each analysis so self-contained that it is sometimes difficult to remember why he is discussing all these writers in the same book. Each individual chapter includes much interesting biographical and historical information, but he makes too little attempt to interrelate their lives, their worlds, or their texts. When Vogel says, "Each writer uses a different technique, but the end game is the same. . . . [S]ometimes these marginalized people spoke their change. Sometimes they became it" (page 2), what stands out for me are not only the different techniques, but the different circumstances, attitudes, audiences, lifestyles, problems, and solutions. The fact that all of them were not-white and trying to work out their relation to whiteness is not enough to hold a book together, at least not the way that Vogel has constructed it.

Nevertheless, *ReWriting White* has a lot to offer a reader interested in antebellum and postbellum life, including entertaining and enlightening information about the relation of phrenology to racism, about Arnold Genthe's photographs of Chinatown around 1900, and about the theatricalization of King Philip's (a.k.a. Metacomb's) 1675 war against the colonists. But if you want a deft and insightful treatment of class, race, and cultural capital in 19th-century America, you probably should seek it elsewhere.

Book Review: Tim Strangleman, *Work Identity at the End of the Line: Privatization and Culture Change in the UK Rail Industry* (Palgrave 2004).

Reviewed by Jack Metzgar, Professor of Humanities, Roosevelt University

Anybody who has been privatized, re-engineered or “right-sized” in the past two decades will recognize themselves in the comic-tragic fate of the British Rail workers in Tim Strangleman’s *Work Identity at the End of the Line: Privatization and Culture Change in the UK Rail Industry*.

Older workers will recognize the cruel insult of the assumption that what they do, know, think and feel is the problem in their workplace. Younger workers will recognize the dilemma of being caught between the bloodless superficiality of a forward-looking managerial vision and the dense, complicated tacit knowledge (the guidance and occasional misguidance) of their older workmates. But they will also learn from the epic, everything-matters approach Strangleman brings to his dialectical analysis of the disastrous denationalization of the British rail system.

Written in a lean, accessible style, *Work Identity* moves effortlessly from the big picture of British national politics and multinational corporate philosophy to the man in the shed whose commitment to the work and his workmates is both destructive of corporate policy and somehow gets the job done. At once a cautionary tale about the perils of privatization and a sociological paean to the stubborn resilience of both blue- and white-collar agency, *Work Identity* is industrial sociology that understands that workers matter, not just for ethical or humanitarian reasons but because their social ingenuity is what makes our world work as well as it does.

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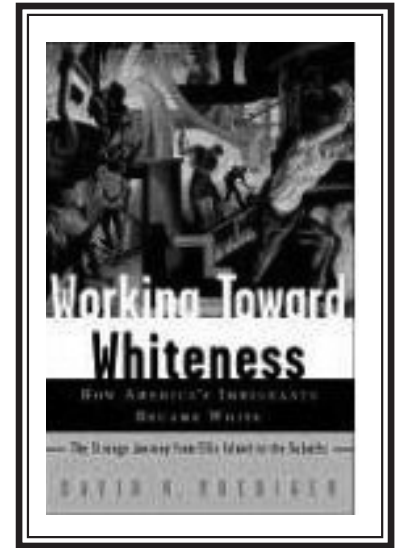
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New Releases

***Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Become White*, David Roediger, Basic Books, 2005**

In *Working Toward Whiteness*, historian David Roediger continues the story of the relationship between whiteness and labor that he began in his classic *Wages of Whiteness*. His new book explores how American ethnic groups that are considered white today, such as Jewish-, Italian-, and Polish-Americans, were once viewed as racially "other." Roediger argues that these ethnic groups became part of white America in the 1920s, ironically after immigration was severely restricted, through a combination of organized labor and increased access to home ownership. From ethnic slurs to racially restrictive real estate covenants, *Working Toward Whiteness* explores the social forces that defined who was and was not "white." As in his other work, Roediger's analysis clarifies the complex interrelationship between race, class, and work.



***The Street*, Jim Daniels and Charlee Brodsky, Bottom Dog Press, 2005**

Jim Daniel's poems and Charlee Brodsky's photographs offer a collaborative rumination on urban life. The photos use a variety of techniques to reveal the personalities of the people pictured, and the poems add smart, funny stories and voices invented by Daniels. The book documents everyday life in poignant and engaging ways.



Photograph by Charlee Brodsky.

Texture

by Jim Daniels

*The wise ponderous face
of an ancient turtle.*

*Textures of strength
earned, grace deceptive.*

*A regal rhino
buying bargain clothes*

*and hand-labeled merchandise.
Beneath her head-scarf*

*the warm glow
of a loving yet chemical smell.*

*Strong enough to be a human
playground apparatus and cook dinner*

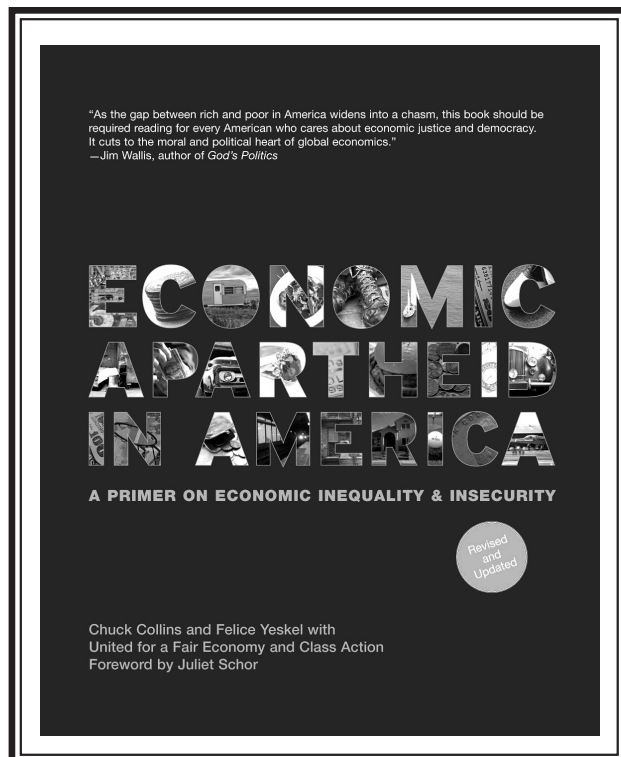
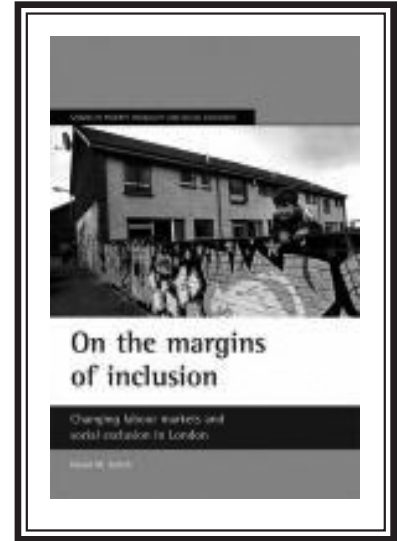
*at the same time.
The line around her neck collects salt.*

*Someone still kisses her there.
Feel the breeze in her skirt.*

New Releases, continued

***On The Margins of Inclusion: Changing Labour Markets and Social Exclusion in London*, David Smith, Policy Press, 2005**

David Smith's new book argues that the social exclusion of the poor is closely tied to the changing nature of work and patterns of exclusion from secure paid employment. In *On The Margins Of Inclusion*, he shows how different groups of economically marginal people have adapted to and negotiate the 'post industrial' labor market and a welfare system geared towards reintegrating them into formal employment. Through close ethnographic study of people living on a South London housing estate the book highlights collective strategies and responses to labor market and welfare changes and considers how these responses can, in themselves, contribute to patterns of community-based exclusion. It explores the notion of 'social exclusion' from the perspective of those deemed to be 'socially excluded' and provides a compelling and vivid portrait of lives at the insecure, low-paid end of the labor market. The ethnography is used to tackle debates and controversies that are central to current discussions on the appropriate role and function of state welfare. Smith offers a thorough discussion of current policies to address social exclusion and area regeneration is woven into the fieldwork analysis.



Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality and

***Insecurity*, Chuck Collins and Felice Yeskel with United for a Fair Economy and Class Action, The New Press, 2005**

In their newly updated edition of *Economic Apartheid in America*, the co-founders of United for a Fair Economy examine the causes and manifestations of income and wealth disparities in the U.S., including recent tax policies and corporate scandals. The book explores changes in income and wealth distribution and examines the economic policies and shifts in power that have fueled the growing divide. Focusing on the decline of organized labor and civic institutions, the battle over global trade, and the growing inequality of income and wages, Collins and Yeskel argue that most Americans are shut out of the discussion of the rules governing their economic lives. Accessible and engaging, illustrated throughout with charts, graphs, and political cartoons, the book lays out a comprehensive plan for action.