

Oberlin College
Department of Politics

Politics 215: The Political Economy of Labor

Fall 2004

Professors Marc Blecher, Steve Crowley and Chris Howell
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30 - 2:45, King 337

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How have workers fared under the latest developments of capitalism in the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the US, in the former state socialist countries of Russia and Eastern Europe, and in the developmentalist states of East Asia? How did working classes form historically in these places? What kinds of unions have arisen, and what have they done for workers? What changes have occurred on the shopfloor? What difference has politics made in cushioning or exacerbating these effects? How have workers responded, economically and politically? How have workers been affected by globalization?

Before each class we expect you to complete readings that will cover the subject for the day. In the first part of each class, we will introduce the material by providing context, filling in gaps, and answering questions. But since in class the material cannot be covered in anything approaching the fullness of what you need to know about it, **what we say in class cannot substitute for doing the reading.** Once we have the material under sufficient control, we will proceed to analyze it in extended discussions based on questions that we will have posed before class as well as your own concerns. As you can see, then, if you have not done the reading before class, you will not be able to get much out of that class session or contribute to discussion; moreover, you will, unavoidably, feel lost.

Much of the reading is on electronic reserve. You can find E-res at: <http://eres.cc.oberlin.edu/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=800> Our password is polt215, and it is case-specific.

An effective tool for learning is the Blackboard computerized discussion board. We will be making intensive and regular use of it, so you are expected to learn it by the end of our first week. You can find Blackboard at: <http://bb.oberlin.edu/> FAQ for students can be found at: http://www.oberlin.edu/OCTET/Bb/FAQ_Students.htm We will use it in at least three ways.

- § First, once each week you are expected to respond in writing on the discussion board to questions that we will pose for each session. Specifically, those of you with surnames beginning with the letters A-M will do so by Monday evening (for Tuesday's class), and those of you with surnames beginning with the letters N-Z will do so by Wednesday evening (for Thursday's class). If you miss your appointed day, please post a reply for the other day that week. You may, of course, respond twice each week if you like; the more often you do so, the more you will learn.
- § Second, you can post substantive questions of fact that arise as you do each session's reading. We and other members of the class may respond to your questions right on the discussion board, and we will do so in the subsequent class.
- § Third, on each morning or early afternoon before class, we expect you to prepare for class by taking a few moments to log in to the discussion board to read what everyone has written.

You will also write two open-book, take-home essays of approximately 2,000 words (\approx 8 pages) each. The schedule can be found in the course outline below. These require a command of the material, but they are oriented mainly toward developing your engagement with and analysis and interpretation of it.

We will evaluate your work according to the following weighting:

Discussion board comments and class participation	40%
Papers	30% each

Please take careful note of these proportions. They reflect our conviction that the daily process of participating in the course by reading, thinking and contributing to everyone else's learning in discussion is as important to your learning as the two papers you will write. In the past students who assumed that the papers were their only responsibilities for the course were surprised at the end of the semester. ☹

Good news: there are no books to purchase for the course. Bad news: all the reading is on reserve — much of it on e-res.

Schedule of Classes, Topics, Readings and Assignments

September 2: Introduction

September 7, 9, 14, 16: Work and Class Formation in Various Modes of Production

Capitalism: Overview

Wright, *Class Counts*, chapter 1

Advanced Capitalist Societies

Richard Hyman, *The Political Economy of Industrial Relations*, chapters 1 & 2 (pages 3- 53)

Jack Metzgar, "Politics and the American Class Vernacular" in *WorkingUSA* (pages 49- 80)

Jill Rubery and Colette Fagan, "Comparative Industrial Relations Research: Towards Reversing the Gender Bias" in *British Journal of Industrial Relations* (pages 209-236)

State Socialism in China

Barry Naughton, "Danwei: The Economic Foundations of a Unique Institution", in Xiaobo Lü and Elizabeth Perry, *Danwei: The Changing Chinese Workplace in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, chapter 7.

Andrew Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, pp. 59-68.

Mark W. Frazier, *The Making of the Chinese Industrial Workplace*, chapter 5.

State Socialism and Capitalist Transition in Russia and Eastern Europe

John Scott, *Beyond the Urals*, parts 1-3

Burawoy, *The Radiant Past*, chapter 1

State Socialism vs. Capitalism

Burawoy, *The Radiant Past*, chapter 3

September 21, 23, 28, 30: Unions and Collective Organization

Overview

Richard Freeman and James Medoff, *What Do Unions Do?*, chapter 1 (pages 3-19)

Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, chapter 3 (pages 66-97)

Offe and Wiesenhal "Two Logics of Collective Action," in Claus Offe, *Disorganized Capitalism*, chapter 7 (pages 170-220)

Advanced Capitalist Societies

Richard Hyman, *Strikes*, chapters 3 & 4 (pages 55-109)

Steve Jeffreys, France 1995: the backward march of labour halted?" *Capital & Class* (pages 7-21)

Debate: "Is Democracy Good for Unions?," *Dissent*, Summer 1998

State Socialism and Capitalist Transition in Russia and Eastern Europe

David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Antipolitics*, chapter 1

Roman Laba, "Worker Roots of Solidarity," *Problems of Communism* (July-August 1986)

Burawoy, *The Radiant Past*, chapter 5

State Socialist and Capitalist Developmentalism in East Asia

Gordon White *et.al.*, *In Search of Civil Society*, chapter 3

Deyo, *Beneath the Miracle*, chapter 2

October 5, 7, 12, 14: Labor Process

Overview

Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, chapters 1 & 4 (pages 45-58, 85-123)

Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production*, chapter 1 (pages 21-84)

Andy Friedman, "Responsible Autonomy Versus Direct Control Over the Labour Process," *Capital & Class* (pages 43-57)

Advanced Capitalist Societies

Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production*, chapter 3 (pages 122-155)

Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent*, chapters 4 & 5 (pages 46-94)

Robert Howard, *Brave New Workplace*, chapter 2 (pages 36-67)

State Socialism and Capitalist Transition in Russia and Eastern Europe

Burawoy, *The Politics of Production*, chapter 4

Capitalist Developmentalism in East Asia

Zhao Minghua, and Theo Nichols, "Management Control of Labour in State-Owned Enterprises: Cases from the Textile Industry", *China Journal* 36

Koo, *Korean Workers*, chapter 3

Friday, October 15, 4:30 PM: First paper due

October 19, 21: FALL BREAK

October 26 & 28, November 2: Labor Politics in Advanced Capitalist Societies

Chris Howell, "The State and the Reconstruction of Industrial Relations After Fordism: Britain and France Compared," Jonah D. Levy, ed., *The State After Statism: New state Activities in the Age of Globalization and Liberalization* (forthcoming)

Wolfgang Streeck, *Social Institutions and Economic Performance*, chapter 5 (pages 137-168)

Leo Panitch, *Working Class Politics in Crisis*, chapter 5 (pages 132-159)

Andrew Martin, "Wage Bargaining and Swedish Politics" (pages 1-43), Center for European Studies Working Paper #36 [1991]

Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream*, chapter 1 (pages 3-51)

Nelson Lichtenstein, "American Trade Unions and the 'Labor Question': Past and Present," (pages 59-117) in *Report of the Century Foundation, What's Next for Organized Labor?*

Jane Jenson and Rianne Mahon, "Representing Solidarity: Class, Gender and the Crisis in Social-Democratic Sweden" in *New Left Review*, 1993 (pages 76-100)

T. J. Pempel, *Policy and Politics in Japan*, chapter 3 (pages 90-109)

Larry Carney and Charlotte O'Kelly, "Women's Work and Women's Place in the Japanese Economic Miracle", in Kathryn Ward, ed., *Women Workers and Global Restructuring* (pages 113-145)

Knuth Dohse, Ulrich Jurgens and Thomas Malsch, "From "Fordism" to "Toyotism"? The Social Organization of the Labor Process in the Japanese Automobile Industry," in *Politics & Society* 14 (1985), pages 115-146

November 4, 9, 11: Labor Politics in Russia and Eastern Europe

Guglielmo Meardi, "Trade Union Consciousness, East and West: A Comparison of Fiat Factories in Poland and Italy," *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 2, no. 3 1996

Ost, "The Weakness of Symbolic Strength: Labor and Union Identity in Poland," in Crowley and Ost, eds., *Workers after Workers' States*

Sue Bridger, *No More Heroines*, chapter 2

Sarah Ashwin 'Redefining the Collective: Russian Mineworkers in Transition' in Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery, eds, *Ethnographies of Transition*

Stephen Crowley, "Explaining Labor Weakness in Post-Communist Europe," *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, (August, 2004)

November 16, 18, 23: Labor Politics in East Asia

Ching Kwan Lee, "From the Specter of Mao to the Spirit of the Law: Labor Insurgency in China," *Theory and Society*, 31, April 2002

Marc Blecher, "Hegemony and Workers' Politics in China," *China Quarterly*, June 2002

Deyo, *Beneath the Miracle*, chapters 3-6 and conclusion

Koo, *Korean Workers*, chapters 4, 5, 7

November 30 and December 2, 7: Globalization

David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, chapters 8 & 9 (pages 125-172)

Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*, chapters 2-5 (pages 41-113)

Charles Tilly, "Globalization Threatens Labor's Rights," *International Labor and Working Class History*, Spring 1995

Dorothee Bohle and Bela Greskovits, "Capital, Labor, and the Prospects of the European Social Model in the East," draft manuscript, [excerpts]

Meardi, "The Trojan Horse for the Americanization of Europe?," *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, vol. 8, no. 1 2002

Mary Gallagher, "'Reform and Openness': Why China's Economic Reforms Have Delayed Democracy," *World Politics*, vol. 54, no. 3 (April 2002), pp. 338-372

December 9, 14: The Future of Labor

Andre Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class*, chapters 1-8 (pages 16-104)

Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*, conclusion and epilogue (pages 269-310)

Koo, *Korean Workers*, chapter 8

Saturday, December 18, morning: **Second essays due**