**Discussion Questions for Herbert Gutman, “Work, Culture and Society” for Fri Jan 19, 2018**

Who is Herbert Gutman? Where does this piece of writing come from? When was it written?

How is the essay organized? What are its parts? What supporting material (charts, tables) is included?

Identify the MAIN THESIS or ARGUMENT of this essay (and, who/what is he arguing with?)

Gutman opens with a critique of the “Protestant work ethic.” If you are not familiar with this term, explore and define it. Whose term is it? How does Gutman take issue with it?

What characteristics does Gutman identify with “preindustrial / premodern” vs. “industrial / modern”?

Who are the objects of his study – in other words, who are Gutman’s workers? Is theirs a

useful population to consider, or not? Does Gutman make a persuasive case for why their

history is important? Are certain kinds of industrial workers left out of his analysis, and why?

Can you compare this group with the labor history of another group you’ve studied in the

past or in another history class? For example, Gutman used E. P. Thompson’s analysis of the English working class, and found that in fact, there were key similarities to the United States. Likewise, can you take Gutman’s ideas and apply them to a different group/class of workers, and how do they hold up in the comparison?

Take one footnote in this article, and analyze it (some are very lengthy). Where did

Gutman go to get his information? How would you go about confirming his research by

following his footsteps? What does this one footnote tell you about Gutman’s scholarly

technique?

On p. 68, Gutman quotes Sidney Pollard that it is a “subtle and violent task” for the industrial elite to constantly discipline the working class. How so? Do you agree? Is that true in workplaces you are familiar with today?

How would you summarize Gutman’s contribution to scholarly understanding of the working class in the United States?

From this essay, what have you learned (so far) about what a social historian does?