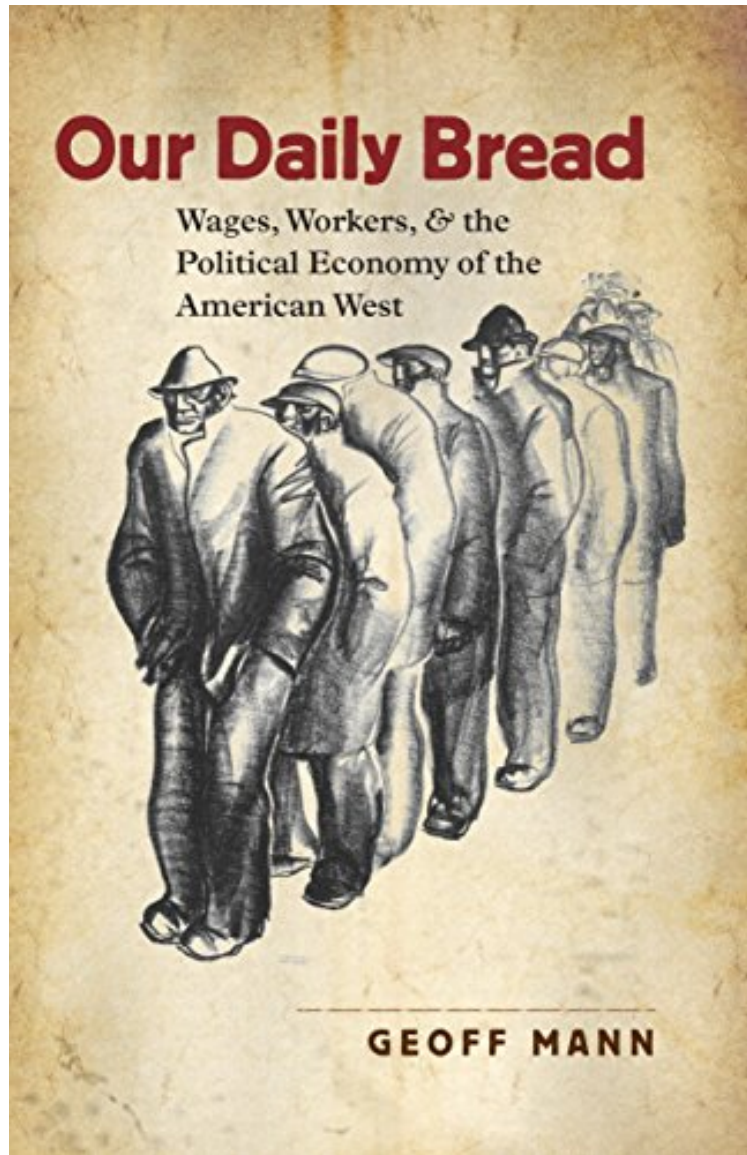


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## **Our Daily Bread: Wages, Workers, and the Political Economy of the American West (Cultural Studies of the United States)**

*Geoff Mann*

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**Geoff Mann : Our Daily Bread: Wages, Workers, and the Political Economy of the American West (Cultural Studies of the United States)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Our Daily Bread: Wages, Workers, and the Political Economy of the American West (Cultural Studies of the United States):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent empirical study of how race and gender intertwine with ...By artExcellent empirical study of how race and gender intertwine with class in the struggles against the bosses. I received the book on time and it was new.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This book is a must for understanding the political economy ...By Diane Shyer PurvisThis book is a must for understanding the political economy and the labor movement during the 1930s and 1940s. Well-written with a mix of statistics and real life stories.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. DisappointingBy C. DeanI read this as background to a possible research project and found that it was largely a waste of time. The topic of the bookdash;cultural politics of the wage in the American Westdash;is original and potentially important, and a few worthwhile things are revealed here and there, but you have to slog through a lot of nonsense.Part of the problem is the writing. The text is loaded with posturing, metaphors that fall flat, and poor word choice (e.g., he seems to have invented his own meanings for 'scalar' and 'purview'). But the bigger issues are conceptual. The blurbs on the back suggest the book is 'brilliant' and 'profound,' and clearly Mann intends it to be. He delves into Marx, then Hegel, to make an obscure point about how the cultural politics of the wage somehow confound a qualitative/quantitative distinction (I think?), but the substantive chapters reveal surprisingly little about the politics of the wage per se, and much of what's there suggests to me a straightforward political economic account, not 'cultural'dash;at least, as he seems to mean it. (And it's never exactly clear how he does mean it.) The theoretical background is also spotty. Major theorists who would seem to be relevant, like Max Weber or Pierre Bourdieu, get no mention.

A wage is more than a simple fee in exchange for labor, argues Geoff Mann. Beyond being a quantitative reflection of productivity or bargaining power, a wage is a political arena in which working people's identity, culture, and politics are negotiated and developed. In *Our Daily Bread*, Mann examines struggles over wages to reveal ways in which the wage becomes a critical component in the making of social hierarchies of race, gender, and citizenship. Combining a fresh analysis of radical political economy with a critical assessment of the role of white men in North American labor politics, Mann addresses the issue of class politics and places the problem of "interests" squarely at the center of political economy. Rejecting the idea that interests are self-evident or unproblematic, Mann argues that workers' interests, and thus wage politics, are the product of the ongoing effort by wage workers to focus on quality in a socioeconomic system that relentlessly quantifies. Taking three wage disputes in the natural resources industry as his case studies, Mann demonstrates that wage negotiation is not simply emblematic of economic conflict over the distribution of income but also represents critical contests in the cultural politics of identity under capitalism.

[An] important book.--Environment and Planning D: Society and SpaceShould prove of interest not only to economists, economic geographers, and labor historians, but also to those engaged in, for instance, cultural studies and political theory." --Environment and Planning Profoundly theoretical and compellingly argued . . . a work of stunning originality.--Labor Studies JournalBrilliant . . . An incisive and convincing argument that places struggles over the wage relationships right at the heart of the 'cultural politics of capitalism.'--New Labor ForumBrilliantly argued and beautifully written.--Journal of Historical GeographyThis remarkable work combines broad theoretical expertise and rich historical case studies to demonstrate that workers' struggles over pay are anything but defensive and narrow. In Mann's compelling account contests over compensation speak profoundly to the everyday lives and the freedom dreams of those who wage them.--David Roediger, University of IllinoisCompelling, provocative, and creative. . . . [Mann's] case studies show us the role of wage struggles in the creation of nationalistic, gender, and racial identities as the cultural politics of wages unfold over time and in different contexts.--Award Committee, Michael Harrington Best Book Award, New Political Science Section, American Political Science AssociationOur Daily Bread is a book whose brilliance is enhanced by its accessible writing and attention to the everyday. Going beyond 'embeddedness' to show how wage struggles encompass every element of political life and cultural practice, Mann reinvents our idea of class struggle. Particularly good on the race-class relationship, deeply theoretical, but above all committed to telling the stories of labor's creative confrontation with capital, *Our Daily Bread* should be adopted in courses across the disciplines. Highly recommended!--Howard Winant, University of California, Santa BarbaraProvocative and stimulating.--The Annals of IowaAbout the AuthorGeoff Mann is assistant professor of geography at Simon Fraser University.