

Paper Assignment #1

Paper idea and preliminary outline, due in class, Wed. Sept. 9

First draft due Mon. Sept. 14

Final draft Mon. Sept. 17

Texts: David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky, "Introduction: Ways of Reading"
Jürgen Osterhammel, "Labor: The Physical Basis of Culture"
Vincent DiGirolamo, "Johnny Morrow and the Dangerous Classes"
April Masten, "Laborers in the Field of the Beautiful"

When first encountering the strategies involved in "strong reading," many students focus on the activity of criticizing a text. But strong reading is intended to enable you (to give you abilities and power) as both a reader and a writer. The point is not to simply note a weakness in a given text, but to respond to some aspect of it in a way that adds to or complicates it. A reader might write this response in the margins of the text; a writer might express it in a paper. A given text should not remain the undisturbed center of attention, to be memorized or criticized. Instead, your writing should show what happens, what new ideas arise when your experience and ideas encounter those of another writer.

In his chapter on "Labor" in *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, Jürgen Osterhammel argues that "no general statements" can be made about work. He says that "if work is regarded not as an abstract category but as an aspect of people's actual lives, then the worlds of work are legion." And yet, underlying his essay are some basic assumptions about which forms of work and categories of workers tell us the most about the nineteenth century. In this first essay, I want you to extend Osterhammel's project by working with *or* against the grain of his selections, understanding, or way of representing labor.

You might begin by choosing an idea or passage from Osterhammel that you connected with, quote it, and put it in your own terms. Pay close attention to what the author meant by it; and pay close attention to the details he offers to defend it. Then, using DiGirolamo and Masten's texts as your sources, engage him in conversation. Find details and make observations that either challenge or further his argument. These details and observations will help you begin to formulate **your own point** about labor in the nineteenth century (your paper idea). Be sure to work with (to use, to frame your meaning with, to do something with) some of the language the authors use to describe their understanding of labor. Explore the connections between the examples you have chosen and consider how those connections (similarities, differences, or whatever) affect your point.