



Working-Class Notes

Volume 7, Issue 2

Spring 2004

The Directors' Report . . .

It's been a busy spring at the Center for Working-Class Studies.

We started the year with renovations, adding a computer lab and fixing up our classroom. These changes improve the quality of our teaching and meeting space, and the lab provides our students and staff the space and resources to work on multimedia projects. With updated space, some new furniture, full-time staff, several student workers, and occasional visiting scholars, the Center is a lively place these days.

In March, visiting scholar Mark Pendras spent two weeks working on his dissertation on local conflicts related to the movement of corporations. Mark is completing his Ph.D. in Geography at Rutgers University. His visit coincided nicely with a visit from a British graduate student working on similar issues, Paul Sissons, from University College in London. Paul is completing a comparative case study of labor market restructuring in the coal towns of England and in the steel towns of Pennsylvania. Other visitors this spring included Dorian Warren, who gave a public talk tracing the relationship and tensions between the labor movement and the civil rights movement. Dorian also met with workers in YSU's food service, who are in the midst of an organizing drive. In April, journalist Al Lubrano joined us as a speaker for YSU's Press Day, where he spoke with area high school students about his work, and gave a public presentation about his book *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams*.

This spring, we're completing work on one of the last projects from the first Ford grant, an edited collection of essays about new working-class studies. The collection is being published by Cornell University Press in the spring of 2005, and it includes essays by a number of people who've been active in the field, including David

Roediger, Michael Zweig, Renny Christopher, Don Mitchell, and Paul Lauter, among others. We're delighted to see Cornell taking the lead in publishing books in this emerging field. This month, Cornell is publishing Michael Zweig's *What's Class Got to Do With It?*, featuring articles developed from papers presented at the 2002 Stony Brook conference.

As we begin our new Ford grant, the Center is devoting considerable time to planning. We've just started work on next year's conference, which will mark the 10th anniversary of the founding of the CWCS (see page 9 for more on this).

We have also been involved in hiring a three-quarter time development specialist, who will help us develop an endowment and raise funds to support the Center's continued work. We hope to bring someone on board in August for this three-year position, jointly funded by Ford and YSU.

Center members Beverly Gray, Homer Warren, and Donna DeBlasio have been planning our new oral history project, focused on collecting interviews with African Americans in the Youngstown area. Our thanks, also, to historians David Roediger, Michael Honey, Kim Phillips, and Joe Trotter, who shared resources and suggestions for this project. This spring, they held a workshop to train people from the local community in the oral history process, and interviews should begin this summer.

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Working-Class Notes

Working-Class Notes is published by the Center for Working-Class Studies 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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Directors Cont'd

Planning is also underway for a program that will provide K-12 teachers in the Mahoning Valley resources and support to develop course materials, websites, and other projects for their students, with assistance from Center members. That project will begin this summer with recruiting of teachers. If you're interested, contact Sherry Linkon at the Center.

Perhaps the most exciting planning project for us this spring has been organizing a new Working-Class Studies Association. The surveys you submitted last spring not only made clear that forming an organization is important, you also provided many good ideas about what the group should do and how it should be organized. In April, we met with 15 representatives from various fields to develop a mission and goals statement, map out the structure and activities for the organization, and work through some key organizing issues. The association will hold its inaugural business meeting at the working-class studies conference at SUNY-Stony Brook in June. The mission and goals statement and information on how the organization will be developed are included in the insert with this issue of the newsletter. A founding meeting will be held from 3-5 p.m. on Thursday, June 10, just before the start of the How Class Works conference at SUNY Stony Brook.

We hope to see you at Stony Brook—

Sherry Linkon and John Russo



The first meeting of the Working-Class Lives: Sociologies and Geographies Seminar, at the University of Newcastle in the UK, generated lively discussions about the study of class in the U.S. and England.



HOW CLASS WORKS • 2004

A Conference at Stony Brook University

June 10-12, Thursday to Saturday

Class is ever more obvious as a force shaping public policy and our lives and life chances. The **How Class Works** conference explores ways in which an explicit recognition of class helps us to understand the social world in which we live.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Walden Bello, Medea Benjamin, Congressman David Bonior, Heather Boushey, Gene Bruskin, Jefferson Cowie, Stan Goff, Thea Lee, Jack O'Dell, Adolph Reed, Leslie Sklair, Joan Williams, 150 others

PRESENTATIONS FROM:

Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Italy, South Africa, Thailand, Trinidad, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

**See the full program and register online at
www.workingclass.sunysb.edu**

Or call the Stony Brook University Office of Conferences and Special Events at 631.632.6320 to request a registration form.

Sponsored by The Center for Study of Working Class Life
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News and Information

New York Union Semester Program Accepting Applications for Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 Programs

The New York Union Semester is offered through Queens College/CUNY and provides students with the opportunity to intern at a labor union or community organization in New York City while taking Labor Studies courses at Queens College for a semester. The program is open to all undergraduate majors and post-baccalaureate students. In addition to a \$1,700 scholarship and a weekly \$210 stipend, all participants receive undergraduate or graduate credit for their work.

Internships include a wide range of activities from organizing to research, to media and communications. A diverse group of unions and organizations have hosted interns, including UNITE!, SEIU, HERE, ACORN, and Jobs with Justice.

New York Union Semester is an excellent career opportunity for students interested in working for social and economic justice. Interested applicants may access an application and further information at www.qc.edu/unionsemester or e-mail unionsemester@qc.edu. They may also contact the Program Coordinator at 212-827-0200.

News from Working Lives Research Institute at London Metropolitan University UK

The Working Lives Research Institute at London's Metropolitan University continues to grow successfully, and rapidly! The unit recently moved into a new set of offices in order to accommodate the 25 members of staff engaged on a series of research projects on working-class life and labor. Research projects currently look at issues of race, ethnicity, and age discrimination as well as trade union learning and activism. The Institute is about to submit a bid to the UK Heritage Lottery Fund for a major grant to record the life histories of Black trade unionists in the UK.

The institute has also recently launched its new website at: www.workinglives.org/

Working Lives has close connections with two other important centers for the study of working-class life: the Trade Unions Congress (TUC) Library and Women's Library within London Metropolitan University. The TUC Library collections has recently launched a major web resource at www.unionhistory.info.

Details of the Women's Library can be found at www.thewomenslibrary.ac.uk/

We welcome contact with other centers and individuals interested in working-class life and culture.

New Center Members

Greg Moring, a new center member, received his Master of Fine Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland. He currently is an associate professor teaching design and sculpture at Youngstown State University, and has served as the chair of the YSU Department of Art. He has completed a number of public commissions and exhibited work in the United States and abroad. He resides and maintains a studio in Youngstown, Ohio.

Salvatore Attardo holds a doctorate from the Catholic University of Milan and a PhD from Purdue University. He works in linguistics, very broadly defined. His research interests include humor (he is the current editor-in-chief of *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research*), Neo-Gricean pragmatics, and sociolinguistics. He is currently working on several projects, among which are working-class humor and the maintenance of Italian among Italian speakers in Northeast Ohio.

First ESRC Seminar on Working-Class Geographies and Sociologies



Sociologist Mike Savage and Sherry Linkon were keynote speakers for the first seminar in the ESRC series.

The introductory event in a high profile seminar series on working-class life was held in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in the North East of England in early February (details at www.working-class-studies.net/index.htm). *Working-Class Geographies and Sociologies* is designed to explore the potential for the approach of working-class studies in the UK and its relationship to more established class analysis. The idea was to kick off the series with an overview panel featuring Sherry Linkon looking at the field from the U.S. point of view followed by Mike Savage, Professor of Sociology from Manchester University, talking about patterns in British class analysis.

On the morning of the following day, participants enjoyed a visit to the North East's legendary Tyneside Gallery and cinema (details at www.amber-online.com). Further events in this series will focus on Class, Representation, and the City; Global Networks of Class and Labour; Workplaces Community and Organized Labour; Home and Class; Spaces and Polices.

Union Women Build Power

Indiana University Division of Labor Studies is holding an expanded state Leadership School for Union Women July 14 (evening registration)—July 17 at noon in Lebanon, Indiana. The theme is Union Women Build Power: From Our House to the White House! Since there is no Midwest School for Women Workers this year, women throughout the Midwest are invited to join in the challenging classes, exciting plenaries, and fun. To receive registration information, contact

Ruth Needleman
e-mail: rneedle@iun.edu
Labor Studies
Indiana Univeristy
(219) 980-6835

Working-Class Studies in the North East of England

Representatives from several of the universities in the northeast of England have met to begin a regional network of those active in working-class studies. Scholars from the Universities of Durham, Newcastle, and Northumbria attended an initial feasibility meeting early in February. The first substantive meeting of the new group will take place at the University of Newcastle on April 28. Its focus will include the development of research initiatives and publications as well as fostering initiatives beyond the academy. Currently those involved include regional specialists and those writing in international and comparative aspects of working-class studies. For further details contact:

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e-mail: i.p.roberts@durham.ac.uk
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University of Durham, England

Kudos to Jim Daniels

Congratulations to working-class writer Jim Daniels, who has been named the Thomas Stockham Baker Professor of English at Carnegie Mellon University. The award recognizes his publications, his teaching, his leadership of CMU's Creative Writing Program, and his work with high school students in the Pittsburgh area.

New Community and Labor Studies Institute in California

California State University, Channel Islands, has established a Community and Labor Studies Institute. It was developed by a committee of university faculty and staff along with members of the local community, including labor leaders and local economic justice advocates. The institute will help promote the university's mission of interdisciplinarity and outreach to the community.

The Institute's mission statement reads as follows:

To serve as a resource to students and campus community and those interested in the study of community and labor issues. Through interdisciplinary learning and research, the institute seeks solutions to community and workforce problems, emphasizing the Central Coast region and its relationship with the global economy. By affording students service learning opportunities, the institute serves as a resource to government and public agencies, community-based organizations, and labor unions in the region along with a wide spectrum of stakeholders including business and labor and non-profit organizations as well as faculty and staff of California State University Channel Islands.

Center Members Present Lecture Series at Lincoln University

Beverly A. Gray, Department of Psychology, and Homer B. Warren, Department of Marketing at Youngstown State University, presented a series of lectures entitled *Realities of Collective Unconsciousness: Memory and History of African Americans in Youngstown* for the Honors Program of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania during March. Lincoln University is celebrating its 150th year as a historically Black university (HBCU), and has among its distinguished alumni, the abolitionist and author Frederick Douglass, noted writer and poet Langston Hughes, and the Honorable Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall.

Gray and Warren also visited the University of Delaware, where they exchanged views and ideas with award-winning historian and author, Allison Blakely. They attended his latest pictorial presentation and lecture on global and historic images of Blacks. Gray and Warren are Co-coordinators of the African American Oral History Project of Youngstown (AAOHP) of the Center for Working-Class Studies (CWCS).

Fall 2004 Schedule

The Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives Lecture Series at Michigan State University

LuAnne Kozma, MSU Museum
"Smiling through Danger on the River: Worker Humor on the Westcott Mail Boat"
 Thursday, September 9

Douglas Noverr, MSU Department of Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures
"Dirty Uniforms, Dirty Money, Dirty Business: Labor and Class as Elements of Baseball's Black Sox Scandal"
 Thursday, October 21

Wilson Warren, Department of History, Western Michigan University
"I'm Glad I'm Not a Hog': Workers' Lives and the Ethics of Animal Slaughter"
 Friday, November 12

Rossina Hassoun, MSU Center for Integrated Arts and Humanities
"The Kufiyya and the Smokestack: The Lives of Working-Class Arab Americans in the Midwest"
 December, TBA

For more information, contact Dr. John Beck, beckj@msu.edu.

**Book Review: *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984*, by Steven High, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.
Reviewed by Donna DeBlasio, Department of History, Center for Working-Class Studies, Youngstown State University.**

Steven High, in his important new book, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984*, tackles the devastation of deindustrialization in the Great Lakes region of both the United States and Canada. The comparison between these two nations is useful, perhaps due more to their differences rather than their similarities.

High writes that in many ways deindustrialization impacted more harshly on the United States than it did on Canada. Indeed, it is only the old industrial heartland of the United States that bears the derisive sobriquet "Rust Belt," while Canada's Golden Horseshoe managed to escape the stigma attached to the failure of big industry in North America.

High points to a number of factors peculiar to Canada that tempered the disinvestments of corporations both large and small, including the fact that Canadians tended to respond to the situation by thinking beyond their own communities. Americans, on the other hand, responded in just the opposite manner—grounding their identities in their own communities, rather than thinking beyond their geographical boundaries. Steven High's book is an insightful contribution to understanding how the "rust belt" became the "rust belt."

One of the most interesting aspects of the book is in chapters three and four, where High discusses respectively, the physical alteration of the factory itself and the changing structure of industrial organization. He points out that the

Steven High's book is an insightful contribution to understanding how the "rust belt" became the "rust belt."

factory's built environment entered a "back to the garden" movement as industry tried to eradicate the image of smoky, dirty mills that permeated the American and Canadian imaginations (not to mention landscapes).

In the late 20th century, factories moved out of their urban environments and into the suburbs and exurbs, far away from the cities that spawned them. In many ways, heavy industry was engaged in a deep denial of its gritty past—somewhat like many business leaders in "rust belt" regions who would rather forget their community's industrial heritage than celebrate it. At the same time, industry tried to re-invent its own structure, shedding its high cost union employees by running away first to the U.S. South and then to Mexico and beyond. The difference here

between the U.S. and Canada is that in the former, it was heavy industry like steel and autos which closed, partly due to antiquated facilities, while in Canada, "not one integrated steel mill or auto assembly plant" closed between 1969

and 1984, since these plants were more modern (p. 130).

High's book is impressive in its adept use of

oral history interviews to help tell the stories of communities like Youngstown and Dayton, Ohio, Detroit, Hamilton, and other places hit by deindustrialization. These stories give the book depth and meaning.

The anger, sense of betrayal, sorrow, and yes, pride and defiance, comes through in the words of the men and women who bore the brunt of the wave of plant closings and industrial retrenchment in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Their stories are important to understand the responses and means of coping by people on both sides of the border—and the differences between citizens of the two nations are illuminated by their own words. The oral interviews make the story of "industrial sunset" a human one indeed.

Book Review: *Twentieth-Century Writing and the British Working Class*, by John Kirk, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003.

Reviewed by William Hutchings, Department of English, University of Alabama–Birmingham

John Kirk's *Twentieth-Century Writing and the British Working Class* reasserts the importance of class issues amid widespread allegations about the demise of class in general and the death of the working class in particular. Kirk's survey of twentieth-century writing on the subject is divided into three periods. The first is the pre-World War II decades, during which working-class writers primarily sought "to insist on the working-class presence," establishing their own experience and perspectives as subjects worthy of serious consideration in literature, without the condescension and marginalization that had prevailed for centuries. Hence came the "proletarian" literature of the "Hungry Thirties."

In Kirk's second phase, the self-styled "affluent society" with its emphasis on youth in the 1950s and 1960s, the working class seemed on the verge of a previously unknown kind of erasure, the hegemony of "embourgeoisement." This was the widespread political assumption that a "classless" society was emergent, its mores and ideology being those of the middle class. In the writings of John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, and Arnold Wesker, such assimilation was variously viewed as "the essential problem and the great tragedy." Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) is Kirk's example of "embourgeoisement," with its emphasis on a commodity culture that consists of "the cheap, the ineffable, and the disposable," not only in its consumer goods but its human relationships as well. Sillitoe's fiction redefines "the working-class text . . . as such not because it speaks a working-class consciousness in some monologic and unified sense, but because the narrated dialogics—the clashing styles and voices, which represent class relations rather than a single class utterance—signify the presence of class antagonisms."

Despite material comforts and better wages, Sillitoe's character Arthur Seaton, in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1957), looks back nostalgically, not in anger, to the 1930s and disappearing working-class culture. Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1966 [1957]) and Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* (1958) provide the decade's intellectual framework for that discussion, particularly the latter's concept of "structures of feeling."

From the early writings of Sillitoe, Kirk jumps to Thatcherite Britain, his third phase. Here he analyzes works as disparate as the BBC television series *Boys from the Blackstuff*, about unemployment, the poetry of Tony Harrison, and novels by Barry Hines, *The Price of Coal* (1979) and *Looks and Smiles* (1983). All of these brought a then-new politicization to working-class writing, even as "negative topographies" via redevelopment and "gentrification" transformed or abolished working-class areas. He offers a particularly thorough discussion of "Recovered perspectives: women and working-class writing," focusing particularly on the early novels of Pat Barker.

Kirk's coverage of his selected decades—the 1930s, 1950s, and 1980 to now—is thorough, thoughtful, and theoretically informed, recovering the works of many lesser-known authors and usefully including even television series where appropriate. Unfortunately, however, the book's title vastly overstates its scope. Such important working-class writers as John Osborne, John Wain, John Arden, Harold Pinter, Joe Orton, and David Storey are among those who are nowhere even mentioned in these pages, and any analysis of twentieth century writing and the British working class is woefully incomplete without them.

Project and Conference Announcements

***Sociology*: Special Issue on Class, Culture and Identity**

Authors are invited to submit original unpublished papers on any aspect of Class, Culture, and Identity for a special issue of *Sociology* to be published in December 2005. Please prepare your manuscripts of 8,000 words or less in accordance with the guidelines on their website by the submission deadline, October 1, 2004. In addition to full-length articles, they will also consider research notes (maximum word length 4,000). Acceptance notification will be issued by the editors on February 28, 2005.

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10th Anniversary Conference of the Center for Working-Class Studies May 18-21, 2005 Youngstown State University

Along with an array of presentations, readings, and arts events, the conference will reflect on the development of new working-class studies as a field and consider new directions that we should pursue. Come help us celebrate the Center's first 10 years.

Watch for more information to be posted on the CWCS website and in the next newsletter regarding registration and keynote speakers.



Donna DeBlasio, Beverly Gray, and Homer Warren met with some of the local residents who will conduct interviews for the CWCS's Youngstown African American oral history project.

Chicago Center for Working-Class Studies Events and Projects

This year the Chicago Center for Working-Class Studies has concentrated its energies on two projects.

The first is the “Young Organizers Project.” With funding from the Wieboldt Foundation, the CCWCS is working on a two-part project serving the Chicago organizing community. Nancy McLean, Dorian Warren, and Liesl Orenic met with young community and labor organizers several times over the winter to discuss building stronger networks for campaigns on issues impacting both constituencies. The first event scheduled for the Young Organizers Project is a workshop for college students interested in social justice careers. Titled, “Get Paid to Cause Trouble: Careers in Social Justice,” this workshop on May 22 at Roosevelt University will introduce college students from eight local universities and colleges interested in social justice work to young organizers in the field. The second event, a workshop for organizers to build local networks and hear about successful national coalitions, is tentatively scheduled for after the November elections.

The second project is a series of events organized under the general title, “Injuries to All.”

The series coincided with Workers’ Memorial Day and foregrounds the extent to which working people in the U.S. still regularly face threats to their health and safety on the job. It not only draws attention to this ongoing problem, but also gives participants useful information and strategies for action they can take to demand improved workplace health and safety. It also addresses the Bush administration’s relaxing of enforcement of existing health and safety standards. The series is organized by Jamie Daniel with Jack Metzgar.

The series includes the following events:

April 22: Opening of photo exhibit, “The Quiet Sickness,” at the Roosevelt University Gage Center (18 N. Michigan). The photos are the work of Earl Dotter, who has been

nationally recognized for his documentation of workplace safety and health risks. Examples of his photos of work in a range of industries can be viewed at his website, www.earldotter.com/book.htm. Dotter will speak at the exhibit, which will continue through the end of May.

April 29: Screening of the film, “An Injury to One,” a documentary about the murder of labor organizer Frank Little in Butte, Montana, in 1919. Little was organizing miners who worked for the Anaconda Copper Company, infamous for such “extreme indifference to the safety of its employees [that] mortality rates in the mines were higher than in the trenches of Europe” during World War I. The film also addresses the long-term health and safety damage done to the residents of Butte by the company’s indifference to environmental safety.

May 13: Forum on current workplace health and safety issues and how unions are fighting back, with presentations by representatives of UFCW Locals (on repetitive stress and other injuries in the retail and meat-packing industries), SEIU (on injuries suffered chronically by home healthcare workers), and one of the building trades unions. This forum will provide workers and trade union staff with information on how to aggressively advocate for better workplace safety law and enforcement.

May 20: Symposium for scholars and activists in disability rights work, discussing the discrepancies between current workplace health and safety practices and the accommodation of workers with disabilities. This event will provide an opportunity for disability studies scholars and activists in the disability service organizations to discuss and compare their projects.

For more information, contact Jamie Daniel, jdaniel@uic.edu or 312-909-1121.

Race, Gender & Class in the 21st Century

2004 Race, Gender & Class Annual Conference

September 23-25, 2004

New Orleans

The 2004 Race, Gender, and Class Conference will be hosted by the following sponsors:

- Southern University at New Orleans, Race, Gender & Class Project, Center for African American Studies, Gender's Studies, Department of Social Sciences
- University of New Orleans, Department of Sociology, Women's Center, Office of Multicultural Affairs
- Xavier University of Louisiana, Department of Sociology, Political Sciences

The New Orleans RGC Conference is the only organization of its kind, which focuses on the intersection of the three terms: race, gender, and class. The Annual RGC Conference is providing a scholarly forum which allows those working in the field to further their study through their interactions with these issues. The conference is bringing in activists and community members, thus providing an opportunity for much needed interactions across institutional boundaries. There is no other conference in the world that addresses all three areas, their intersections, and their impacts on people lives.

Submissions are welcome from all RGC Studies disciplines on the topic Race, Gender & Class in the 21st Century. The following types of papers/abstracts/submissions are invited to submit: Research Papers; Completed Papers; Abstracts of Completed or Proposal Research; Students Papers; Work-in-Progress; Reports or Proposals for future projects; Reports on issues related to teaching or research or activism.

Proposal Submission Guidelines: Deadline is June 30, 2004.

Create a title page for your submission. The title page should include:

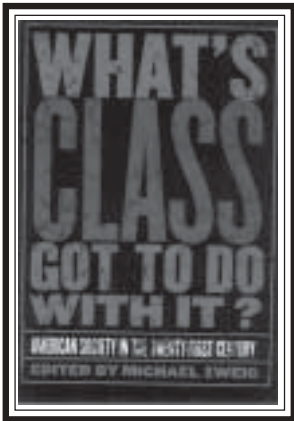
- (a) title of the submission;
- (b) topic area of the submission;
- (c) presentation format;
- (d) name(s) of the author(s);
- (e) department(s) and affiliation(s);
- (f) mailing address(es);
- (g) e-mail address(es);
- (h) phone number(s);
- (i) fax number(s);
- (j) corresponding author if different than lead author.

You may e-mail your abstract and/or paper, along with a title page, to **jbelkhir@suno.edu**. Receipt of submissions will be acknowledged via E-mail within 48 hours. You may also send submissions via regular mail (if submitting via regular mail, supply two copies) or fax to

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2004 RGC Conference Participation: If you wish to be a RGC Conference Committee member, a session organizer and/or chair please E-mail your request to **jbelkhir@suno.edu** and indicate the topic area in which you are interested. Registration for the Conference is required to be a 2004 RGC Conference organizer.

New Releases



***What's Class Got To Do With It? American Society in the Twenty-first Century*, Edited by Michael Zweig (Cornell University Press, 2004)**

Zweig's collection features essays by scholars and activists from labor studies, economics, psychology, English, and other

fields, reflecting on the relationship between class, race, and gender; globalization and public policy; and the lived experience of working-class people. Emerging from the 2002 How Class Works conference, this book reflects important trends in working-class studies and examines how the field is connected to contemporary society and politics. Contributors include Dorothy Sue Cobble, Bill Fletcher Jr., Barbara Jensen, Michelle M. Tokarczyk, and others.

***Tenderly Lift Me: Nurses Honored, Celebrated, and Remembered*, by Jeanne Bryner (Kent State University Press, 2004)**

CWCS Member Jeanne Bryner has published a new collection of profiles about nurses. *Tenderly Lift Me: Nurses Honored, Celebrated, and Remembered* reflects Bryner's study of the lives and perspectives of nurses, based on oral history interviews and her own experience as a registered nurse. The book is organized around individual women's stories, with profiles and photographs providing a rich context for the poems. Bryner is currently working on a play based on the book, which will be performed for the first time this spring.



***Liberating Voices: Writing at the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers*, by Karyn L. Hollis (Southern Illinois University Press, 2004)**

In *Liberating Voices*, Karyn L. Hollis tells the remarkable story of how the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers brought together women from different classes and ethnicities to study writing, literature, and politics. The summer school curriculum, Hollis shows, enhanced the individual and collective self-confidence of the 1,800 women who studied there between 1921 and 1938.

Drawing heavily on the women's writings—including autobiography, poetry, labor drama, humor, and economic reporting—*Liberating*

Voices recognizes the published writings of working-class women, who were mostly nontraditional students, immigrants, and minorities. Outlining a materialist pedagogy that centers on the women's daily economic struggles as well as their family and community experiences, Hollis reveals the tensions that stemmed from differences in race, ethnicity, class, and religion. She also shows how the students exploited cultural scripts and drew strength from their diversity, eventually insisting on a democratic sharing of power with faculty and administrators at the Summer School.

Hollis's analysis of the women's poetry points to their skill as both producers and consumers of literature. The common theme of body versus a powerful machine in the workplace bears witness to the industrial exploitation the women endured.

