

Democratic Workplaces

Course Description

This course explores the concept and practice of workplace democracy. It will introduce students to major examples of workplace democracy, contrasting these forms with dominant (undemocratic) models of workplace governance and ownership under capitalism. The linkages between workplace democracy and political democracy, and the diverse historical roots of the concept, will be examined. The relationship of workplace democracy to such outcomes as worker wealth ownership, racial equity, and worker voice will be explored. Individual democratic workplaces will be examined in detail.

Course Delivery Format

This course runs from Jan. 21, 2025, through May 11, 2025. It is delivered entirely online through the Learning Management System, Canvas. There will be no required in-person classroom sessions. The course is delivered in asynchronous mode. This means the learning activities and communication takes place outside of real-time. You do not have to log in at any specific scheduled time; you log in at your convenience. Note: Even though you don't need to log in at any specific time, you are required to adhere to all course work due dates.

Instructor

Professor Adria Scharf, PhD., Associate Director of Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing at School of Management and Labor Relations

Email adria.scharf@rutgers.edu or Canvas inbox

Students are encouraged to reach out to the professor by email, Canvas inbox, or office hours with questions and thoughts, at any time during the semester.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand prevalent models of workplace governance in business, nonprofit and government spheres and prevalent models of business ownership.
- Understand several building block concepts from social theory.
- Analyze the contradictions between how workplaces are commonly structured, and the idea of democracy.
- Analyze multiple conceptions and features of workplace democracy.
- Compare and evaluate several historical and contemporary examples of workplace democracy.

School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR) Learning Objectives:

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

Course Materials

Most readings in this class will be provided or will be available from Rutgers University Libraries (online access). To access these readings from the library, you will need to enter your NetId and Password.

Supplemental Materials

Additional learning materials, such as recorded lecture, presentation slides, videos, and articles including from Curriculum Library on Employee Ownership (CLEO.RUTGERS.EDU). are provided in the Modules section in their respective weeks.

Coursera Course Videos

Some of the course videos assigned for this course are available on Coursera.orgLinks to an external site.. Coursera is a MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) platform. The videos you will need to view for this course on Coursera are part of Professor Scharf's Coursera course titled: Our Share: Employee Ownership as a Wealth Sharing Tool.Links to an external site. To access the videos, you will need to sign up on Coursera (for Free). Please do so. The specific videos you will need to view once you are on the Coursera platform are noted in the relevant Modules section. Note: you are not required to complete the Coursera course. Only the sections that are assigned.

Course Structure & Schedule

This course is structured in a weekly module format. A Module is a chunk of the course content broken out by usually topic. Each Module equates to a Week. Each week starts on a Monday and ends on a Sunday. Exceptions are the 1st the last week of the semester.

The course is divided into 15 Weeks as follows:

Week 1 (January 21 - 25) - Introduction

Week 2 (January 26 - February 1): Dominant Models: How are Workplaces "Governed?"

Week 3 (February 2 - 8): Dominant Models: How are Businesses Owned?

Week 4 (February 9 - 15): Workplace Democracy from Multiple Perspectives

Week 5 (February 16 - 22): Examples of Democratic Worker Governance

Week 6 (February 23 - March 1): Examples of Worker Ownership

Week 7 (March 2 - March 8): Democratizing Gig Work & Review

Week 8 (March 9 - 14): Midterm

March 15 - 23: Spring Break. No Class activities.

Week 9 (March 24 - 29): Participation vs. Bureaucracy

Week 10 (March 30 - April 5): Democratizing the Nonprofit Sector

Week 11 (April 6 - 12): The Worker Takeover

Week 12 (April 13 - 19): Scaling Up: Mondragon, The World's Largest Cooperative Network

Week 13 (April 20 - 26): Why So Few Democratic Workplaces? Barriers

Week 14 (April 27 - May 3): Course Review and Discussion about Final Projects

Week 15 (May 4 - May 11): Final Papers due

Assignments, Activities, and Assessments

Discussions

Actively engage in discussion forums, having completed and reflected upon assigned course materials. Student participation in the discussion forum represents 20% of total course grade.

Participation in discussions is critical to this class.

Reflections

Periodic reflections on weekly course materials containing brief summaries of readings, your answers to reflection questions, and your personal analysis. You are also encouraged to relate course material to your own experiences and observations. Do not ever submit text generated by AI.

Mid-Term Exam

For the mid-term and final exams, you will complete an exam that will include multiple choice questions, fill in the blank questions, and short-essay questions. Practice questions will be provided in advance.

Knowledge Checks

This course will include two quizzes over the course of the semester to assess learning.

Final Project

The final paper or project will be an in depth examination of a question of your choosing related to the course topic, which includes a clear articulation of the question, a literature review, and your thoughtful analysis. It must reference concepts or readings from the class and include citations.

Grading Structure

	% of Final Course Grade
Discussion Forum	25%
Reflections	10%
Course Project	30%
Knowledge Checks	10%
Midterm Exam	25%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

Grade	Performance
90 - 100	A Outstanding
88 - 89.99	B+ Good
80 - 87.99	B Good
78 - 79.99	C+ Satisfactory
70 - 77.99	C Satisfactory
69.99 below	F Poor

Staying On Track

Online learning requires a high level of discipline, dedication, and time management skills. While online learning offers you flexibility and convenience to learn from anyplace, anytime, you are still expected to adhere to the all due dates.

To help you stay on track:

- Have access to a reliable computer, and access to the Internet
- Log in to Canvas for your course on a daily basis
- Check for any announcements, update to the syllabus, assignments, and/or discussions and respond accordingly
- Actively participate in the Discussion Forum
- Complete the assigned readings and/or media
- Complete the assigned exercises and projects
- Adhere to all due dates

Access Rutgers Canvas via the MyRutgers Portal, rutgers.instructure.com, mobile app and <https://canvas.rutgers.edu>. For Canvas assistance, Passwords, or any other computer-related technical support contact the Rutgers Canvas Help Desk help@canvas.rutgers.edu

Academic Integrity

The rights of students will be protected to insure that test scores are related to competence in the subject matter. If cheating is detected, it will be prosecuted to the limit allowed by University policies.

Academic Integrity Contract:

All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to behave in an ethical and moral fashion, respecting the human dignity of all members of the community and resisting behavior that may cause danger or harm to others through violence, theft, or bigotry. All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to adhere to the civil and criminal laws of the local community, state, and nation, and to regulations promulgated by the University. All members of the Rutgers University community are expected to observe established standards of scholarship and academic freedom by respecting the intellectual property of others and by honoring the right of all students to pursue their education in an environment free from harassment and intimidation. Please see <http://policies.rutgers.edu/PDF/Section10/10.2.11-current.pdf> for details regarding the Student Code of Conduct. Please see http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf for details regarding the Academic Integrity Policy. Similarly, all students and faculty members of the academic community at the School of Management and Labor Relations should uphold high standards for personal conduct, ethical behavior, and professional integrity. In the area of academic integrity, students are expected to refrain from cheating, fabricating information, plagiarizing, inappropriately denying others access to material, and facilitating others in academic dishonesty. Please see <http://policies.rutgers.edu/PDF/Section10/10.2.11-current.pdf> (pp. 24-28) for detailed descriptions of each type of action. Any of the following acts, when committed by a student, is an act of academic dishonesty and decreases the genuine achievements of other students and scholars.