TITLE OF COURSE: American Labor Writing: The Farm, the Factory, and Beyond

INSTRUCTOR(S) NAME: Julia Madsen

COURSE MEETING TIMES: Wednesdays (February 12 - March 4) 9:30-11:30 am

COURSE LOCATION: Ruffatto Room 305

CONTACT INFO FOR INSTRUCTOR:
  Email: julia.madsen7@gmail.com  Phone: 319-331-9092

INSTRUCTOR BIO:
Julia Madsen is a multimedia poet and educator. She received an MFA in Literary Arts from Brown University and is a PhD candidate in English/Creative Writing at the University of Denver. Her first book, The Boneyard, The Birth Manual, A Burial: Investigations into the Heartland, was listed on Entropy’s Best Poetry Books of 2018. She is the video editor at Reality Beach and has shown video poetry and multimedia installations at &Now, Outlet Fine Art Gallery, No Nation Art Gallery, Counterpath Gallery, Cabal Gallery, the Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Alliance and Collaboratory, and Denver’s Unseen film festival. Her video work has appeared in VICE’s "The Creators Project," and her poems, reviews, and multimedia work have also appeared in jubilat, Tarpaulin Sky, Tupelo Quarterly, Black Warrior Review, and elsewhere.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:
This course engages with works of labor writing from the American South, Midwest, and Rust Belt, examining representations of diverse labor experiences and what these representations reveal about the reality of working conditions in America. Focusing on Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle, James Agee and Walker Evans’s Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, Muriel Rukeyser’s “The Book of the Dead,” and Mark Nowak’s Shut Up/Shut Down, alongside the short documentary film Finally Got the News (1970), we will investigate the effects of class oppression on workers and families. Our study will begin in Chicago’s meat factories and will trace the movement from early 20th century labor writing to the Great Depression and the labor struggles of the late ‘60s and ‘70s, and will also explore contemporary blue-collar labor through the voices of workers. We will engage with new working-class studies, labor geography, and discourses surrounding socioeconomic class with the aim of mapping a critical and social context for our inquiries, reflecting on the systems that perpetuate class oppression. This course includes lectures, discussions, as well as a film screening.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS OR MATERIALS (note if they will be supplied by instructor)


“The Book of the Dead” by Muriel Rukeyser (supplied by instructor)
SYLLABUS (please provide an overview of each class session; this information will be uploaded to the OLLI at DU Portfolio site):

Session #1 – Lecture and discussion over The Jungle (chapters I-XV)

Session #2 – Lecture and discussion over The Jungle (chapters XVI-XXXI)

Session #3 – Lecture and discussion over Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (pages 1-316)