

PS393 Labor Movements and Public Policy

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course will examine the labor movement in the United States, using organized labor as a lens through which to analyze the convergence of the state, shifting institutional frameworks, and social movements. Students will be able to assess the role of organized labor within US politics generally, grappling with the opportunities and limits of labor as a means for enacting change, as well as how labor fits into, shapes, and is affected by institutional arrangements. A historic perspective will be taken in order to mark developments within the state and how this context has affected and been affected by organized labor. Students will be tasked with employing and sharpening existing understanding of state and policy structures while gaining critical knowledge and analytical skills that they will be able to apply to analysis of the state and other actors.

Requirements

Reading Material

- Class Reader (available at library)

Class Preparation

Please come to class fully prepared. This means thoroughly reading and engaging with the assigned texts/content. Take notes and address any questions raised in class pertaining to the texts. Do your best to prepare questions of your own about the strength and validity of the author's argument, how they chose to make their case, and how their argumentations fits with what else we've read and discussed in class.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. There will be an attendance sheet for every session. Each absence beyond one (that is more than one absence from one sessions of 180 minutes) will lead to the subtraction of 1 point from the overall final grade. Late arrival counts as an absence. If you miss more than 30 percent of the class you cannot pass.

Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

Classroom Participation: 30%

This course is built on thoughtful and engaged discussion from all participants. This includes coming prepared to class and actively participating in group and class-wide discussions. Students should feel comfortable voicing their views, but please be mindful and respectful of other course members while doing so. A respectful decorum is necessary, and if it feels like this is lacking at any point please do not hesitate to discuss this with the seminar leader.

In-Class Assignments: 10%

Students will complete a number of small in-class assignments and projects, each to be assessed separately. These will cumulatively account for 10% of the semester's grade.

Response Papers: 25%

Each student is required to write 4 response papers (500 words, 1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman) on sessions of their choice. One paper must be written in the introduction block of the course (weeks 1-3), while 1 is to be written during weeks of the student's choosing during each of the 3 main blocks of the course. Response papers should consist of an abstract on one of the primary texts' core components and arguments, as well as posing 2 critical questions of the text to be used in the following week's discussion.

Response papers MUST be submitted in print at the beginning of class.

Final Paper Proposal: 5%

A 500 word proposal for your final paper, which includes your proposed research question, an outline of your paper's objective, and the sources you intend to use to write your paper. You will receive more information about this writing assignment during the first class.

Final Paper: 30%

There will be a final writing assignment (3,000 - 3,500 words) due at the end of the course. You will receive further information about this writing assignment during class.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Schedule

Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the

INTRODUCTION (1 response paper due in this portion of the course)**Class 1: Introduction (01.09)**

- David Graeber: On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A Work Rant, 2013. <https://www.strike.coop/bullshit-jobs/>
- Celeste Murillo: Producing and Reproducing: Capitalism's Dual Oppression of Women, 2018. <https://www.leftvoice.org/on-reproductive-labor-wage-slavery-and-the-new-working-class>

Class 2: What is Organized Labor? (08.09)

- Nelson Lichtenstein: State of the Union: A Century of American Labor, 2003. (Introduction)
- Eric Foner: Why is there no Socialism in the United States? 1984.
- Eric Levitz: Democracy Dies When Labor Unions Do, 2019. <http://nymag.com/>

[intelligencer/2019/09/democracy-dies-when-labor-unions-do.html](https://www.intelligencer.com/2019/09/democracy-dies-when-labor-unions-do.html)

Class 3: Institutions, Power, and the Working Class as Actor (15.09)

- Carlota Perez: Techno-economic Paradigm Shifts, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhNd3tVR1hl>
- Craig Calhoun: Dictionary of Social Sciences, 2002.
- Bob Jessop: Handbook of Politics: State and Society in Global Perspective, 2010.

BLOCK ONE: Industrialism: 1870 - 1920 (1 response paper due in this portion of the course)

Class 4: Industrialism's Impact on Work and Regulation (22.09)

- Stephen Skowronek: Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920, 1982. (Chapter 5)
- Melvyn Dubofsky: We Shall be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1969. (Chapter 1)
- Alice Kessler-Harris: Women Have Always Worked, 2018. (Chapter 3)

Class 5: Ideology and Action on the National Scale (29.09)

- Timothy Mitchell: Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil, 2011. (Chapter 1)
- Melvyn Dubofsky: We Shall be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1969. (Chapters 4 and 7)

Class 6: State Repression and Progressive Reform (6.10)

- James Green: Death at the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing that Divided Gilded Age America, 2006. (Prologue)
- Olivia Waxman: A Century Before Trump's ICE Raids, the U.S. Government Rounded Up Thousands of Immigrants. Here's What Happened, 2019: <https://time.com/5625012/palmer-raids/>
- Elizabeth Cobbs-Hoffman, et. al: Major Problems in American History, Volume II, 2012. (Chapter 5)
- Melvyn Dubofsky: When Socialism was Popular in the United States, 2016: <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2016/03/29/when-socialism-was-popular-in-the-united-states/>

BLOCK TWO: FORDISM 1920 - 1970 (1 response paper due in this portion of the course)

Class 6: Embedding Liberalism and Labor in the Great Depression (13.10)

- Mark Blyth: Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the 20th Century, 2002. (Chapter 3)
- Howard Kester: Revolt Among the Sharecroppers, 1997. (Introduction)
- Julian Guerrero: The Flint Militants, 2018: <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/10/flint-sit-down-strike-anniversary-autoworkers>

No class on 20.10 due to Fall Break

Class 7: Workplace Democracy amid a Labor and Capital Accord? (27.10)

- Nelson Lichtenstein: State of the Union: A Century of American Labor, 2003. (Chapter 2)
- Stanley Aronowitz: Death and Life of American Labor: Towards a New Workers

Movement, 2014. (Chapters 3 and 4)

- Robert Reich: Supercapitalism: the transformation of business, democracy, and everyday life, 2007. (Chapter 1)

Class 8: Repression, Institutional Constraints and an Evolving Left (03.11)

- Colin Gordon: The Legacy of Taft-Hartley, 2017. <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/12/taft-hartley-unions-right-to-work>
- Vanessa Tait: Poor Worker's Unions: Rebuilding Labor from Below, 2016. (Chapter 1)
- The Black Panther Party Platform, 1966.
- Bayard Rustin: The Failure of Black Separatism, 1970.
- The Combahee River Collective Statement, 1979.

BLOCK THREE: POSTINDUSTRIALISM: 1970 - Present (one response paper due in this portion of the course)

Class 9: Fordist Dreams and Postfordist Realities (10.11)

- John Maynard Keynes: Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren, 1930.
- Documentary Film: Harlan County, USA , 1976. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2aPy_XVVZ4
- Kim Moody: On New Terrain: How Capital is Reshaping the Battleground of Class War, 2017. (Chapters 1 and 2)
- WNYC Radio Interview on PATCO Strike, 2011: <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/takeaway/segments/164690-strike-changed-american-labor>

Class 10: Neoliberalism and the Economic Geography of Globalization (17.11)

- David Harvey: A Brief History of Neoliberalism, 2005. (Introduction and chapter 6)
- David Harvey: Globalization and 'the Spatial Fix', 2001.
- Bonacich and Wilson: Getting the Goods: Ports, Labor, and the Logistics Revolution, 2008. (Chapter 1)
- Deborah Cowen: Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade, 2014. (Chapter 1)

Class 11: Care, Surplus Labor and New Deal Legal Framework as Double-edged Sword (24.11)

- Loïc Wacquant: From Slavery to Mass Incarceration, Rethinking the 'race question' in the US, 2002.
- Nancy Fraser: Contradictions of Capital and Care, 2016.
- Steve Fraser: Age of Acquiescence: The Life and Death of Organized Resistance to American Wealth and Power, 2015. (Chapter 12)
- Stanley Aronowitz: Death and Life of American Labor: Towards a New Workers Movement, 2014. (Chapter 3)

Class 12: The Future of Work in a Digitized, Post-neoliberal World (1.12)

- Sarah Jaffe, Nationalize Amazon, 2018. <https://theoutline.com/post/6587/nationalize-amazon-make-bezos-our-bitch?zd=3&zi=o3zh6wp3>
- Mark Dudzic and Adolph Reed Jr.: The Crisis of Labor and the Left in the United States, 2015.
- Eric Blanc: Red State Revolt: The Teacher's Strike Wave and Working Class Politics, 2019. (Introduction)

Class 13: Organized Labor's Horizon (8.12) - FINAL PAPER DUE