

# Labor & Democracy

*Dr. John Schultz, PhD*

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| Course Number:<br><br>Labor Studies and Employment Relations<br>575:301:01<br><br>Spring 2026  | Course Time and Location:<br><br>Wednesdays, 10:20AM-1:20PM<br>Scott Hall<br>Room 102<br>College Ave Campus                   |
| Course Prerequisite: None  | Office Hours: MWF 12PM-1PM. But if these hours don't work for you, not to worry! Contact me and we'll find a time that works! |
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| Course start date: January 21, 2026  | Phone: (215) 874-7107 (Google Voice)  |
| Canvas Help: For technical support with Canvas, click on the "Help" button in the blue strip on the left hand side of your screen.<br><br>You can also call the Canvas Help Hotline:<br>1-844-833-3116 |   |

## 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: CCO-1***

- Analyze a contemporary global issue from a multidisciplinary perspective

### ***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:

**In-class participation**                      20% of the course grade

**Four short papers**                      32% total (8% each)

**One Midterm 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 Tuesday at 11:59PM, and you turn it in Wednesday 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 “0.”

### ***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: Introducing the course, and its theme*

*Week 2: The question of democracy*

- Gilles et al., "Testing Theories of American Politics"
- *The New Yorker*, "Are Bosses Dictators?"
- *Social Democratic America*, "Introduction: What's the Problem?"

*Week 3: Unions and democracy*

- AFL-CIO, "How Unions Work"
- Oldham, "What the worker movement won," *Teen Vogue*
- "Introduction" to Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*
- Abraham Kahn. 2020. Let's Call Athletes 'Workers,' and Let's Call these NBA Protests What They Were – Strikes." *The Conversation*, August 28.
- Assignments:
  - Short Paper 1 (500 words)

### ***Part II:***

#### ***Global beginnings and controversies***

*Week 4: 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 5: 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 Democracy in the 1930s: Europe and the U.S.***

##### *Week 6: Germany, the working class, and the path to national socialism*

- Readings:
  - Berman, *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe’s Twentieth Century*. Chapter 6, “The Rise of Fascism and National Socialism”
  - Childers, Chapter 4, “Polarization and Collapse: The Elections of 1932,” in *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1933*
  - Eley, Chapter 3 (“The Return of Ideology: Everyday Life, the Volksgemeinschaft, and the Nazi Appeal”), of *Nazism as Fascism : Violence, Ideology, and the Ground of Consent in Germany, 1930-1945*

##### *Week 7: The American Labor Movement and the New Deal*

- The American Labor Movement and the New Deal
  - Lichtenstein, “Reconstructing the 1930s”
  - Omer Aziz, “America through Nazi Eyes,” *Dissent*.
  - Roosevelt, “Address at Madison Square Garden”
  - PBS Documentary: *The Great Depression*, Episode 1, “A Job at Ford”
  - OPTIONAL: PBS Documentary: *The Great Depression*, Episode 2, “The Road to Rock Bottom”

##### *Week 8: Labor post-war*

- Assignment
  - Midterm paper due
- Readings:
  - Sheri Berman, *The Primacy of Politics*, Ch. 7, “The Swedish Exception”
  - Peter Baldwin, *The Politics of Social Solidarity: Class Bases of the European Welfare State, 1875-1975*, Chapter 2, “The Triumph of the Solidaristic Welfare State: Britain and Scandinavia”
  - William P. Jones, “The Forgotten Radical History of the March on Washington”
  - Lichtenstein, *Labor’s War at Home*, Chapter 12, “Labor in Postwar America”

## **Part IV:**

### ***Labor and Democracy: From the Neoliberal Assault to Today***

#### *Week 9: The Onset of Neoliberalism as a Global Phenomenon*

- Readings
  - Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, “Introduction” and “Chapter 1”
  - Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*, “Erosion of the Union Idea” and “A Time of Troubles”
  - Jane McAlevey, “Who Killed the Unions?”

#### *Week 10: Labor Becomes More Precarious*

- Assignment
  - Final Paper Annotated Bibliography
- Readings:
  - Kathleen Thelen. 2019. “The American Precariat: U.S. Capitalism in Comparative Perspective.” *Perspectives on Politics* 17(1): 5–27.
  - Chapter 6, “Trade Unions and Precarious Work: In Search of Effective Strategies,” in *Democracy, Social Justice and the Role of Trade Unions*
  - “Precarious Work, Young Workers, and Union-Related Attitudes: Distrust of Employers, Workplace Collective Efficacy, and Union Efficacy”
  - Kevin Anderson, “The French Yellow-Vests”

#### *Week 11: Migrants and labor*

- Readings: *Migrants, labor, and democracy in the neoliberal era*
  - “A Movement Wrestling: American Labor’s Enduring Struggle with Immigration, 1866-2007.” *Studies in American Political Development* 23(2): 218-248 (focus on introduction, conclusion & one time period).
  - “Immigration and Labor: A Special UALE Conference Issue” 2008
  - Trading Barriers : Immigration and the Remaking of Globalization (especially Chapter 2)
  - Beattie, “The immigration dilemma Labour hopes will go away,” *Financial Times*, July 2024

#### *Week 12: Migrants and labor, continued*

- Readings:
  - 2022, “COVID and the Risky Immigrant Workplace: How Declining Employment Standards Socialized Risk and Made the COVID-19 Pandemic Worse,” Andrew B. Wolf
  - “Tens of thousands protest in Berlin against proposed German immigration crackdown.” Reuters, 2025.

- “White House P.R. Campaign Aims to Show Trump Making Good on Immigration Promise,” *New York Times*
- I may add a recent news story or two here as well on immigration and politics

*Week 13: What Path forward? (Part 1)*

- Readings:
  - Barbara Ransby. 2015. “The Class Politics of Black Lives Matter.” *Dissent*, Fall.
  - Assorted stories on new unions at Amazon, Starbucks, etc.
  - 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”

*Week 14: What Path Forward? (Part 2)*

- Readings:
  - “A Conversation with Marshall Ganz,” *The Nation*
  - Stories on Starbucks, Amazon, in the U.S. and Europe
  - “Bargaining for the Common Good” — “Going on Offense during Challenging Times,” *New Labor Forum*
  - Lee, “From Melting Pots to Intersectional Organizing,” *Perspectives on Work*,

*Week 15: Wrapping up. Towards a social democracy?*

- Assignments:
  - Final Paper
- Readings:
  - The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, “Social Democracy”
  - Kenworthy, “America’s Social Democratic Future”