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IEG



Labor and Capital in U.S. History: Annual Conference of the Historians in the German Association for American Studies

Organized by Axel Schäfer, Anja-Maria Bassimir, and Torsten Kathke

Attendance is free of charge. Register for this two-day Zoom event via Eventbrite:
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All times CET (subtract hours: UTC -1, EST -6, PST -9)

Friday, February 11, 2022

- 11:00–11:30 Conference Opening
- 11:30–13:00 Panel I: Normalizing Neoliberalism
Anja-Maria Bassimir, Torsten Kathke, Axel Schäfer
Chair: Simon Wendt
- 13:00–14:00 Break
- 14:00–15:00 Gather I: Doctoral Poster Presentation
- 15:00–16:30 Panel II: Socialism and Marxism
Severin Müller, Cord Scott, Olga Thierbach-McLean
Chair: Pia Wiegink
- 16:30–17:15 Break
- 17:15–18:30 Keynote I, David Roediger "Is the US a Middle Class Nation?
Past and Present"
Introduction: Alfred Hornung

Saturday, February 12, 2022

- 9:30–10:00 Welcome by Johannes Paulmann, Director of the Department of History of the Leibniz-Institute of European History (IEG), our conference host
- 10:00–11:30 Roundtable "Changing Labor Conditions"
Natalie Rauscher, Axel Jansen, Jan Logemann, Dirk Hoerder
- 11:30–13:00 Panel III: Internationalism, Transnationalism, and Empire
David Bebnowski, Lorenzo Costaguata, Richard Saich
Chair: Johannes Paulmann
- 13:00–14:00 Break
- 14:00–15:00 Gather II: Doctoral Poster Presentation
- 15:00–17:00 Panel IV: Labor Law and Labor Rights
Dominic Allen, Sydney Ramirez, Elizabeth Shermer, D. Caleb Smith
Chair: Philipp Gassert
- 17:00–17:15 Break
- 17:15–18:30 Keynote II, Elizabeth Faue, "Fighting for It Under a Different Name": Collaboration and Conflict, Labor and the New Social Movements"
Introduction: Axel Schäfer
- 18:30–20:00 Business Meeting



Friday, February 11, 2022

Panel I: Normalizing Neoliberalism

Chair: Simon Wendt (Goethe Universität, Frankfurt)

Anja-Maria Bassimir (Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz)

"Natural Profits – From Countercultural Cuisine to Yuppie Consumption"

The countercultural criticism of contemporary society led people to experiment with alternative forms of living and loving, but also of working and consuming. Yearnings for a simpler, more authentic and more communal life led some "back to the land." While cooperative farms promised an alternative way of producing, cooperative stores and buying clubs promised an alternative way of distributing and acquiring goods. The natural, health, and organic movements promised alternative – and better, more wholesome, and ethically sound – products. Dismissed by some as naïve or "nutty," the industry eventually recognized the appeal of these products and came up with their own "health" and "light" versions, hijacking the ideal and often taking over successful alternative businesses. An USDA report from 1984 noted: "The number of retail health and natural food stores increased from about 1,000 stores in 1970 to approximately 8,000 in 1982, with the largest share of stores located in the West. Total store sales also jumped from \$140 million in 1970 to slightly over \$2 billion in 1983." It also noted that some of these natural products were now available in regular supermarkets. The 1970s proved a pivotal period for the establishment and mainstreaming of the natural foods market. This paper traces the cooptation of countercultural critiques into a neoliberal natural foods industry. It argues that the field of natural food production, distribution, and retailing, while changing the conversation about personal and planetary health, incorporated countercultural ideals and made them operational within a neoliberal market logic.

Torsten Kathke (Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz)

"Working Futures"

Future Shock made waves in the early 1970s. Combining the peppy style of the era's New Journalism, dire warnings, a healthy dose of hyperbole, and thorough research, the book was the epitome of a new kind of popular diagnostic non-fiction work that dealt with the seemingly myriad problems that seemed to be popping up everywhere in U.S. society after the Sixties. Together with two more books, published in ten-year intervals thereafter, *The Third Wave* (1980) and *Power Shift* (1990), authors Alvin and Heidi Toffler tapped into changes that affected American society on all levels, including a topic that they, as former union organizers, naturally gravitated to: the future of work. The Tofflers' evolution from proponents of a vaguely technologically-powered Third Way ideology in the 1970s – already imminently connectable to neoliberal ideas, but yet falling short of their universal claims – towards deeply embedded neoliberalism (social critic Christopher Lasch complained that "the logic of the 3rd Wave" was the "absorption of all activities into the market") by the 1980s parallels a shift also in the larger political and economic discourse of the United States.

Using archival sources from the Toffler Papers as well as the Random House Collection, and public texts written by and about Alvin and Heidi Toffler and their conceptualizations of work, this paper traces the impact *Future Shock* and its sequels had on discussions about labor, deindustrialization, and the rise of the information economy, which they both predicted and were constantly bullish about. It argues that the "neoliberalization" of the Tofflers' futurist thought came about as a gradual reframing of already existing ideas in futures studies about the future of work, which the Tofflers developed in correspondence with, and as a reaction to what unions, corporations, and politics were making of their first book. This allowed the Tofflers to profitably fit their expertise into a developing broad societal discourse on the changing nature of the economy, which in turn then was influenced by their specific interventions.

Axel Schäfer (Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz)

"The Strange Career of Normalized Neoliberalism: How Evangelicals and the Counterculture Forged a New Political Economy"

Research into the unexpected ways in which antagonistic subcultures tend to bleed into and shape each other has in recent decades opened up new perspectives on the interaction of religion with the entire complex of social movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Building upon this body of scholarship, the paper revisits resurgent conservative Protestantism's relationship with the counterculture. It argues that the counterculture of the 1960s was pivotal for resurgent evangelicalism not solely because it provided a convenient enemy image, but because evangelicals participated in, shaped, and transported the decade's transformative impulses they professed to oppose. In particular, the paper advances three main arguments: First, that evangelicals did not simply reject the countercultural ideas of the 1960s, but absorbed and extended its key sentiments. Second, that conservative Protestantism's appropriation of countercultural rhetoric and organizational styles played a significant role in the right-wing political mobilization of conservative Protestants. And third, that the merger of evangelical Christianity and countercultural styles, rather than their antagonism, ended up being one of the most enduring legacies of the sixties. In particular, the paper maintains that the confluence of evangelical and countercultural sentiments shored up the neoliberal "mode of production" that valorized both low-paid labor and growing wealth inequality, transported anti-establishmentarian sentiments while spiritualizing capitalism, and advanced a form of secularization wrapped in a religious cloak. In short, it suggests that the combination of Sixties countercultural impulses with 1970s New Right political organizing was a critical element in forging the cultural imagery, socioeconomic structures, and political alignments that "normalized" neoliberalism.

Panel II: Socialism and Marxism

Chair: Pia Wiegink (Universität Bonn)

Severin Müller (George Mason University, Virginia)

"From Exceptionalism to the State of Exception: The Simultaneity of the Non-Simultaneous and the Corporatization of Social Life in Appalachia"

In the towns of Appalachia, each day trains carrying coal loads worth multiple millions of Dollars traverse the former epicenter of the booming United States coal industry. On their way to the giant export piers along the coast, the treasured cargo leaves a conspicuous trail of dust on ground and building alike, needlessly reminding the local communities of the persistent yet precarious dominance of this commodity extracted from the Appalachian coalfields region. This everyday phenomenon directly belies the persistent fantasies of Appalachia in popular culture and the media, routinely painting a picture of this globally integrated region as an isolated outlier of American social life and culture. It was Marx, among others, who pointed to the ideological function of the social division of labor expressed in the binary of town and country as not just a central conciliator of the contradictions of the capitalist system per se but, importantly, as a model of the inherent expansionary drive of capitalist accumulation and its imperialist penetration of new markets in the peripheries of the world-economy.

In his book *The New Imperialism*, the prominent geographer David Harvey provides an account of the historical processes of recent decades subsumed under the socioeconomic policies of neoliberalism. Conceived as a temporary and highly unstable fix for the recurring crises arising from stalling rates of profit, the project of neoliberalism sought to open up new outlets for capital flows at home and abroad. The implementation of its policies was dependent on the market-opening conditions born by globalization, on which it had a tremendously exacerbating influence. On the other hand, its social realities have revealed an at best temporary and highly unstable state of affairs, given the inevitable rise of opposition—a collective taking, so to speak, exception to a politics of intensified dispossession—to the financially imposed regime of deprivation necessary for the continued reproduction of capital. In this context, one of the central limitations of Harvey's analysis emerges in his dismissal of the antinomic character of globalization. Having vastly increased the pool of an industrial reserve army, it has simultaneously created the conditions for the articulation of class unity on a global scale. This realization, however, requires an epistemological break with the ruling logic of political economy bound to the conceptual units of the nation state and the national economy.

In this paper, I am interested in exploring the concept of simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, which, under the conditions of financial capitalism has found a startling expression, I suggest, in the corresponding images of the coal train passing through the economically devastated towns of Appalachia and the surge of the stock markets alongside the growing death toll of the Covid-19 pandemic. The corporatization of social life and culture in the Appalachian region, historically marked by the dominance of the coal industry and the gradual formation of a railway oligopoly, will serve as my framework for an overview of the calamitous subordination of labor to the logic of profit under the irrational conditions of capitalism.

Cord Scott (University of Maryland Global Campus – Asia)

"The 'Marxist History' War – the Cultural Depictions of Labor in U.S. History"

In 2021, one of the most slanderous political terms in the US is to be called a Communist, or a Marxist. The fear is such that the term is used to attack a variety of venues, from political ideology, to discussions of minimum wage and social programs, to the teaching of history itself in the US. Yet most Americans cannot distinguish the features of Marxism, communism, or even elements of the Constitution which they purport to defend. This political term has also been attached to any immigrants coming to America.

The result of these attacks on American institutions is troubling to say the least. Americans have used concepts which they may not fully understand, as a type of slur against the concept of "America" and its ideals. Combined with the fact that immigrants often brought these ideas to America, led to both anti-intellectual aspects of life as well as a backlash against any immigrants. These arguments often go against both labor movements as well as immigrants who represented a perceived threat for employment.

This paper will look at the cultural aspects of history, and how certain events in labor history were altered (the 1877 Rail Strikes, the 1886 Haymarket incident, the 1894 rail strikes, the "company town" mentality, Ludlow Colorado in 1912) to reflect an anti-immigrant/nationalist issue rather than a labor rights one. This alteration of history has implications for the future, as it cuts into the very concept of history to affect how we approach history in the 21st century.

Olga Thierbach-McLean (independent scholar)

"Is It Happening Here? – The Rise of Socialist Discourses in Contemporary U.S. Culture"

The absence of a strong socialist movement in the U.S. has been the subject of much academic and journalistic debate. Numerous critics have explored the question of why the U.S. emerged as the only industrial nation in which socialist ideas have failed to take firm roots, even despite being the most strongly developed capitalist society in the world and hence being primed for this political trajectory according to the assumptions of historical materialism. Typically, the reasons for this aspect of American political exceptionalism are traced to the country's strong individualist tradition with its celebration of entrepreneurship and the unregulated marketplace. For instance, in their seminal book *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (2000), Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks argue that "[d]istinctive elements of American culture – antistatism and individualism – negated the appeal of socialism for the mass of American workers."

However, more recently the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a resurgence of the capitalist critique that had flared up following the 2007–09 financial crises but lost momentum soon thereafter. Today, as we are experiencing a new level of economic inequality and rapidly spreading disaffection with the mechanics of late-stage capitalism, working class solidarity is growing and public support for organized labor is soaring. Remarkably, President Biden has pledged to be "the most pro-union President leading the most pro-union administration in American history." And with protests against

inadequate working conditions becoming more frequent and workers quitting their jobs in record numbers amidst an unprecedented labor shortage, U.S. capitalism finds itself in fundamental crisis.

Concomitantly, a revised perspective on the oft-diagnosed failure of socialism in the U.S. is emerging: Rather than declaring it ideologically incompatible with ingrained cultural sensibilities, recent critical voices have drawn attention to the targeted structural manipulation by political and economic interest groups as a decisive factor for the atrophied state of the American labor movement. In other words, the organic narrative of organized labor being viscerally “un-American” to the broader U.S. citizenry is giving way to mounting evidence of artificial political and legal stifling by power elites.

This paper takes stock of this national renegotiation process based on notable examples from various media formats, including Kurt Andersen's book *Evil Geniuses: The Unmaking of America* (2020), and the popular late-night show *Last Week Tonight*, which has repeatedly drawn its viewership's attention to corporate practices of worker intimidation and antiunion repression. In doing so, the paper particularly seeks to highlight efforts to separate socialist thought from the connotation of communist totalitarianism and – Ahmed White's *The Last Great Strike* (2016) and John Nichols' *The 'S' Word: A History of an American Tradition...Socialism* (2011) come to mind – to situate and rehabilitate it within the context of U.S. intellectual history.

Saturday, February 12, 2022

Roundtable “Changing Labor Conditions”

Natalie Rauscher (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg): focus on new forms of work, independent workforce, gig economy, safety net

Axel Jansen (German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C.): focus on basic-income concepts, automation of jobs, poverty

Jan Logemann (Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen): Transatlantic varieties of capitalism, corporate culture, management and entrepreneurs, work and leisure / consumption

Dirk Hoerder (Universität Bremen, emeritus): social history, work and migration

Panel III: Internationalism, Transnationalism, and Empire

Chair: Johannes Paulmann (Institut für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz)

David Bebnowski (Ludwig Maximilians Universität, München)

"Conflicting Transnationalisms and the Fate of Labor: The IWW Between Internationalism and Nationalism"

"Workingmen bringing union cards from industrial unions in foreign countries should be freely admitted into the organization." (IWW Manifesto, 1905) This quote from the Industrial Union Manifesto, the 1905 founding pamphlet of the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or "Wobblies"), was emblematic for a union that would go on to attract a considerable following among immigrants in the US (Stoenescu 2021; Dubofsky 2000: 6). Equipped with a self-perception as a worldwide movement within the larger and internationally comprised network of socialists in the US around 1900 (Buhle 2013), the IWW set an example for internationalist working-class culture and solidarity (Cole, Struthers Zimmer 2017: 2).

Differing from other unions of their time, the IWW's internationalist stance and strategy of pursuing direct economic action as a means of labor struggle aided the Wobblies in organizing semi- and unskilled immigrant industrial workers and farmhands, who often were not allowed to vote (Dubofsky 2017: 182). Moreover, their strategies were indicators of strong transnational ties, as these concepts had been imported from European anarchist traditions, the prime example being the seemingly "French" tactic of sabotage, popularized in the US through a pamphlet by a German immigrant (Trautmann 1912; Zimmer 2017).

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, as the already fervent nationalism in Europe and America – represented by phenomena like the Americanization movement – rose to new heights during WWI, the Wobblies encountered harsh state repression from which they would never fully recover.

This nationalist blowback against the labor movement was visible on a global scale. Nationalism effected a deep split between Social Democracy and Communism, triggered by the decision of German Social Democrats to vote in favor of war credits and national mobilization in 1914. Precisely because of their internationalist ethos, the IWW faced a very similar debacle when the US entered the war in 1917. As an organization that had been regarded as suspicious from its inception, the patriotic upsurge created the opportunity to link already existing racist, nativist, and anti-labor sentiments to the IWW, which was now framed as a treasonous foreign agent. A pamphlet issued by the National Civic League embodied such attitudes in its title: *The IWW: An Auxiliary to the German Espionage System* (Everett 1918).

Lorenzo Costaguata (University of Bristol)

"Adolph Douai and Race in American Socialism"

Adolph Douai (1819-1886) lived many lives. He was a Ph.D. student in Leipzig and a private tutor in imperial Russia; a Forty-eighter who fought against authoritarianism in his native Thuringia and a pioneer immigrant in West Texas, where he landed in 1852 leading a party

of German settlers; a founder of a series of primary schools in Boston in New York, which he used to import innovative pedagogical methodologies from Germany to the U.S.

Most importantly, Douai was one of the most consequential leaders of the Gilded Age American socialist movement. Douai cut his political teeth in the 1848 European revolts. In the U.S., he edited the *San Antonio Zeitung*, an abolitionist paper, between 1853 and 1856. After miraculously escaping the South untouched, Douai became a leading socialist organiser. In the aftermath of the Civil War, he was the editor of the *Arbeiter Union*, the newspaper of the New York City-based trade union federation *Allgemeine Deutsche Arbeitverein*, an organisation closely affiliated with the First International. When the Workingmen's Party of the United States was founded in 1876, Douai was nominated as co-editor of its three main publications, the *Labor Standard*, the *Chicagoer Vorbote* and the *Arbeiter Stimme*. Douai was one of the few leaders that maintained relationships with socialists from across the many factions of the movement in the 1880s. Until his death in 1888, he continued to publish articles in leading German-language dailies like the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, which he also co-edited for a short period of time.

My paper will reconstruct Douai's contribution to developing an American socialist racial thought. A firm believer in scientific racialism, Douai defended an original if inconsistent blend of ideas that brought together Marx's historical materialism with a disparate set of theories such as the holist naturalism of Alexander von Humboldt, the linguistics of Friedrich Schlegel and Charles Darwin's evolutionism. Yet his faith in scientific theories of race (or "geographies of peoples", as he called them) did not translate into a supremacist, exclusionary or authoritarian approach to the social problems linked to racial and ethnic conflicts in the U.S. Douai was staunch defender of the free migration of workers to the U.S., not only from Europe but also from China and the rest of Asia; he was one of the most prolific analysts of the issue of African American inequality from a socialist point of view. Douai's case attests to the existence of a strand of thinking that managed to articulate racial egalitarian positions in a landscape dominated by social Darwinism. A relentless organiser, volcanic intellectual and prolific writer, Douai's personal and political trajectory exposes the significance of immigration in the creation of a distinctively American socialist tradition – a tradition at the same time firmly tied to its European roots and entirely devoted to solve the issues caused by the racial and ethnic conflicts within the American working class.

Richard Saich (University of Cambridge, UK)

"The Neoliberal Labour Regime in California in the 1980s and 1990s: Social Movement Unionism, Immigration, and American Empire"

In the 1990s, commentators began to describe Los Angeles as a "global city," a major centre of world trade and international financial capital. In the previous two decades, the state of California had grown to become the seventh largest economy in the world – greater in size than the GDP of most nation-states. However, economic growth was accompanied by a turn to neoliberal urban governance and intensifying inequality. Deindustrialization, the development of the services sector, and segmentation created a dual labour market structure of well-paying and low-paying service jobs. Those at the top of the occupational structure prospered, whilst those at the bottom were subjected to increasingly precarious working and living conditions. Aggressive employment practices, such as outsourcing and subcontracting, eroded unionisation rates and workers were increasingly subordinated to the demands of capital. It was within this context that the

California labour movement turned to a new strategy for organising workers: social movement unionism. The labour resurgence in the 1990s is now associated with this organizing approach, which was best exemplified by the Justice for Janitors campaign of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

Historians have yet to fully situate social movement unionism in California within a transnational context. In this paper, I respond to Marcel van der Linden's call for a global labour history that explicitly rejects methodological nationalism. I argue that global economic restructuring during this period created a neoliberal labour regime in California, and that this regime was sustained by the exploitation of undocumented immigrant workers who filled many of the new low-wage jobs and lacked adequate legal protections. Mae Ngai has shown that U.S. legal and racial regimes have defined the boundaries of American citizenship and shaped immigration patterns, however historians must also consider the social, economic, and political role of migrants themselves. Immigrant workers brought with them valuable skills and experience that enabled them to mobilise effectively both within and outside of the workplace. The renewal of the California labour movement, and the success of the Justice for Janitors campaign in resisting urban neoliberalism, must therefore be understood with reference to labour migration and organising traditions and practices from Central America.

I also argue that U.S. empire played a fundamental role in structuring transnational labour migration. Julie Greene has shown this to be true in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, however more work needs to be done on the late twentieth century. I therefore call attention to the significance of U.S. military aid to repressive forces in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala, and the influence of U.S. economic policy in Mexico. In describing the transnational processes that shaped labour regimes in postindustrial California, I challenge the assumption that the histories of neoliberalism, labour, immigration, and American empire can be understood in isolation from one another.

Panel IV: Labor Law and Labor Rights

Chair: Philipp Gassert (Universität Mannheim)

Dominic Allen (University of Strathclyde, Glasgow)

"Robert Ferdinand Wagner and 20th Century American Society"

The 1932 election of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Presidency of the United States of America (USA) and the introduction of the New Deal policies heralded 40 years of unsurpassed prosperity for American workers. A key plank in the New Deal platform was the legal protections that the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), aka the Wagner Act, allowed American workers to organise into trade unions of their choice. The NLRA was a truly radical departure from existed political and cultural norms as it provided a neutral umpire for industrial disputes and placed collective bargaining as the fulcrum for wealth redistribution in the USA. It had a further aspiration of eliminating a major expression of collective violence and reducing the potential attraction to the political extremities of communism and fascism. The Wagner Act has increasingly been assessed in terms of

industrial relations and collective bargaining. In this paper, the outcomes of the Wagner Act will be assessed to expand its legacy outside of a purely industrial setting. A further avenue of enquiry will be to revive the expansive legacy of its author, Senator Robert F. Wagner, and the central role that he played in reducing social tensions through his reformist agenda.

Born in the newly united Germany in 1877 and settling in New York in 1885, Wagner was the personification of the American dream after he grew from humble, migrant beginnings to being one of the most influential politicians of his day. The term "Wagner Act" could apply to statutes that covered Keynesian public works programs, social security, housing or labour relations. Wagner also tried to garner support for a national health system and was a proponent of an anti-lynching act, giving a complete picture as to the scope of his vision for the USA. The NLRA needs to be understood not just in terms of economic effect but also the impact that it had on American social cohesion. This legislation helped to significantly reduce the endemic nativism of American society by assisting communities, such as the Catholic Irish, German and Italian immigrants and their children, to join the American middle-class. Wagner thus encouraged the assimilation of European ethnic minority groups into the American polity through the legalised framework of collective bargaining and trade unions. The central thrust of this paper is to demonstrate Wagner's view of building an inclusive America that was crucial to the nation's ongoing affection for the New Deal. The decline of the American trade union movement's industrial and political power has overshadowed the intent and importance of the NLRA.

Sydney Ramirez (Universität Kassel)

"Examining the Working Body: The Significance of Child Labor in the History of Disability"

This paper examines how work came to be associated with damage to children's health on a political and cultural level. Looking at lobbying efforts and legislation in the state of Massachusetts from 1910 to 1920, I examine the changes in regulating children's work to show how political actors seeking to change child labor laws in the U.S. ultimately affected ideas about work, childhood and health which had lasting impact on the structure of the American state and society. In my findings, I showed that political actors' advocacy further legitimized the role of the physician as an authority in the workplace, which links this history of labor and childhood more broadly to histories of medicine.

Prior to the 1930s, there was no federal legislation regulating child labor in the U.S. My research focused on the period from 1910 to 1920 in the state of Massachusetts, where some of the earliest and most invasive child labor regulation in the country were passed. As a part of this history of child labor, this research seeks to understand how the damaged child as a cultural construct impacted the political discussion of labor legislation. The foundational insights of this research show how the relationship between health and work came to be crucial to the definition of disability as a social category in the 20th century. Disability today often describes a condition where one cannot work and is thus reliant on social welfare. My research suggests research focus must be directed towards understudied actors, such as children, in order to fully contextualize the emergence of this category.

In the first section of the paper, my analysis showed that the visual archive of child labor located the imperative to prevent injury through work in the body of the laborer. These

representations correlate to attitudes expressed in the legislation that made the prevention of injury the responsibility of the worker.

Later, I considered the law in its function at the state level. My analysis of medical inspection law in Massachusetts from 1910 to 1920 shows a shift in jurisdiction over children's work from parents to physicians. However, sources showed a failure to implement medical inspection laws. This study suggests that while legislative history, and state legislative history in particular, is an important part of disability history, they do not fully explain the exclusion of people with disabilities from the workplace. As a contribution to the field of labor history, this article uses legal and photographic source material to illustrate the importance of the new historiographic perspectives of disability history to understand changes that took place with regard to the laboring body.

Elizabeth Tandy Shermer (Loyola University, Chicago)

"Expecting Colleges to Answer the Labor Question"

Scholars have been too quick to assume that the recent rise in the cost of enrolling in US colleges and universities have made students and parents focused on what someone can "do" with a major like history, literature, or business. Higher Education in the United States has always been a business enmeshed in the prevailing social, cultural, political, and economic norms. There have been important shifts as campuses became complicit in the slave trade, seizing Indigenous lands, industrialization, the Sunbelt's midcentury rise, and the triumph of knowledge industries, like health, communications, and finance. Meeting the country's labor needs became especially during and after the New Deal. Working and rural people had clamored for the chance to study in order to compete for white collar work since the Gilded Age but that desire heightened in the 1920s. Yet only in the 1930s did federal policymakers recognize the importance of a college educated workforce for democracy and economic prosperity. The Roosevelt Administration's early experiment with a work-study program and then the 1944 GI Bill established a precedent for offering complicated tuition assistance programs as a way to manage the country's labor market and improve the overall quality of the American workforce. Those federal experiments slowly evolved to a loan program intended to offer equal opportunities to enroll. But the Guaranteed Student Loan Program was modeled on the federal mortgage program that has worsened systemic racial, gender, and economic inequalities. GSLP similarly contributed to those inequities because it never ensured campuses allocated federal tuition assistance fairly. That law also could do nothing to close the persistent gaps in pay that have left people of color, especially women, disproportionately drowning in college debt.

Darius Caleb Smith (Tulane University, New Orleans)

"Back Pay Without Promotions: Black Labor In Louisiana After The 1964 Civil Rights Act"

In September of 1967, Harris Alfred Parson filed suit against the Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation and the Aluminum Workers International Union's Local 225 with charges of racial discrimination at Kaiser's plant in Chalmette, Louisiana. Harris Parson filed suit under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act which prohibited workplace discrimination. By June of 1984, the Times-Picayune reported that Parson successfully sued the Kaiser company in an eighteen-year long struggle. Parson was awarded

\$113,000 in backpay. Other African Americans apart of the class action lawsuit received roughly three million dollars in sum. This essay uses the Parson v. Kaiser case as a thread in analyzing the development of Title VII law through the climax of deindustrialization. Chronologically, this essay extends Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's "long civil rights" argument further right by challenging narratives that situate the post-1965 sector of the African American freedom struggle as solely dominated by the age of black power. This essay argues that everyday labor activists, like Parson, shaped the law and defined its effectiveness while civil rights lawyers seized on the ambiguities of an initially vague Title VII law. By the time Parson saw victory in Louisiana's Eastern District Court, Kaiser's Chalmette plant was closed due to a global economic downturn. The recession ensured that affirmative action policies would not mature quickly for black workers nationwide.

PhD Poster Presenters

Venus Bender (Goethe Universität, Frankfurt)

"Prayers and Protests: How Religion Shaped the Black Power Movement"

To date, scant attention has been paid to the impact Christian congregations have made on Black Power and vice versa. Indeed, most studies have mainly described the movement as secularized and thus neglected the influence of religious Black Power activists. This paper corrects this historical oversight by shedding light on the role of the church in the Black Power movement.

I argue that Black Power activists belonging to various Northern congregations such as the Reverend Albert B. Cleage and the National Black Sisters' Conference (NBSC) challenged not only the ecclesial but the social and political status quo by revealing its racial structures, and by demanding self-determination within and outside the church. Thus, the Black Power movement did not represent a departure from religious ideas, but instead paved the way for a new black religious concept that proved useful for the revolutionary fight for freedom. I further examine the effects of black intellectual thought on the church and clarify the role of black religious thought in the Black Power movement and its meaning for the adherents.

The main goal of this paper is to determine the importance of church-based activism for the Black Power movement and of black religious intellectuals whose ideas served as an inspiration for a spiritual revolution in the years after 1968. This study provides an overview of various case studies with the results of my examination of written documents as those of Cleage and NBSC, newspaper articles, audio recordings and documented interviews. With the conceptualization of Black Christian nationalism, the reverend Albert B. Cleage sought to unite Black Power and Christianity and create a synergy that would serve as a tool against white supremacy. His ideology contained the claim that God's chosen people and Christ, who initiated the black revolution and the building of a black nation, accordingly, were black. Cleage further criticized the church for maintaining the image of a white Christ, arguing that the Bible per se was indeed the history of a black people. Through his books, Black Christian Nationalism (1972) and The Black Messiah

(1968), he sought to demonstrate the concurrence of Christianity and Black Power and called for a black revolution.

Similarly inspired by the works of black nationalists, the NBSC, as Cleage, worked in their communities to raise awareness of the racist power structures in the church. Their members Sister Martin de Porres Grey and Sister M. Shawn Copeland wrote essays on the Catholic Church and the NBSC's community work in the 1970s Black Power era, which will serve as an additional primary source for the analysis of my paper. This study seeks to close a historiographical gap by analyzing these case studies, among others, that demonstrate the church's participation in Black Power while contributing towards a better understanding of its ideological versatility.

Sandra Meerwein (Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz)

"Imagining the Indo-Pacific Region – A Transpacific Perspective on U.S. Regional Vision"

When the US Department of State published the report "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific" on Nov. 4, 2019, the foreign policy emphases of the document simply reflected an ongoing trend of US regional policies that already informed administrations prior to then-President Donald Trump's. However, the shift from Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific in US official foreign policy rhetoric denotes a noticeable and significant change that comprises altered perceptions of regional actors on the one hand, and a revised interpretation of regional vision regarding the Indo-Pacific's economic and geostrategic aspects relevant to US interests.

The rhetoric of the US Department of State report and other official papers like the US Department of Defense's Indo-Pacific Strategy Report (2019) convey a strong signal for putting the conceptualization of a "shared vision"¹ and coherent strategy concerning the Indo-Pacific at the top of US foreign policy priorities. Yet, as the region covers more than one country and, with that, the possibility of various interpretations of an "Indo-Pacific vision" and what it entails, I mean to scrutinize the origins and implications of regional visions concerning the region that is officially referred to as the "Indo-Pacific" by the US. Therefore, I explore how US regional vision of the Indo-Pacific is reflected by institutions and through different types of media. Moreover, I intend to designate conflicting and coherent points of regional vision and analyze where they eventually come into effect.

As "Imagining the Indo-Pacific Region" is a transpacific project and based on the aspect of varying vision interpretations, I aim at the inclusion of perspectives from countries in the region. Thereby, I analyze documents both early and contemporary that reflect US foreign policy and vision regarding the Indo-Pacific region and the countries in it, and - vice versa - any documents regarding the foreign policy of the region's countries toward the US and/or the Indo-Pacific region. Countries such as Japan or the Republic of Korea are thereby of particular interest as they present one of the longest-established parties in the network of US strategic alliances and partnerships.

In addition to perspectives articulated by governmental institutions, I investigate how other institutional sections (academics, news media, etc.) present, react to, evaluate, and interpret US "Indo-Pacific" vision. For that part, I pay attention specifically to media and institutions that provide an insight on contemporary understandings of regional identity (concerning the Indo-Pacific) and vision. By juxtaposing various regional vision interpretations, I eventually intend to designate points of coherence and conflict. Thereby, I determine integrated and neglected aspects concerning the decision-making process

of US foreign policy regarding the "Indo-Pacific." These points are especially relevant regarding the evaluation of the extent to which the conceptualization of visions like the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" into a coherent strategy are either beneficial or detrimental to the US and other regional parties.

Alexander Reineke (Ruhr Universität Bochum)

"Peacetime and Wartime Priorities of the U.S. Army, 1898-1941"

My project is about the professional discourse in the US Army between circa 1900 and 1941 in regards to learning lessons from previous wars and preparing for the next conflict. The main research question is: "How did the army's peacetime culture interfere with its self-set goal of preparing for the next war?"

What makes my research novel is that I study the military in peacetime rather than in wartime as is the normal approach when writing military history. A peacetime military is drastically different from a wartime military in that it can mainly be seen as a safe and secure employer during hard economic times. While many officers and men join the military in peacetime because they are interested in the profession of soldiering, many more join the army for food, shelter and security. Therefore, during peacetime, the army is always torn regarding its priorities: does it analyze past conflicts and prepare for the next war in the most effective and modern way possible even if that means cutting inefficient or outdated elements of its organization or does it protect inefficient and outdated elements that are nonetheless rich in tradition and nostalgia? Individuals in the army are torn in the same way between doing their duties and maintaining tradition and jobs for themselves and their like-minded associates even if they no longer serve a purpose in modern warfare. Like every large bureaucratic institution the military chooses to protect itself from streamlining rather than putting its self-set mission first.

My research looks directly at the contemporary army journals – as well as diaries and correspondence between officers – and the professional discourse between officers. The focus here is on their interpretations of historical and contemporary events, policy recommendations, their inspirations, ideas of progress, as well as the staunch conservatism of those factions who either see no reason to modernize the armed forces or try to protect their jobs and influence within the organization.

This juxtaposition between progress and job security has led to some interesting developments in the discourse of the time and the way the US Army interpreted conflicts all the way up to the First and Second World Wars during the periods of peace preceding both wars. For instance, the army was actually aware of the destructive and stalemate potential of a great power conflict but torn on the way to resolve said stalemate because of peacetime priorities and internal politics, unlike the often-repeated idea that the First World War offered a completely new style of warfare never before predicted.

Ayman Al Sharafat (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)

"Language Policy and Language Rights From the Perspective of US Presidents From Theodore Roosevelt to Donald Trump"

This Ph.D. dissertation examines the position of the US presidents towards language issues and their attitude towards language rights since the Theodore Roosevelt's

administration at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. It aims to discover and analyze the language policy types and language orientations of the US presidents during their time in office. This project examines many quotations of the US presidents to articulate their language policy and their thinking about language rights. It seeks to answer two main questions. First, how did language policy and language rights appear in the communications of the US presidents from the administration of presidents Theodore Roosevelt to that of Donald Trump? Secondly, what were their language policies and their attitudes towards language rights? Moreover, this dissertation reviews the sociopolitical events during each administration which might have played a role in their language policies and attitudes.

This dissertation traces the communications of the US presidents that contain reference to language issues in the United States. The communications of the US presidents on language issues were sourced from searchable archives for US presidents' documents and manuscripts, particularly the archive of "The American Presidency Project" (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>), which was launched in 1999 at the University of California, and is a non-partisan and non-profit source of all presidential documents and communications since 1789. The historical-textual analysis approach in language policy is chosen to analyze the available data of the US presidents' communications on language issues and how social and political events reflected on their language policies.

The result of this PhD dissertation indicates that the US presidents' attention to language issues has been increasing gradually since the beginning of the Twentieth Century. The English language received the majority of the US presidents' attention towards language issues, followed by foreign languages. President Bill Clinton was the president who mentioned language issues the most in his communications (out of the 20 examined administrations). He spoke about language issues in the United States in 93 statements, while president Calvin Coolidge made the least statements, with only English was promoted in 134 policy statements of the presidents during the examined period, while immigrant languages were restricted in 18 statements. President George W. Bush made the highest number of restrictive policy statements against non-English languages, while President Barack Obama made the highest number of tolerant policy statements towards the same languages. President Harry S. Truman was the first president to mention language rights at the presidential level, and President Bill Clinton mentioned language in the context of rights in 15 statements, the most out of the 20 US presidents considered.

The idea of declaring English as the official language of the Federal Government and of Puerto Rico has been opposed by US presidents. Such demands appeared intensively during World War I & II, and usually appear as a reaction to immigration waves to the United States (the 1890s and 1980s, for instance). However, to date, it seems US presidents realize the importance of language rights and language diversity for American society.

Business Meeting (DGfA/GAAS members only)

- 1) Berichte aus den Instituten
 - 2) Berichte aus den Gremien
 - 3) Ausblick Tagung 2023, Rebecca Brückmann und Silke Hackenesch
 - 4) Ausblick Tagung 2024
 - 5) Verschiedenes
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Conference Abstract

The transnational turn has introduced significant new perspectives on the history of labor and capitalism in the United States. While the state remains an important object of analysis, decentering the nation in labor history provides additional lenses that focus on circulations, interactions, and connections below or beyond the nation-state. According to Ian Tyrell, they focus attention on exchanges across national boundaries, the impact of asymmetrical power exerted by one nation, and networks of relations not contained by nation-states. In questioning a coherent, all-encompassing national narrative, the voices and visions of people and groups who have been marginalized in the context of a nationalist myopia are reclaimed.

The experiences of non-citizens and migrants, labor sojourners and "birds of passage," inhabitants of border regions, workers of international corporations, and new digital and remote workers help provide a more complete and more complex picture of what both labor and capital have meant in various historical contexts. Negotiations of labor rights, property rights, the rights of capital or corporate personship from the emergent nation-state to globalization accounts for different appraisals of labor heroes or radicals, benevolent tycoons or robber barons. Historians such as Kiran Klaus Patel, for example, root the history of the New Deal in a global context, connecting the history of labor and capital to that of U.S. hegemony in the twentieth century. Others, such as Julie Greene, connect the immigrant experience with American empire. Likewise, Donna Gabaccia focuses on the migration world of Italian workers, and Mae Ngai traces the role of "impossible" illegal immigrant workers in the making of America.

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