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**Book Review: Linné, Rob, Leigh Benin, and Adrienne Sosin, eds.  
Organizing the Curriculum: Perspectives on Teaching the US Labor  
Movement. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense, 2009. 280 pp. \$29.00 (paper)**

Anneta Argyres

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## Book Reviews

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Linné, Rob, Leigh Benin, and Adrienne Sosin, eds. *Organizing the Curriculum: Perspectives on Teaching the US Labor Movement*. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense, 2009. 280 pp. \$29.00 (paper).

**Reviewed by:** Annetta Argyres, *University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA, USA*

DOI: 10.1177/0160449X10395103

In the introduction to *Organizing the Curriculum*, one editor offers up this collection of essays as a “raucous picket line of educators and unionists” (p. xi), calling for labor’s history to be fully incorporated into classroom curricula across all grades. From that beginning, the book goes on to cover a vast array of subjects as the authors, mostly university-based educators, explore how labor history could be taught and what could be gained by incorporating that history into K-12 education in the United States.

The book includes articles aimed at teachers from the K-12 level through the university-based education programs. For the most part, these articles interweave specific pieces of labor history with education philosophy, techniques, and resources; a few of the essays provide detailed reviews of specific labor education efforts. Scattered throughout the book are some fascinating and inspiring pieces of labor’s history in the United States: the Louisiana/Texas Timber Wars of 1907–13, Lewis Hine’s photography and the work of the National Child Labor Committee in the early 1900s, the role of women labor leaders in the United States, the work and philosophies of Cesar Chavez and Miles Horton, and the recent Justice for Janitors campaign in Houston, Texas, to name a few.

The book reaches out to activist unionists and educators to inspire them to start their own labor education projects and programs. While successful in offering that inspiration, the work falls short in its efforts to provide a useful “how-to” guide for activists and classroom teachers. Actual curricular resources are available elsewhere, but unfortunately, questions about how to work within the current systems of standards and testing or how to develop support for labor programs among colleagues and administrators are not addressed in a thorough or concrete manner. Questions like these plague union-based labor educators. Thus, from an activist’s perspective, this book does not help the teacher or unionist take the next step toward action.

Similarly, even though the book issues the call for labor education in our schools, it fails to present a strongly reasoned, convincing argument for those *not* walking the “picket line”—namely, the majority of our teachers, union leaders, and education policy makers. A few well-intentioned teachers can indeed change the lives of some of their students. But the authors rightly point out that we need to fundamentally change

who controls the content of education in the United States. Unfortunately, these essays brought me no closer to understanding what steps could be taken to do that than I was when I first picked it up.

These limitations notwithstanding, *Organizing the Curriculum*'s strength lies in aiding teacher educators. Students of education would benefit greatly from reading and discussing this book because it would help to challenge them to explore why we educate children, what goals we have for our educational system, and what individual classroom teachers can do to reach those goals. In addition, specific essays explore parts of U.S. labor history, along with its famous and hidden leaders, offering education students ideas on how they might teach that part of history. Perhaps by impacting the education that teachers receive, we could develop more teacher-activists who are able and willing to challenge the education status quo in the United States.

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Brenner, Aaron, Benjamin Day, and Immanuel Ness, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2009. 750 pp. \$175 (hardcover).

**Reviewed by:** Dexter Arnold, *University of Illinois, Champaign, IL, USA*  
DOI: 10.1177/0160449X10394974

This book offers an informative, wide-ranging perspective on strikes, including their impact on workers, patterns within industries, strikebreaking, and workers' resilience. The sixty-five essays are arranged in sections on the theory and practice of strikes, strikes and working-class culture, strike waves, and strikes in the public and private sectors with the latter broken down into three sections on manufacturing, mining, and agriculture; infrastructure; and service industries. While several of the selections focus on individual walkouts, most take a broader perspective. As editor Aaron Brenner explains, this ambitious volume is "not encyclopedic." Instead, it aims to provide analytical tools for thinking about strikes.

Like many works with numerous contributors, the entries are uneven. Bibliographies for each essay offer excellent guides for further investigation.

The theory and practice entries include good overviews of strikebreaking as well as the status of strikes today. Jeremy Brecher's essay on declining strike activity and Steve Early's provocative piece on the lessons of recent years address important questions of power, resources, and strategy, making it clear that a commitment to stay out "one day more" must be accompanied by a plan to make the boss hold out "one day less."

The strike wave section has strong contributions on the 1877 rail strikes, World War I-era walkouts, and the 1946 strike wave. The cultural section is a grab bag of entries on topics like Communist-led strikes in the early 1930s, labor songs, and the Catholic Church plus several essays on race and ethnicity, including James Pula's fine piece on Polish strikers that addresses homeland experiences and community involvement.