

Rutgers University
Labor Studies & Employment Relations
37:575:377
Spring 2021

Democratic Workplaces

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Office Hours: By phone or Zoom, by appointment. The best way to contact me is by email.

Course Time: This course is synchronous remote. Classes are scheduled for Tuesdays, 7:15-10:05pm and will meet via Zoom. Students should reserve—set aside free of interruptions—this full class period for work focused on the class. Typically, however, the actual length of each Zoom class session will be approximately two hours.

Course Location: Zoom

Course Website:

Course Description: This course will explore the questions: How can firms be organized in ways that reflect values of democracy, worker voice, and equity? How do such practices challenge traditional approaches to work in industrial and post-industrial capitalism? How are democratic and participatory workplace practices and structures advantageous? What are their risks and challenges, and what are the obstacles to their broader use?

Throughout the course students will explore a variety of workplace practices, including egalitarian, participatory and shared-ownership practices used in workplaces across the country.

Students will explore workplace practices and structures relating to:

- *Decision Making* (top-down, participatory, and consensus)
- *Ownership* (private ownership, employee ownership, other stakeholder ownership structures)
- *Equity and Inclusion* (practices that challenge whiteness and privilege and intentionally bring about equity and inclusion).

The course will include hands-on exercises to develop skills and understanding.

Learning Objectives: After completing this course, students will be able to

- Demonstrate knowledge of participatory, egalitarian and democratic workplace practices.
- Apply employment relations concepts, and substantive institutional knowledge, to understanding contemporary developments related to work (Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department Goal 2)

- Make an argument about a matter in the field using contemporary and/or historical evidence (Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department Goal 4)
- Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry level professional (SMLR Goal I)
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge necessary for effective work performance (SMLR Goal VI)

A rubric will be applied to the final project and specific questions on the final exam to assess these objectives.

Course Policies and Expectations

Attendance

It is expected that you will attend class sessions and participate actively. *If you know that you will need to miss a class session, or have trouble meeting a due date, please consult with me in advance.*

General Expectations for this Online Class

Please “arrive” (join the Zoom meeting) on time. Close all web browsers and documents that are unrelated to class. As a courtesy to your peers and professors, set aside and do not use other electronic devices (e.g., cell phone) for non-class related communications or activities, during class time.

Assignments

- All readings and assignments will be posted to Canvas. It is your responsibility to check Canvas for announcements, readings, due dates, and changes to the class calendar or assignments.
- Written assignments must be submitted by the due date.

Academic Integrity

All work submitted should be original, and completed for this class and no other. Proper use of citations, quotations, and paraphrasing are essential skills for all students to avoid inadvertent plagiarism.

Disability

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Grading

Although grades are largely based on the percentage of points received, final grades are always determined at the discretion of the professor. Consistent participation in class, demonstrated growth in understanding, high levels of engagement and overall effort will positively affect your grade.

A-range grades are given for outstanding work that not only meets the basic requirements of a given assignment but demonstrates exceptional insight, clarity and depth of thought.

B-range grades are given for above average work that meets all basic requirements of a given assignment and reflects effort and engagement with the material. Such work is well-written, shows a solid understanding of the material, and avoids major errors.

C-range grades are average or may fall slightly short in some way with respect to understanding of the material, organization, writing quality, or logic.

D-range grades fall significantly short with respect to understanding, organization, writing quality and/or logic.

Although grades will largely be based on the general guidelines above, final grades are, again, always determined at the discretion of the instructor.

While not encouraged to do so, students have the right to express a concern about a grade to the instructor and request that a grade be reconsidered. If a student believes an assignment has been graded unfairly or incorrectly and wants to discuss the grade and/or have the grade reconsidered, a meeting must be requested with the instructor within seven days of receiving the grade.

Course Structure and Brief Description of Assignments

Detailed descriptions of requirements for assignments will be posted to Canvas. Brief descriptions are provided below.

- In-class participation: Students are expected to come prepared and to participate actively during each class session, having read and reflected on the assigned reading.
- Two Short Essays (approx. 500 words): Students are expected to connect personal experience or observation to concepts in the readings.
- One Quiz: Questions about concepts discussed in the readings and in class. Each question requires a response that demonstrates understanding of the material.
- Mini-Presentation: Presentation of approximately 10 minutes in a format of students' choosing; submit short overview memo to professor in advance.
- Final Examination includes multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The exam will require students to demonstrate knowledge of, and ability to apply the course material, and to have processed and reflected critically about the ideas.

Details of assignments are posted on Canvas. All readings will be available online. There is no textbook.

Approximate Grade Weighting

Your final course grade is weighted by assignment, as follows:

Assignment	Weight
In-class participation (attendance; preparedness; active participation in class and online discussion). See more detail below.	15%
Short Essay 1	15%
Quiz 1	15%
Short Essay 2	15%
Mini-Presentation	15%
Final Examination	25%

Criteria for Assessing in-Class Participation

- Attendance
- Engaging in discussion having read and thought about assigned texts
- Seeking understanding and insight
- Taking risks, trying out ideas, asking questions
- Building as appropriate on others’ contributions, making links where appropriate to what others have said and/or to the text
- Tone of respect.

Class Schedule

Tues., Jan. 19—Introduction and Course Overview

Personal Reflection Activity

Tues., Jan. 26—Work in Capitalism

Lecture & Discussion

Kelly, Marjorie (2003). *Divine Right of Capital*. Chapter 3 “The Corporation as Feudal Estate”

Lune, Howard (2010) *Understanding Organizations*. Chapters 1 “Introduction” and 2 “Classical Theories of Organizations” (the sections on Weber and Marx)

K is for Karl - Alienation (Episode 1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKloksmPUCM>

K is for Karl - Exploitation (Episode 4)

<https://marx200.org/en/mediathek/k-karl-exploitation-episode-4>

Tues., Feb. 2—Work in Capitalism

Small Group & Large Group Discussion

Reading: Lune, Howard (2010) *Understanding Organizations* Chapter 3 “Management and Administration”

Tues., Feb. 9—Vantage Points on Work Across the Economy

Small Group & Large Group Discussion

Sweet, Stephen and Meiksins (2017) Chapter 1

Scharf, Adria “Scripted Talk”

<http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2003/0903scharf.html>

Greenhouse, Steven “False Freedom: Sharing the Scraps from the Perilous Gig Economy”

<https://lithub.com/false-freedom-sharing-the-scraps-from-the-perilous-gig-economy/>

***Assignment: Short Essay 1 (due Feb. 15 at 6pm):** Choose an idea that you have read about or discussed in the first weeks of class. (Some examples include “ownership,” “alienation,” “exploitation,” “hierarchical control,” or “management.”) How do scholars define the concept? What does the concept mean to you, in your own words? Think of an example, drawing from your personal work experience or other knowledge, that illustrates this concept. How well does the “book” definition fit your real world example? Target length: 500 words.

Tues., Feb. 16—Democratic Ownership

Lecture & Discussion

Watch in class: “Shift Change: Putting Democracy to Work” Preview

<https://cleo.rutgers.edu/articles/shift-change-putting-democracy-to-work/>

Reading: Blasi, Joseph, Richard Freeman, Douglas Kruse (2014). *The Citizen’s Share*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (Introduction and Chapter 3)

Nembhard, Jessica Gordon (2014). *Collective Courage*, “Introduction”

Tues., Feb. 23—Democratic Ownership

Lecture & Discussion

Reading: “The Case for Employee Ownership”

<https://cleo.rutgers.edu/articles/the-case-for-employee-ownership/>

“Becoming Employee Owned”

https://institute.coop/sites/default/files/resources/COT_BecomingEmployeeOwned_FINALweb.pdf

Boguslaw, Janet et al (2019). Building the Assets of Low and Moderate Income Workers

<https://cleo.rutgers.edu/articles/building-the-assets-of-low-and-moderate-income-workers-and-their-families-the-role-of-employee-ownership/>

Tues., March 2—Democratic Ownership

Activities: Worker Ownership Role Plays & Debates

“A Forum on the End of Employee Ownership at New Belgium”

<https://www.fiftybyfifty.org/2019/12/last-call-a-forum-on-the-end-of-employee-ownership-at-new-belgium/>

Assignment: Quiz 1 (take at home; due March 8 at 6pm)

Tues., March 9—Participatory and Egalitarian Alternatives: Decision Making

Lecture and Discussion

Reading: Chen, Katherine (2009) *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization Behind the Burning Man Event* (Chapter 1)

“Rethinking Hierarchy in the Workplace,” *Stanford Graduate School of Business*

In-Class: Watch and Discuss Video on Burning Man Organization

March 13-21 Spring Break

Tues., March 23—Participatory and Egalitarian Alternatives: Decision Making

Review of course to date.

Experiential Activities.

Prepare for guest speaker next week.

Reading: “The Need for Workplace Democracy”

<https://www.currentaffairs.org/2018/08/the-need-for-workplace-democracy>

Bernstein, Ethan et al (2016). “Beyond the Holacracy Hype,” *Harvard Business Review*.

<https://hbr.org/2016/07/beyond-the-holacracy-hype?>

In-Class: Watch video on Consensus Decision Making, Seeds for Change

Skill-Building Small Group Activities:

- Consensus Decision Making (practice consensus decision-making)
- “MOCHA for Managers” (*a tool for clarifying who should play what role throughout the course of work*)

***Assignment: Essay 2 (due March 29 at 6pm)**

Choose one of two prompts:

1) Think of an undemocratic or exploitative workplace that you've experienced or have knowledge of, or choose one from the readings. What features of this workplace are

undemocratic? How would you advocate for democratic change to the CEO, the shareholders, or your coworkers, if you could? What are a few initial steps the company should take? Refer knowledgeably to the readings in answering the question. Note: You may use a pseudonym for the company name and the essays will remain confidential. Target length: 500 words.

2) Think of the readings and discussions about worker ownership. What are the most persuasive arguments for worker ownership, to you? Do you agree or disagree with the case for worker ownership that advocates make? What criticisms or questions do you have about the concept of worker ownership? Target length: 500 words.

Separately, write out three questions that you have for the guest speaker and submit these along with your essay on March 29.

Tues., March 30—Guest Speaker

Shipper, Frank et al. “Equal Exchange: Doing Well by Doing Good”

Guest Speaker: Daniel Fireside, Equal Exchange Coffee

Tues., April 6—Equity and Inclusion

Lecture & Discussion

Reading: Gulati-Partee, Gita and Maggie Potapchuk (2014) “Paying Attention to White Culture and Privilege: A Missing Link to Advancing Racial Equity,” *The Foundation Review*.

Karen Kahn (2020). “Race, Equity and the Transformative Power of Employee Ownership: A conversation with Todd Leverette”

<https://medium.com/fifty-by-fifty/race-equity-and-the-transformative-power-of-employee-ownership-493d1fb41132>

*** Assignment (memo due April 19; presentations are in class on April 20):** Prepare an approximately 10 minute presentation, using your choice of format, to share your insights with the rest of the class. In your presentation, introduce a workplace that you consider to be democratic or highly participatory. Name and briefly describe the organization. What democratic or participatory practices are notable? (These may include decision making processes, governance structures, ownership or profit sharing or other features.) How do the practices contribute to the organization's success & survival, in your view? What challenges do they present for the organization and its members? What did studying this organization teach you; how might your research inform your own work, career or thinking in the future?

Submit a one page memo by April 19th at 6pm (in advance of your presentation) including: Organization name, your data sources, description of democratic or participatory practices, and your response to the question “what did studying this organization teach you?”

Tues., April 13—Tools You Can Use

Workplace Democracy

Reading: PolicyLink (2020). “CEO Blueprint for Racial Equity”
<https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/ceo-blueprint-for-racial-equity>

Watch before class: “Living our Co-op Values”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qx_eo1YYMs&t=212s

Skill Building Small Group Activity:
Tool from The Management Center: SMARTIE Goals (*for integrating equity goals into planning and goal setting*)

Tues., April 20

Mini Presentations

Tues., April 27

Review; Prepare for Final Examination

*** Final Examination:** A mix of multiple choice, short answer and long answer questions designed to assess understanding of concepts discussed in class and application of concepts to real world scenarios. Specific questions will measure LSER and SMLR learning goals.

Readings

Long Reading:

Lune, Howard (2010) *Understanding Organizations*. Malden, MA: Polity Press: (Chapters 1, 2, 3).

Short Readings:

Abell, Hilary (2020). “The Case for Employee Ownership”
<https://cleo.rutgers.edu/articles/the-case-for-employee-ownership/>

Bernstein, Ethan et al (2016). “Beyond the Holacracy Hype,” *Harvard Business Review*.
<https://hbr.org/2016/07/beyond-the-holacracy-hype?>

Blasi, Joseph, Richard Freeman, Douglas Kruse (2014). *The Citizen’s Share*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (Introduction and Chapter 3)

Boguslaw, Janet et al (2019) Building the Assets of Low and Moderate Income Workers. Kellogg Foundation.
<https://cleo.rutgers.edu/articles/building-the-assets-of-low-and-moderate-income-workers-and-their-families-the-role-of-employee-ownership/>

Chen, Katherine (2009). *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization Behind the Burning Man Event*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (Chapter 1).

“Becoming Employee Owned: A Small Business Toolkit for Transitioning to Employee Ownership” (2018). *Democracy at Work Institute*.

Denning, Steve (2019). “Understanding The U.S. Economy: Lots Of Rotten Jobs,” *Forbes*.

FiftybyFifty.org (2019). “A Forum on the End of Employee Ownership at New Belgium.”

Gulati-Partee, Gita and Maggie Potapchuk (2014) “Paying Attention to White Culture and Privilege: A Missing Link to Advancing Racial Equity,” *The Foundation Review*.

Greenhouse, Steven (2019). False Freedom: Sharing the Scraps from the Perilous Gig Economy
<https://lithub.com/false-freedom-sharing-the-scraps-from-the-perilous-gig-economy/>

Nembhard, Jessica Gordon (2014). *Collective Courage*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press. (Introduction)

PolicyLink (2020). “CEO Blueprint for Racial Equity”
<https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/ceo-blueprint-for-racial-equity>

Robinson, Nathan (2018). “The Need for Workplace Democracy.”
<https://www.currentaffairs.org/2018/08/the-need-for-workplace-democracy>

Scharf, Adria. “Scripted Talk,” Dollars & Sense
<http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2003/0903scharf.html>

Schneider, Nathan. 2017. Ours to Hack and to Own: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, A New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet

Shipper, Frank et al. “Equal Exchange: Doing Well by Doing Good”
<https://cleo.rutgers.edu/articles/equal-exchange-doing-well-by-doing-good/>

Sweet, Stephen and Peter Meiksins (2017) *Changing Contours of Work* (Chapter 1)

Walsh, Dylan (2017) “Rethinking Hierarchy in the Workplace,” Stanford Graduate School of Business.

Tools: “MOCHA for Managers,” “SMARTIE Goals Worksheet,” *The Management Center*;
“Consensus Decision Making,” *Seeds for Change*.

Videos:

Karl Marx on Alienation, BBC
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZ4VzhIuKCQ>

K is for Karl - Exploitation (Episode 4)
<https://marx200.org/en/mediathek/k-karl-exploitation-episode-4>

“Shift Change: Putting Democracy to Work” Preview

<https://cleo.rutgers.edu/articles/shift-change-putting-democracy-to-work/>

Living our Co-op Values: Applying an Intercultural Development Model

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qx_eo1YYMs&t=212s

Guest Speaker:

Dan Fireside, *Equal Exchange*