

Sustainability, Jobs & Justice

Dr. John Schultz, PhD

Course Number:

Labor Studies and Employment Relations 575:240:90

Fall 2026

Asynchronous/online

Office Hours: MWF 12PM-1PM.

Credits: 3

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Canvas Help: For technical support with Canvas, click on the "Help" button in the blue strip on the left hand side of your screen.

You can also call the Canvas Help Hotline: 1-844-833-3116

Course Overview

Is it possible to have both decent jobs and a healthy planet? This course recognizes a basic reality: everyone needs an economic *livelihood* and we all need a livable *planet*.

Our basic questions in this course are these: Is it enough to just have a job? Shouldn't the jobs pay livable wages? And what of the tremendous inequalities in wealth and the racial and gender disparities that still permeate our society? And haven't we do these problems persist?

Taking a broad view of sustainability, the course will explore the deep and dynamic interconnections between democracy, economy, and environment, including fundamental changes underway in the labor market, industries, and government institutions as well as emerging trends in social, environmental, and economic justice campaigns led by labor unions, environmentalists, and other social movements. Readings will be drawn from the disciplines of labor studies, sociology, economics, history, political science, and environmental studies. The course will open with an extended primer on American political economy then examine the interconnected problems of economic, social and environmental inequality and sources of ecological degradation. The final section of the course will explore the possible futures of work and jobs in a sustainable economy, the role of unions and social movements in achieving sustainability, and the possibility of a just transition for workers and historically marginalized communities in N.J., the U.S., and globally.

Course Readings

All articles and book chapters will be available as pdf files in the course modules on Canvas or via links to online sources.

Primary sources for lectures and readings include:

Wright, Erik Olin, and Joel Rogers. *American Society: How It Really Works*

Brecher, Jeremy. *Climate Solidarity: Workers vs Warming*

Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything*

Speth, Gus. *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*

Vachon, Todd E. *Clean Air and Good Jobs: US Labor and the Struggle for Climate Justice*

The following films will be viewed as well:

The Corporation

Inequality for All

This Changes Everything

From the Ashes

Suggested, but not required, supplemental readings and films may be included at the bottom of weekly modules.

Learning Objectives

From the instructor:

- Display critical thinking about the relationship between economic activity and the environment
- Explain the major pillars of sustainability
- Describe the ideological and material factors behind human-environmental relations and their social inequalities
- Evaluate economic, cultural, and sociological theories of inequality
- Display appreciation of the origins and patterns of human power relations, as well as of sources of mutual affection and concern.
- Display critical imagination of future possibilities for socio-ecological relations.
- Apply facts and concepts from the course to argue convincingly against common contemporary fallacies related to sustainability, jobs, and justice

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department:

- Analyze contemporary global issues using multiple perspectives (goal 7)

School of Management and Labor Relations:

- Evaluate the context of workplace issues, public policies and management decisions (goal V)

Method of Instruction

This course is delivered online, asynchronously. Course content will include weekly readings, videos, and pre-recorded lectures and course work will be primarily in the form of posting to the discussion forum. Assessment of learning will be achieved via a combination of online tests and written essay responses.

Note: whenever anything is posted to this site, you will automatically receive a notification to your rutgers.edu email account. Checking that email account frequently is highly recommended.

Course Grading

Online Discussion Forum/Class Participation (200pts - 40%)

There will be an online discussion prompt each week (except for exam weeks and spring break). It is possible to earn up to 25 points by excellence in participation in each forum. A forum is an interactive threaded discussion. The weekly forum will open each week on Monday, and end on Sunday and you are expected to contribute three times. **AI written posts will receive ZERO credit** - please share your own thoughts in your own words, it's not a big ask. Your contributions will be evaluated as follows:

- **Was your participation timely, ongoing and interactive? Did you participate in a substantive way?** You should have at least one substantive post by **Wednesday** night, one by **Friday** night, and another by **Sunday** night for full credit here. But additionally for full credit, you must interact with others by asking or answering questions, or by agreeing or disagreeing with them. But, remember that you must add to the discussion, not simply agree. In general, you can think of this as requiring 3-4 SUBSTANTIVE posts that add ideas to the discussion. Of course, you will also have some posts that are not substantive but involve interaction with other students (e.g. ones that agree with a point they have already made) **(10 points)**.
- **Were your comments thoughtful and based on the readings and other course materials? Breadth and Evidence?** Did you demonstrate an understanding of the key concepts? Did you connect the ideas from the readings or lectures to the discussion topics? In other words, what was the quality of your comments? Occasional reference to outside sources is ok, but the use of a lot of external sources would indicate the use of AI scouring the web rather than the student relying on what was provided in the course modules – AI written posts will receive ZERO points. Did you comment on multiple questions or just one? Were your opinions backed by personal experience or evidence? Persuasive opinions are backed by a variety of types of evidence – from course materials, from current events, and from personal experience **(10 points)**.
- **Were your comments expressed clearly and appropriately?** While it may seem like a group text thread--you must use standard written English of the sort that would be appropriate in a work setting **(5 points)**.

Be sure to adhere to the [discussion post rules and guidelines](#)

Note: Threaded discussions (forums) are closed once a week is over so you must be sure to stay current with the class in terms of online discussion. Showing up is 90% of success in life! It is also part of your participation grade, so be sure to participate in the class forum!

Exam #1 (100pts - 20%)

Exam 1 will be a standard exam comprised primarily of multiple choice and short answer questions based on the readings and lectures from the first section of the course.

Exam #2 (100pts - 20%)

Exam 2 will be a standard exam comprised primarily of multiple choice and short answer questions based on the readings and lectures from the second section of the course.

Exam #3 (100pts - 20%)

The final exam will be an open book, take-home essay that will draw content from the entire semester.

Student Responsibilities; Policy on Technological Failures; Late Work Policy; Policy on "Absence"

Policy on Technological Failures:

Please keep in mind that any failures of technology — including internet access, computer failure, etc. — are solely the responsibility of the student. Additionally, it is likewise the student's responsibility to assure that any assignment turned in is turned in in a way that can be readily accessed by the professor; on-time; any assignment that is submitted but not accessible to the professor will count as not submitted and the late work penalty will apply.

Make sure you have an alternative plan of access to your Canvas course in case your computer crashes (it happens). An extra computer at home, your employer's computer, or computer at your local library can be some alternatives. Additionally, be sure to backup your important documents and assignments on a flash drive or other external device.

Late Work Policy:

The late work policy is as follows: all assignments are due by Sunday evening in the week in which they are due, no later than 11:59PM that night. Any late assignment is automatically docked 10% of the overall possible grade; an additional 10% is subtracted for every 12 hours that pass thereafter. After 5 days, the assignment can no longer be submitted and the student will receive a 0%. If an assignment is to be late,

"Absence" Policy:

"Attendance" is measured in this class by the submission of assignments on-time. Any inability to turn in assignments on-time means the student is "absent." As a result, as per the new guidelines of Rutgers University, **absences should be handled through the [University's Self-](#)**

Reporting Form[Links to an external site.](#). Information on absence and verification **can be found here**[Links to an external site.](#).

Copyright Information

- [Library of Congress Copyright Office \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#).
- [Creative Commons License \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#).
- [Code of Best Practices in Fair Use of OpenCourseware \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#).

TurnItIn Statement

Students (You) agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com (via Canvas) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

If you do not agree please contact me immediately.

Academic Integrity

Instructors: you can add your own Academic Integrity on this page, in addition to the Rutgers version.

- Be sure to read and adhere to [Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy](#)[Links to an external site.](#).
- [PDF version](#)[Download PDF version](#)
- [Don't Plagiarize! Document your Research](#)[Links to an external site.](#).

Student Code of Conduct

You are expected to conduct yourself in a professional, responsible, courteous, and respectful manner at all times during the course, in the classroom as well as online (Discussion Forums, when applicable). Offensive language, harassment, posting videos or other media that is not related to the course, and/or any other inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated; and will result in dire consequences, including dismissal from the course. Any form of communication with your classmates and/or your instructor must be of the highest professional and respectable standard.

Technical Support

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem with Canvas:

- Visit the [Canvas Student Tutorial](#)[Links to an external site.](#)
- Contact [Rutgers IT Help Desk](#)[Links to an external site.](#) 877-361-1134, accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Visit the [Rutgers Canvas Student orientation](#)

Special Needs Accommodations

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 \(\(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site. \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.\)](#).

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 \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.website \(https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.\)](#).

Should you require my assistance in facilitating the process, I will be happy to do so. Just let me know. Below is the full contact information for the office of disability services:

Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Suite A145, Piscataway, NJ 08854-8045.

- E-mail Address: dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu
- Phone: (848) 445-6800 • Fax: (732) 445-3388
- <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Student Affairs – Office of the Dean of Students

The [Office of the Dean of Students \(Links to an external site.\)Links to an external site.](#) provides support to students who may be facing exceptional difficulties that could jeopardize their education. Visit their website to learn more about the type of support they offer and/or to schedule an appointment.

Contacting Your Professor

If you have questions related to the course content (assignments, projects, etc.) contact your instructor through email from your ***rutgers.edu email account***. Messages sent from your personal (non-Rutgers email account) may end up in a Spam folder, or get hacked in cyberspace,

consequently delaying response to your inquiry. You may also contact your instructor via the Canvas Inbox feature (left side navigation bar, red area).

Instructor contact: Dr. John Schultz, john.schultz@rutgers.edu

Office hours: By appointment.

Rutgers Support Services

Academic Support Services

Rutgers has a variety of resources for academic support. For more information, see the [University Academic SupportLinks to an external site.](#) page.

Rutgers Learning Centers:

General academic support services are offered to all Rutgers students through the [Rutgers Learning CentersLinks to an external site.](#). These services are free-of-charge to Rutgers students and include:

Academic Support

- [Peer TutoringLinks to an external site.](#) is available in two forms. Walk-in group tutoring is available on all campuses and one-on-one tutoring is available through our partnership with the SAS Honors Program.
- [Academic CoachingLinks to an external site.](#) is a comprehensive service for students who want to improve their academic and self-management skills, such as time management, critical thinking, and study skills.
- [Writing CoachingLinks to an external site.](#) supports writers in a variety of disciplines and a range of courses. Our coaches meet individually with students about brainstorming topics, organizing ideas, formulating a thesis, structuring paragraphs, and developing an argument.
- [Study GroupLinks to an external site.](#) leaders review course material with students and integrate study strategies—note taking, problem solving, and test preparation—that link course content with cognitive skill development.
- [Reserved Course MaterialsLinks to an external site.](#) such as equipment, demonstrations, and videos are available at the MSLC.

Professional Development Opportunities for Students

- [Employment OpportunitiesLinks to an external site.](#) offer students professional development, leadership experience, and flexible hours.
- [Peer Leader TrainingLinks to an external site.](#) is available to University programs upon request and addresses leadership & communication skills, group management techniques, content training, and more.
- [Peer Instructor EducationLinks to an external site.](#) is a 3 credit, 300 level pedagogy course we provide to train peer leaders.

You can [schedule an appointment Links to an external site.](#)online for one-on-one assistance.

Writing Centers:

Rutgers also has a [Writing CenterLinks to an external site.](#) on each campus where any student can obtain tutoring and writing assistance. Visit their website to make an appointment or find the Writing Center location on your campus.

Library:

- SMLR Librarian - Julie Peters, jpeters@smlr.rutgers.edu.
- [Rutgers University LibrariesLinks to an external site.](#) offer many resources to assist you. Through their website, you can search the library holdings and access a variety of research and reference tools.

For example, you can:

- Find [articlesLinks to an external site.](#) in a large collection of indexes and databases and [books or mediaLinks to an external site.](#) from a variety of catalogs.
- View a wide variety of general and subject-specific [library guidesLinks to an external site.](#)
- Get [HelpLinks to an external site.](#) from a librarian via email, phone, or live chat.

Access: Rutgers Libraries [Indexes and DatabasesLinks to an external site.](#) are subscription resources, available to Rutgers students, faculty, and staff only. Please note that if you need to access these resources from off-campus, you will need to [log-in Links to an external site.](#)using your Rutgers NetID and password.

Disability Services

All Students:

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs, and the [Rutgers Office of Disability Services Links to an external site.](#)offers a wide array of services.

In order to receive accommodations, students must contact the disability services office at the campus where they are officially enrolled. Students must complete and submit a [registration formLinks to an external site.](#), participate in an intake interview with an ODS-assigned coordinator, and provide [documentationLinks to an external site.](#).

If the documentation supports your request for accommodations, your campus' 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 ensure that your needs can be met in a timely manner.

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The [Office of the Dean of Students](#)[Links to an external site.](#) provides support to students who may be facing exceptional difficulties that could jeopardize their education. Visit their website to learn more about the type of support they offer and/or to schedule an appointment.

Campus Specific Offices:

[Rutgers-New Brunswick ODS](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

The Rutgers-New Brunswick office can be contacted at:

Office of Disability Services-New Brunswick
Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145
Livingston Campus
54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue
Piscataway, NJ 08854-8045
Phone: 848.445.6800
Fax: 732.445.3388
E-mail: dsoffice@echo.rutgers.edu

[Rutgers-Camden ODS](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

The Rutgers-Camden office can be contacted at:

Tim Pure
Coordinator of Disability Services, Rutgers-Camden
Rutgers-Camden Learning Center
Armitage Hall, Room 240
311 North Fifth Street
Camden, NJ 08102-1405
Phone: 856.225.6442
Fax: 856.225.6443
E-mail: tpure@camden.rutgers.edu

[Rutgers-Newark](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

The Rutgers-Newark office can be contacted at:

Kate Torres
Coordinator of ADA Services and Academic Support
Robeson Campus Center, Suite 352
350 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
Newark, NJ 07102
Phone: 973.353.5300
Fax: 973.353.5666
E-mail: kate.torres@rutgers.edu

Specific contacts for the **Law Schools**, or for **Biomedical Sciences and Health Schools** can be found at the [ODS Contact Links to an external site.](#)page.

Technology

Help and Resources:

[Canvas Student GuideLinks to an external site.](#) This guide includes information about accessing Canvas, setting email addresses and notifications, accessing grades, and how to use the different tools available in Canvas.

Students having difficulty using a course tool should contact the **Online Learning Help Desk** at 877.361-1134 or help@canvas.rutgers.edu 24/7/365; please contact the Help Desk before contacting your course instructor to resolve Canvas technical issues.

[Canvas Technical Requirements](#). This page contains system, browser, and feature requirements. Please be sure your computer and browser can support Canvas.

Accessibility:

The accessibility statements for technology that students may use in this course to communicate and collaborate with others and/or create content can be found below:

- [Canvas accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [BigBlueButton accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Adobe accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [YouTube accessibility guidesLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Google Docs accessibility guidesLinks to an external site.](#)
- [VoiceThread accessibility statement and white paperLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Kaltura accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Proctortrack accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Turnitin accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Campus Pack accessibility statement](#) 
- [Piazza accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [EvaluationKit accessibility statement](#) 
- [Ebsco accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Barnes & Noble accessibility statement Links to an external site.](#)
- [Cengage accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Pearson accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [McGraw-Hill accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
- [Wiley accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)
 - [Wiley Plus accessibility statementLinks to an external site.](#)

Privacy:

The privacy policies for technology that students may use in this course to communicate and collaborate with others and/or create content can be found below:

- [Canvas privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [BigBlueButton privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Adobe privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [YouTube privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Google Docs privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [VoiceThread privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Kaltura privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Proctortrack privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Turnitin privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Campus Pack privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.[Open this document with ReadSpeaker docReader](#)
- [Piazza privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [EvaluationKit privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Ebsco privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Barnes & Noble privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Cengage privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Pearson privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [McGraw-Hill privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.
- [Wiley privacy policy](#)Links to an external site.

Course Schedule

PART I. SETTING THE STAGE: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

Sept 1 - Perspectives and Values

- Audio: Welcome to Class/Framing
- Video: Perspectives and Values
- Slides: The Current Moment: A Dual Crisis of Ecology and Inequality on Planet Earth
- Slides: Perspectives and Values
- Assignment: Write a Personal Narrative and post to the discussion forum by 11:59pm Thursday - view other essays and comment on 2 by 11:59pm Sunday

Sept 7 – Capitalism in Theory

- Reading: Wright - Capitalism: How It's Supposed to Work
- Slides: Capitalism: How It's Supposed to Work
- Reading: Speth Chapter 2
- Film: *The Corporation*
- Assignment: Post in discussion forum for this week

Sept 14-20 - American Capitalism in Practice

- Reading: Wright - American Capitalism: How It Actually Works
- Slides: American Capitalism: How It Actually Works
- Video: A Tale of Two Cities
- Video: Tragedy of the Commons
- Reading: Klein Chapter 2
- Assignment: Post in discussion forum for this week

Sept 21-27 – Democracy in Theory and Practice

- Reading: Wright - Capitalist Democracy
- Slides: Capitalist Democracy
- Reading: Speth Chapter 11
- No Discussion Forum this week
- Study for Exam 1 next Week!!!

Sept 28-Oct 4 – EXAM 1

- EXAM #1: The Political Economy of American Society

PART II. WHAT'S SO UNSUSTAINABLE, ANYWAY?

Sept 28 – Silent Spring: Unsustainable Ecological Relations

- Slides: Unsustainable Ecological Relations
- Audio: Putting a Price Tag on Nature
- Reading: Insect Extinctions
- Assignment: Post in discussion forum for this week

Oct 5-11: Silent Spring: Unsustainable Ecological Relations

- Slides: Unsustainable Ecological Relations
- Audio: Putting a Price Tag on Nature
- Reading: Insect Extinctions
- Assignment: Post in discussion forum for this week

Oct 12-18 – We Are the 99%: Unsustainable Economic Relations

- Slides: Unsustainable Economic Relations
- Film: *Inequality for All*
- Assignment: Post in discussion forum for this week

Oct 19-25 – Equal Rights and Justice: Unsustainable Social Relations

- Slides: Unsustainable Social Relations
- Film: This Changes Everything
- Study for Exam 2 after Spring Break!!!

Nov 1 – EXAM 2

- Exam #2: What's so Unsustainable, Anyway?

PART III. A BETTER WORLD IS POSSIBLE? SUSTAINABILITY, JOBS, AND JUSTICE

Nov 2-8 – Jobs vs. the Environment: Class, Ecology, and Sustainability

- Reading: Lynas
- Reading: Obach Chapter 3
- Reading: Vachon Chapter 3
- Reading: Brecher Chapters 1-5
- No Discussion Forum this week

Nov 9-15 – Not in my Backyard: Environmental Injustice

- Videos (x3): Environmental and Climate Justice in the U.S. and Globally
- Reading: Bullard interview
- Reading: Principals of EJ
- Reading: Jemez Principals
- Reading: Tessum
- Assignment: Post in discussion forum for this week

Nov 16-22 – Just Transitions – Planning for Environmental, Social, and Economic Sustainability

- Slides: Democracy, Economy, and Sustainability
- Video: This is What Energy Democracy Looks Like
- Reading: Vachon JT Frames
- Read Klein Chapters 9, 10, and 11; Write 2 discussion questions for class
- Assignment: Post in discussion forum for this week

Nov 23-25 – This is What Democracy Looks Like!: Fighting for Environmental, Social, and Economic Sustainability

- Slides: Democracy from Below
- Reading: Brecher Chapters 6-8;
- Reading: Klein Conclusion
- Film: From the Ashes
- Assignment: Post in discussion forum for this week

Nov 30-Dec 6: Possible Futures

- Slides: Possible Futures
- *Abundance* (selections) by Klein and Thompson
- Assorted critiques of *Abundance*
- *Looking Backwards* by Bellamy
- Selections from Robinson, *Red Mars*
- Prepare for you last exam and submit it

Dec 7-10: preparing for end of semester assignments

FINAL ASSESSMENT: Due December 10 by 11:59PM