

OBRA

An International Conference on Labor and the Working Class

Organized by

Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints

Ateneo de Manila University

Quezon City, Philippines

29–30 July 2025

CALL FOR PAPERS

The country's first industrial union, the Unión de Impresores (UI), was founded in June 1901. It was composed of printers employed by *The Manila Times*, which was then an American-owned newspaper. On 2 February 1902, the Unión Obrera Democrática (UOD), the country's first labor federation, was established under the leadership of Isabelo de los Reyes. To show its strength, the UOD organized a mass demonstration on 4 July that same year, with around 70,000 participants. The rally demanded independence for the Philippines from the United States. A few months later, the federation would adopt the name Unión Obrera Democrática Filipina following the election of Dominador Gómez as the organization's president.

Thus, the year 2026 will be a milestone, as it marks the 125th year of trade unionism in the country, while the year 2027 will be the 125th anniversary of the UOD's founding. The country's present-day labor movement—composed of numerous unions, federations, and confederations that have consistently struggled for decent wages, better working conditions, and more secure jobs—will surely be at the forefront of these commemorations, even as they continue to face economic hardships and political repression.

In recognition of the labor movement's historic role and immeasurable contribution to Philippine society, *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints (PSHEV)* will hold a two-day international conference devoted to the theme of labor and the working class. This event aims to gather established and young scholars from different disciplines, both in the Philippines and overseas, to analyze a range of issues associated with labor as a historical actor and as a sector of society in the present. Papers that provide new data and/or new perspectives as well as those that take a comprehensive and comparative view of the labor movement are particularly welcome.

The keynote addresses will be delivered by Judy Taguiwalo (former secretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development) and Rev. Ben Ngay-a-an (St. Andrew's Theological Seminary).

Conference organizers will accept individual paper proposals as well as full panel proposals on a range of salient themes such as:

- Historical accounts of significant events based on documents, first-hand experiences, visual materials, or other sources
- Biographies of workers, unionists, and organizers
- The question of gender and the importance of women and LGBTQIA+ workers
- Different forms of labor mobilization throughout history, including slavery, *corvée*, contract labor, and the like
- Colonialism, imperialism, and the working class
- Wages, job security, occupational safety, and contractualization
- Trade unionism, collective bargaining, labor disputes, and working-class politics
- Radicalism, anarchism, and communism
- The state, its policies, and its role as arbiter between labor and capital
- Non-wage workers (e.g., ambulant vendors, jeepney drivers) and the concept of a semiproletariat
- Agrarian reform, industrialization, economic reforms, and their impact on employment
- The OFW phenomenon and the country's labor migration policy
- Neoliberalism, the international political economy, and the rise of the precariat
- Working-class communities and access to basic social services, such as housing, electricity, and water
- Household labor and social reproduction
- Proletarian culture and depictions of workers in textbooks, film, literature, and popular culture
- Activism, dissent, and human rights issues
- Proletarian-led armed movements and the communist insurgency
- Comparative analysis of the Philippine labor movement vis-a-vis and that of other countries, especially in Southeast Asia

Selected papers that pass the refereeing process will be included in a special issue of *PSHEV*, the quarterly published by the Ateneo de Manila University since 1953. Articles in this journal are indexed and abstracted in several global databases such as Historical Abstracts, Project MUSE, JSTOR, Scopus, and Thomson Reuters Emerging Sources. Other publications may also be planned.

Submission Guidelines

Interested paper presenters are requested to submit a **250-word abstract**. Panel proposals are also welcome and should include a brief description of the proposed panel as well as the abstracts of the individual papers in the panel.

Proposals should include a brief note about the paper proponents.

Please submit abstracts and panel proposals by **31 March 2025**. Submissions must be in Word format and include the name, institutional affiliation, email address, and bio note of the paper proponent(s). Decisions on abstracts will be released on **30 April 2025**.

Inquiries as well as panel and paper proposals can be addressed to:
The Editorial Team <philstudies.soss@ateneo.edu>

Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints
School of Social Sciences, Ateneo de Manila University

Registration

Accepted paper presenters are requested to register by **31 May 2025** for them to be included in the program and to submit their full papers by **30 June 2025**. Non-presenters who wish to participate in the event should also register by **31 May 2025**.

Participants are encouraged to seek funds for travel from their home institutions. The journal can accommodate a limited number of requests for free on-campus board and lodging for paper presenters, although early-career scholars (graduate students and junior faculty) based outside Metro Manila and abroad will be given preference. No registration fee will be collected from paper presenters and non-presenters, but all participants need to register online to avail of meals, refreshments, and conference materials. The conference will not accommodate walk-in participants.