

Eileen Boris: Sweatshop USA
INT94EU:
Sweatshop USA

[Professor Eileen Boris](#)

Course Description

From sit-ins and building takeovers in universities to pickets at brand-name retailers to protests at gatherings of the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, anti-sweatshop activism has grown at the beginning of the 21st century. But just as the sweatshop is no new phenomenon, so too this is not the first time that outraged consumers and labor activists have protested the low wages, poor working conditions, and social disorganization associated with the sweatshop in garments and other industries. Whereas a century ago, the sweatshop represented un-American conditions of immigrants, symbolized family breakdown through child and female labor, and hinted at disease and decay, today it appears as the worst expression of the new unregulated, global economy. This course considers the past and present of the sweatshop, focusing on representations by defenders and detractors as well as its social, economic, and political contexts. Students will explore current events in light of historical ones. Seminar includes a field trip to Los Angeles to the garment district.

Course Requirements

Class participation. This is a discussion course. It is pass/fail. To pass, you must participate in discussions, including a debate: The Sweatshop: Necessary or Never? Analysis of a website will be shared in class.

We will meet for approximately 1 hour, 15 minutes for four times in addition to the field trip to the [Garment Worker Center](#), which will count as four class hours. We also will watch films and discuss images of the sweatshop.

Academic Integrity

This class assumes that all participants are doing the assignments with integrity. Plagiarism occurs when a student copies without proper citation intentionally or unintentionally the ideas or words of another. Handing in work that is not your own is unacceptable. **Academic dishonesty violates university regulation and is a reportable offense.**

Book for Purchase

A small course pack will be available for purchase at Grafikart, 6550 Pardall Road, Isla Vista. I will place a copy on reserve.

Agenda

(subject to change)

January 5 Introductions

Film: "Mickey Mouse Goes to Haiti"

12 Producing the Sweatshop

We will visit the Museum of American History on line.

Reading: Green, "Fashion, Flexible Specialization, and the Sweatshop: A Historical Problem;" Liebhold and Rubenstein, "Bringing Sweatshops into the Museum"

Ross, "The Flight of the Silicon Wafers"

15 Field Trip to Garment Workers Center in LA

Meet at UCSB at 7:45 am; we will return by 4:00

Reading: Ching Yoon Louie, "'Just-in-Time' Guerilla Warriors: Immigrant Workers' Centers"

19 Resisting the Sweatshop

Web assignment: analyze one website relating to campaigns against the sweatshop.

Reading: Krupat, "Rethinking the Sweatshop: A Conversation about United Students Against Sweatshops"

26 The Great Debate

The Sweatshop: Necessity or Never?

Ross, "Three Pillars of Decency"

Kristof and WuDunn, "Two Cheers for Sweatshops"

Some Web Resources

[University of Massachusetts Political Economy Research Institute](#)

[Sweatshop Watch](#)

[National Labor Committee](#)

[Behind the Label \(UNITE\)](#)

[United Students Against Sweatshops](#)

[Global Exchange](#)

[Worker Rights Consortium](#)

[Fair Labor Association](#)

[Co-op America, Ending Sweatshops](#)

[National Mobilization Against Sweatshops](#)

[Nike Watch Campaign](#)

[Triangle Shirtwaist Fire](#)

Packet

Nancy L. Green, "Fashion, Flexible Specialization, and the Sweatshop: A Historical Problem," in Daniel E. Bender and Richard A. Greenwald, eds., *Sweatshop USA: The American Sweatshop in Historical and Global Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 37-55

Peter Liebhold and Harry Rubenstein, "Bringing Sweatshops into the Museum," in Daniel E. Bender and Richard A. Greenwald, eds., *Sweatshop USA: The American Sweatshop in Historical and Global Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 57-73

Andrew Ross, "The Flight of the Silicon Wafers," in Andrew Ross, *Low Pay High Profile: The Global Push for Fair Labor* (New York: New Press, 2004), 157-73

Miriam Ching Yoon Louie, "'Just-in-Time' Guerilla Warriors: Immigrant Workers' Centers," in Miriam Ching Yoon Louie, *Sweatshop Warriors: Immigrant Women Workers Take on the Global Factory* (Boston: South End Press, 2001), 215-46

Kitty Krupat, "Rethinking the Sweatshop: A Conversation about United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) with Charles Eaton, Marion Traub-Werner, and Evelyn Zepeda," *International Labor and Working-Class History* N.61 (Spring 2002), 112-27

Robert S.J. Ross, "Three Pillars of Decency," in Robert S.J. Ross, *Slaves to Fashion: Poverty and Abuse in the New Sweatshops* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 322-34

Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, "Two Cheers for Sweatshops," *New York Times*, September 24, 2000, sect. 6, p.70-71