

**POLITICS 219:
WORK, WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS IN ADVANCED CAPITALISM**

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Spring 2008**

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Introduction

Within advanced capitalist societies, the world of work has undergone a quite remarkable transformation in the course of the past quarter century. Some elements of work itself have changed as the workplace has seen the erosion of assembly line mass production by full-time “blue-collar” workers, and its replacement with “white-collar” and service sector jobs, and “flexible” production, performed by an increasingly insecure part-time and temporary workforce. Workers today are much less likely to be male and white, as women, minority workers and immigrants enter the paid workforce in much larger numbers. And trade unions, which were the primary class organizations representing and defending workers in the 20th century, have gone into eclipse almost everywhere. As union membership declines, employers have developed new forms of individual and collective representation for workers, and unions themselves have sought new strategies for survival.

This course explores the transformation of work, workers, and trade unions in advanced capitalist societies since the Second World War. Given the scope of the subject-matter, this course is something of a sampler, offering an introduction to a large range of topics, with some left out, and many more only briefly covered. The first third of the semester is broadly theoretical. We begin with a discussion of the nature of work, class and identity, power relations in the workplace, and the potential for collective action. Another third of the semester involves an examination of comparative industrial relations. We look at Britain, France, Sweden, Germany, Japan and the United States to see the differences in the way in which workers are organized, the relative success workers and unions have achieved, the different role played by the state, and to understand the reasons why particular national models of industrial relations develop. Each country is chosen because it illustrates some distinctive feature, such as Conservative anti-unionism in Britain and co-determination in Germany. In the final part of the semester we examine the main changes in the economic environment -- globalization, flexibility, post-Fordism -- which now face workers, and we look forward, asking how unions are responding to the challenges facing them, and whether we have come to the end of labor’s century.

Requirements

The primary requirement is that students do the assigned reading (of which there is a lot, about 150-200 pages a week) on time and be prepared to discuss it in class. Each student must write comments (anywhere from a paragraph or two to a page or two) on the readings each week. The purpose of the comments is to identify the main issues, questions and criticisms so that we can incorporate them into class discussion. Further explanation of this assignment is provided at the *Blackboard* web site for this course (at the “Assignments” tab). It should be read carefully. The comments are normally due by 5.00am every Tuesday (this may be adjusted if the class discussions get out of synch with the readings) and should be posted to the *Blackboard* “Discussion Board”. Occasionally students will make oral presentations about some of the readings. The written comments, oral presentations and class participation will be worth one-third of the grade.

Another one-third of the grade will come from an oral history project that will involve interviewing people about their job, authority relations, experience of collective action, and attitudes towards work, and writing up the interview. The written report is due just before mid-term. Further details will be available at the *Blackboard* “Assignments” tab.

The final one-third of the grade will come from a quasi-research paper (about 10-15 pages long), on a topic chosen by the student, due at the end of the semester. This research paper can be one of two types: i) an individual research paper chosen by the student; ii) a collective research paper, involving up to four students, on a topic chosen by the group. I would prefer that the research papers explore topics or countries that we have not had a chance to cover in class. In addition each student or group must hand me a one-page proposal for their research paper (the topic plus a preliminary bibliography) by Thursday April 17th. These are all requirements and late work will be penalized for reasons of equity.

Finally, there will inevitably be some changes to the course as the semester progresses – changes in the readings, additional details of assignments, questions for the weekly comments, and so on – which are not included on this syllabus. I will provide weekly updates in the “Announcements” section of the *Blackboard* web site for this course: <http://oncampus.oberlin.edu/> Always check the *Blackboard* site at least once a week. In the unlikely event that you miss a class, you should always check the web site in case I have announced something of importance.

Course Readings

There are no books to buy. All readings are available electronically on *Blackboard*, at the “Course Readings” tab. You can then read (and, if you wish, print) this material. Check page numbers carefully, so that you read the correct section of each reading at the correct time. In many cases I have had some sections of a book scanned in that you do not need to read, or that you read at different points in the semester, so do be aware of page numbers.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

February 5, 7 & 12

Work, Class, and Working Class Identity

Robert Kuttner, *Everything for Sale*, chapter 3 (pages 68-109).

Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts*, chapters 1 & 9 (pages 1-37 & 239-248).

Adolph Reed, *Class Notes*, introduction (pages vii-xxviii).

Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism" in Nicholson, ed., *The Second Wave Reader* (pages 97-122).

John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon eds., *New Working Class Studies*, chapters by Russo & Linkon, Faue, and Metzgar in (pages 1-31 & 189-208).

Michele Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men*, chapters 3 & 6 (pages 97-148, 215-240).

Showing of *Modern Times*.

February 14 & 19

Power at Work

Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, chapters 1, 4, 5 & 20 (pages 45-58, 85-138 & 424-449).

Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production*, chapter 1, sections 1-4 (pages 21-50).

Michael Burawoy, "Thirty Years of Making Out," (pages 190-209) in Pahl, ed., *On Work*.

Andy Friedman, "Responsible Autonomy Versus Direct Control Over the Labour Process," (pages 43-57) in *Capital & Class* [1977].

Showing of *Fast Food Women*.

February 21, 26, 28 & March 4

Industrial Relations, Trade Unions and Collective Action

Jonathan Zeitlin, "From Labour History to the History of Industrial Relations," (pages 159-179) in *Economic History Review* [1987].

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

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

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

Claus Offe, *Disorganized Capitalism*, chapter 7 (pages 170-220).

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

Showing of *Final Offer*.

March 6, 11 & 13

British and French Industrial Relations

Chris Howell, "The State and the Reconstruction of Industrial Relations Institutions After Fordism: Britain and France Compared" (pages 139-184) in Jonah Levy, ed., *The State After Statism* [2006].

Chris Howell, "Women as the Paradigmatic Trade Unionists?" (pages 511-543) in *Economic and Industrial Democracy* [November 1996].

Chris Howell, "Is There a Third Way for Industrial Relations?" (1-22) *British Journal of Industrial Relations* [2004].

Steve Jefferys, "France 1995: The Backward March of Labour Halted?" (Pages 7-21) in *Capital & Class* [Summer 1996].

Chris Howell, "Between State and Market: Crisis and Transformation in French Industrial Relations" (all) forthcoming in Cole, Le Gales and Levy, eds., *Developments in French Politics* [2008].

Anders Hayden, "France's 35-Hour Week" (pages 503-542) in *Politics & Society* [2006].

March 18 & 20

Swedish Industrial Relations

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].

Peter Swenson and Jonas Pontusson, "The Swedish Employer Offensive Against Centralized Wage Bargaining" (pages 77-106) in Iversen, Pontusson and Soskice, eds., *Unions, Employers, and Central Banks* [2000].

Rianne Mahon, "Women Wage Earners and the Future of Swedish Unions" (pages 545-586) in *Economic and Industrial Democracy* [1996].

Nils Elvander, "The New Swedish Regime for Collective Bargaining and Conflict Resolution" (pages 197-216) in *European Journal of Industrial Relations* [2002].

April 1 & 3**German and Japanese Industrial Relations**

Peter Katzenstein, *Policy and Politics in West Germany*, chapter 3 (pages 125-148).

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

Anke Hassel, "The Erosion of the German System of Industrial Relations," (pages 483-505) in *British Journal of Industrial Relations* [1999]

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" (pages 113-145), in Kathryn Ward, ed., *Women Workers and Global Restructuring*.

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

John Salmon, "Union Organizing: The Case of Japan" (pages 505-518) in Craig Phelan, ed., *Trade Union Revitalization* [2007].

April 8, 10 & 15**United States Industrial Relations**

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

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

Manning Marable, "Black Leadership and the Labor Movement," (pages 199-212) in Fraser and Freeman, eds., *Audacious Democracy*.

Paul Frymer, "Race, Labor and the Twentieth-Century American State" (pages 475-509) in *Politics & Society* [2004].

Loic Wacquant, "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration" (pages 41-60), in *New Left Review* [2002].

Margaret Levi, "Organizing Power: The Prospects for an American Labor Movement" (pages 45-68), in *Perspectives on Politics* [2003].

Policy Matters Ohio, *The State of Working Ohio 2007* (pages 1-39).

April 17, 22 & 24**The New Political Economy of Work**

Charles Sabel, *Work and Politics*, chapter 5 (pages 193-231).

John Tomaney, "A New Paradigm of Work Organization and Technology" (pages 157-194) in Ash Amin, ed., *Post-Fordism: A Reader*.

Paul Osterman, *Securing Prosperity*, chapters 2 & 3 (pages 20-89).

Jacob Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift*, chapter 3 (pages 61-85).

Barbara Ehrenreich, "Maid to Order" (pages 85-103) in Ehrenreich and Hochschild, eds., *Global Woman* [2003].

Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, chapters 1 and 6 (pages 3-23 & 89-136).

William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears*, chapter 5 (pages 111-146).

John Logan, "The Union Avoidance Industry in the United States" (pages 651-675) in *British Journal of Industrial Relations* [2006].

Martin Jay Levitt, *Confessions of a Union Buster*, chapters entitled "Copeland Oaks" and "Bloodletting" (pages 163-225).

Showing of *Out at Work* and *Degrees of Shame*.

April 29, May 1, 6 & 8

What (If Anything) Is To Be Done?

Carola Frege and John Kelly, "Union Revitalization Strategies in Comparative Perspective" (pages 7-24) in *European Journal of Industrial Relations* [2003].

Richard Hurd, Ruth Milkman and Lowell Turner, "Reviving the American Labour Movement" (pages 99-117), in *European Journal of Industrial Relations* [2003].

Paul Osterman, "Community Organizing and Employee Representation" (pages 629-649) in *British Journal of Industrial Relations* [2006].

Ruth Milkman, "Two Worlds of Unionism" (pages 63-80) and Karen Nussbaum, "Working Women's Insurgent Consciousness" (pages 159-176) in Dorothy Sue Cobble, ed., *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor* [2007].

Ruth Milkman, *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement*, chapters 3 and 4 (pages 114-186).

Andre Gorz, *Reclaiming Work*, chapter 4 (pages 72-111).

Bob Black, "The Abolition of Work" (pages 1-11).