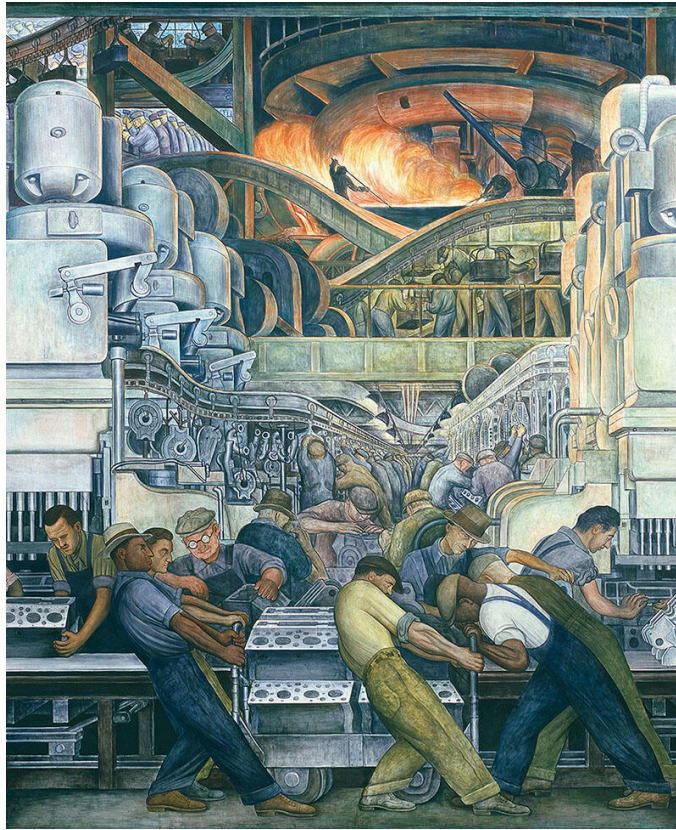


Labor & Democracy



Labor Studies and Employment Relations 575:301:01 Spring 2025

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Office hours: before/after class, or by appointment
Class time/location: 10:20-1:20, Room 203, Scott Hall, College Ave

Course Overview

Democracy is in crisis in many nations and increasingly problematic in the U.S. In this class we'll explore the relationship of labor organizations to democratic practices and principles. We'll ask: what can labor organizations and other progressive social movements do to defend democracy? What is meant by democracy anyway in politics or in society more broadly?

Students will be introduced to workers' collective action as a worldwide phenomenon that has been central to the political economic development of capitalist democracies. The course emphasizes how countries' unique histories and their institutional contexts have shaped both

the political opportunities for workers' evolving collective action and the effects that such social mobilization has had on the relationship between capitalism and democracy.

With reference to two centuries of transatlantic history, the class covers both key political achievements of the working class as well as labor's contemporary challenges.

Learning Objectives

The student is able to:

Core Curriculum: 21C

- Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experiences of and perspectives on the world (Goal a).
- Analyze issues of social justice across local and global contexts. (Goal d).

Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department:

- Analyze a contemporary global issue in labor & employment relations from a multidisciplinary perspective (Goal 7) .
- Analyze issues of social justice related to work across local and global contexts (Goal 8).

School of Management and Labor Relations:

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

Requirements (details at the end of the syllabus):

In-class participation	20% of the course grade
Five short papers	40% total (8% each)
One Midterm Paper	20%
One Final Paper	20%

Policies

Attendance and participation

Be prepared for class and always read the assigned materials before our meetings. You are expected to bring questions and comments about the course material so that you can participate in class discussions. With much of our time spent learning through discussion, it is necessary for everybody to participate. I might ask students to use their questions to stimulate discussions and will ensure broad participation. It is critical that we respect one another's thoughts and address

our comments at others' ideas, not at people themselves. This course is not a forum for demeaning or threatening language. Rather than measuring the frequency with which you speak in class, your participation grade reflects how you balance reasoning, reading, and listening. Also, do not forget to take careful notes to complement my PowerPoint slides.

Students should plan to attend every course session. If for some unavoidable reason you must miss a class, please let me know in advance through the university's absence reporting website (<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>) so that your absence will not remain unexplained. If you are late or leave early repeatedly, and if you miss class unexcused, your participation grade will suffer.

Late work

Late work is accepted in this course, but is penalized. Assignments lose 10% of the overall possible grade for each day late, starting at midnight. (Thus, if a paper is due on Monday at 11:59PM, and you turn it in Tuesday morning, grading would start at 90%.) After five days late, the late assignment is no longer accepted and will receive a "o."

Extensions on late work will be given only with prior arrangement with the professor, and only in extreme situations.

Turning in assignments

No physical documents are accepted in this class; all assignments must be submitted via the official Canvas course website. No submission of any other kind is accepted: for example, no emailed submission will be accepted; no submission via the "submission comments" box in the Canvas assignment; etc. Documents must be submitted in the proper format: as documents ending in .doc or .docx

Any assignments not submitted correctly will receive a "o." It is the student's sole responsibility to ensure that a document is submitted in the proper format that is readable by the professor. Students who submit assignments that cannot be opened and read by the professor are marked as missing and will receive a "o."

Intellectual property

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

As the instructor for this course, I have the responsibility to protect students' right to privacy. Classroom recordings of students will therefore be treated as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the U.S. federal law that governs access to educational information and records. Instructors and students must provide notification if any part of sessions are to be recorded, and such recordings cannot be circulated outside the course.

Artificial Intelligence

No use of Artificial Intelligence is permitted in this course, and its use will be considered plagiarism in violation of the policy on academic integrity. Students are expected to generate and submit original, personally composed tasks for each assignment. The use of Artificial Intelligence to create and submit work under the guise of original work is not acceptable.

Academic integrity

While I encourage students to work together to understand theories and concepts, all written work must be your own. If you cite an author or use his/her ideas, please cite properly. Plagiarized assignments or evidence of cheating will result in a failing grade in the assignment and possibly in the course. Moreover, plagiarism may result in disciplinary action by the university.

Disability statement

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.

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>.

Technical Assistance

Helpdesk: Rutgers Office of Information and Technology, <https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support>

Call: 833-OIT-HELP

Course Schedule

Part I: Starting out

Week 1: What is a union? Why do unions matter?

- Readings:
 - AFL-CIO, “How Unions Work”
 - Oldham, “What the worker movement won,” *Teen Vogue*
 - Abraham Kahn. 2020. Let’s Call Athletes ‘Workers,’ and Let’s Call these NBA Protests What They Were – Strikes.” *The Conversation*, August 28.

Week 2: Labor and democracy: what’s the problem?

- Assignments:
 - Short Paper 1 (500 words)
- Readings:
 - “Introduction” to Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*
 - Chapter 2 of Kennworthy, *Social Democratic America*, “What’s the Problem?”
 - Ferguson, Jorgensen, Chen, “How money drives US congressional elections,” *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics*, September 2019

Part II: Global beginnings and controversies

Week 3: Labor and Politics in Europe in the 1800s

- Readings
 - Eric Hobsbawm, Chapter 1 of *Age of Capital*, “Springtime of the Peoples”
 - Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, Preamble, Part I, and Part II

Week 4: A controversy erupts: reform or revolution?

- Assignment:
 - Reaction paper 2 (500 words)
- Readings:
 - Bernstein, “Evolutionary Socialism” (1899)
 - Luxemburg, “Reform or Revolution?” but *only*
 - “Introduction”
 - “The opportunist method”
 - “Capitalism and the state”

- “Conquest of Political Power”

***Part III:
Labor and politics in the U.S.:
Towards social democracy***

Week 5: The making of the US labor movement

- Assignment:
 - Reaction Paper 3 (500 words)
- Readings:
 - Foner, “History of the Labor Movement in the United States,” V. 2, selections
 - Brecher, *Strike!* Chapter 4, Nineteen Nineteen
 - Founding documents of the IWW

Week 6: Unions, the New Deal, and politics (part 1)

- Readings:
 - Zieger, *The CIO*, Chapter 2: Founding the CIO, 1935-1936, and Chapter 3, “Over the Top, 1936-1937”
 - Text of the Wagner Act 1935
 - FDR and the “Second Bill of Rights”

Week 7: Unions, the New Deal, and politics (part 2)

- Assignment:
 - Midterm Paper (due the Sunday before Spring Break starts).
- Readings
 - Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, Chapter 1, “Reconstructing the 1930s,”
 - Michael Goldfield, *The Southern Key*, Conclusion

Week 8: Labor and Politics in World War II

- Readings
 - Lichtenstein, *Labor’s War at Home*, Chapter 3, “CIO Politics on the Eve of War,” and Chapter 12, “Epilogue: Labor in Postwar America”
 - Moody, *An Injury to All*, Chapter 2: “The Postwar System of Labor-Capital Relations”

Week 9: Labor in the Post-War Era

- Assignment:
 - Reaction Paper 4 (500 words)

- Readings
 - Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, Chapter 4, “Erosion of the Union Idea”
 - Moody, *An Injury to All*, Chapter 6, “Business Organizes as a Class”
 - Shuhrke, *Blue Collar Empire*, “Introduction”

Part IV:
Labor and social democracy today, in the U.S. and Globally

Week 10: Labor and Democracy in the Age of Neoliberalism

- Readings:
 - Jane McAlevey, *A Collective Bargain*, Chapter 2, “Who Killed the Unions?”
 - Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, Chapter 6, “A Time of Troubles”
 - Moody, *On New Terrain*, Ch. 3: Growing Diversity in the Midst of Change

Week 11: What is workers’ collective action? How does it work?

- Readings:
 - Unite Here. 2020. Press Release on Canvassing. November 7.
 - Joseph A. McCartin. 2019. “How Air Traffic Controllers Helped End the Shutdown – and Changed History.” *Washington Post*, January 26.
 - Daniel, “Cesar Chavez and the Unionization of California Farm Workers,” in *Labor Leaders in America*, pp. 350-373.

Week 12: What path forward? (Part 1)

- Assignments
 - Reaction Paper 5 (500 words)
- Readings:
 - Cockburn and St. Clair, Chapter 2 of *5 Days that Shook the World*, Chapter 2
 - Barbara Ransby. 2015. “The Class Politics of Black Lives Matter”
 - “AFL-CIO's Shuler Pledges 1 Million New Union Members in 10 Years,” *Bloomberg*

Week 13: What Path forward? (Part 2)

- Readings:
 - Eyal Press. 2021. “America Runs on ‘Dirty Work.’” *New York Times*, August 13.
 - Mike Elkby. 2013. “VW Isn’t Fighting Unionization—But Leaked Docs Show Right-Wing Groups Are.” *Bill Moyers & Company*
 - Assorted resources on “Bargaining for the Common Good”

- Assorted stories on new unions at Amazon, Starbucks, etc.

Week 14: Towards a Social Democracy

- Assignments:
 - Final Paper
- Readings:
 - The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, "Social Democracy"
 - Kenworthy, "America's Social Democratic Future"