

Hamilton College, Department of Government  
**Government 389W – Spring 2014**  
Capitalism, Democracy & the Workplace

Instructor: Joel Winkelman  
Office: KJ137  
E-mail: [jwinkelm@hamilton.edu](mailto:jwinkelm@hamilton.edu)  
Office Phone: x4984

Class: TR 10:30–11:45am, KJ124  
Office Hours: TR 9–10:15am, WF 2:30–3:45p  
and by appointment

**Course introduction and goals**

“Most men would feel insulted, if it were proposed to employ them in throwing stones over a wall, and then in throwing them back, merely that they might earn their wages. But many are no more worthily employed now.” —Henry David Thoreau, “Life Without Principle” (1854).

What is the relationship between capitalism and democracy? Should the claims of democracy extend into the workplace? What would it mean to democratically organize work? Engaging students in original research projects, this course asks students to consider these and related questions. The course begins with a survey of the history of ideas about work; proceeds through empirical and legal studies of the relationship between capitalism, democracy, and work; and concludes with two contemporary normative analyses of today’s working life.

**Required Reading**

All texts available at the College Store. Please refer to ISBN numbers if purchasing from another source. Page numbers on the syllabus will correspond to these editions. While I have made every effort to order inexpensive editions of the texts, an equally important criterion was inclusion and quality of bibliographic, introductory, and other supplemental essays, which are valuable resources for your written assignments.

Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Bks. I–III (Penguin) [978-0140432084]  
Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* {Kalberg trans.} [978-0199747252]  
Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* [978-0226025988]  
C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* [978-0195157086]  
Russell Muirhead, *Just Work* [978-0674024083]  
Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work* [978-0822351122]

## Course Requirements

*Preparation and participation.* This course will be conducted as a seminar. I will provide basic historical, biographical, or interpretive background for each reading, but class will be primarily conversation-based. Because this seminar is an upper-level research seminar, all students are expected to participate in each session. I expect that the seminar could operate productively without my attendance. Thus, preparedness requires completing assigned readings with sufficient time and attention to have something to say. [QUIZZES?]

*Research paper.* This course is Writing-Intensive (WI). Because learning to write well is an on-going process, the faculty has committed to a WI Program that will assist students in learning to write well in multiple disciplines and throughout their time at Hamilton. As a designated WI course, the formal written requirements for the course will consist of a 5000-word research paper, one peer review, and a critical summary of a scholarly article. The writing process will include early drafts and revisions, with feedback from peers and the instructor. Sixty-five (75) percent of your grade is determined by written assignments. Please see Appendix A for more details.

*Paper presentation.* In lieu of a final exam, students will prepare a 10 minute presentation of their research papers.

Final grades will be determined according to the following rubric:

Assignment	Percentage
<i>Participation and preparation</i>	20
<i>Critical Summary</i>	5
<i>Literature Review (Original)</i>	10
<i>Literature Review (Revised)</i>	10
<i>Analytic Essay</i>	18
<i>Peer Review (of Analytic Essay)</i>	2
<i>Introduction and Conclusion</i>	10
<i>Research Paper (Final)</i>	20
<i>Paper Presentation</i>	5
Total	100

## Class Conduct and Expectations

[Notice: Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation(s) and would like to make a formal request for this course, please be certain to discuss it with me during the first two weeks of class. You will need to provide Allen Harrison, Associate Dean of Students (Elihu Root House; ext. 4021) with appropriate documentation of your disability.]

All students are expected to abide by the Hamilton College Honor Code. A copy of the honor code can be found at: <http://www.hamilton.edu/student-handbook/studentconduct/honor-code>.

In addition to the basic academic comportment expected by the honor code, I expect that all students will be respectful of one another. Disagreements will occur (with one another, and with the texts), but we will seek understanding before critique.

Unless you have a documented disability that requires use of a laptop in class, all personal electronic devices must be silenced and put away while in class. If you are texting or using an electronic device without authorization during class, you will be marked as absent for the day.

## Course Schedule

Tue, January 21 – Course introduction

*Unit I: Work in the history of political thought.*

Thu, January 23 – Adam Smith, “The Division of Labor.”  
Smith, Book I, chs. 1–3.  
**Text selection due.**

Tue, January 28 – Smith, “Money and Prices.”  
Smith, Book I, chs. 4–7.

Thu, January 30 – Smith, “Wages.”  
Smith, Book I, ch. 8.  
**Critical Summary due.**  
**Begin compiling sources.**

Tue, February 4 – Max Weber, “The Spirit of Capitalism.”  
Weber, Part 1, chs. 1–2.  
**Discussion of Research Question.**

Thu, February 6 – Weber, “The Conception of the Calling.”  
Weber, Part 1, ch. 3.

Tue, February 11 – Weber, “Asceticism.”  
Weber, Part 2, ch. 5.  
**Research Question due.**

Thu, February 13 – C. Wright Mills, “White Collar Worlds.”  
Mills, ch. 5.  
**Discussion of literature review.**

Tue, February 18 – Research Day  
No reading. Meet at Burke Library.

Thu, February 20 – Mills, “The Personality Market and the ideal of craftsmanship.”  
Mills, chs. 8 & 10.  
**Literature review check-in.**

Tue, February 25 – Mills, “White Collar politics.”  
Mills, ch. 15.

Thu, February 27 – Hannah Arendt, “Labor”  
Arendt, chs. 11–15.

Fri, February 28 – Arendt, Arendt, “Work or labor?”

Arendt, chs. 16–21.  
**Literature review (original) due.**

Tue, March 4 – “Society and the triumph of labor”  
Arendt, chs. 22–23, 42–45.

*Unit II: Empirical and legal approaches to contemporary work.*

Thu, March 6 – The State of Working America  
*The State of Working America*, ch. 1 (PDF).

Tue, March 11 – The State of Working America, pt. 2  
*The State of Working America*, ch. 5 (PDF).

Thu, March 13 – Political challenges and possibilities  
Hacker, “The Privatization of Risk” <http://bit.ly/1gWzK0C>.

Tue, April 1 – Automation  
Kevin Drum, “Welcome Robot Overlords” <http://bit.ly/19xrghj>.

Thu, April 3 – Automation and workplace hierarchy  
Tali Kristal, “The Capitalist Machine.” *American Sociological Review* (PDF).

Tue, April 8 – The rise of service  
Kalleberg, *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs*, chs. 7, 9 (PDF).  
**Circulate Analytic Essay for Peer Review.**

Thu, April 10 – The experience of service  
Sherman, *Class Acts*, ch. 1 (PDF).  
**Peer review comments due.**

Tue, April 15 – Research day  
No reading. Meet in Burke Library.  
**Revised literature review due**

*Unit III: Contemporary normative approaches*

Thu, April 17 – Weeks  
Weeks, Introduction.  
**Analytic Essay due.**  
**Peer review revision memo due.**

Tue, April 22 – Weeks  
Weeks, ch. 1.  
**Introduction due.**

Thu, April 24 – Weeks  
Weeks, ch. 3.

Tue, April 29 – Muirhead  
Muirhead, chs. 1–2.  
**Conclusion due.**

Thu, May 1 – Muirhead  
Muirhead, chs. 5–6.

Tue, May 6 – Muirhead  
Muirhead, ch. 8 & Conclusion.

Thu, May 8 – Wrap-up  
**Final papers due.**  
No reading.

**Wed, December 18, 9am – Final Exam.**

## Appendix A: Research Paper

The primary course requirement is to produce a piece of original research on a topic (related to course themes) of your choosing. While your choice of topic is open-ended, you must use one of our core primary texts—Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, Weber’s *Protestant Ethic*, Arendt’s *Human Condition*, or Mills’s *White Collar*—for your analysis. Thus your research will be restricted to textual and contextual methods. Papers should be 20–30 pages in length. A series of discrete writing assignments, graded and ungraded, will ensure that you begin your research project early. These assignments are described below.

### *Text selection and rationale (ungraded) – Due Jan. 23*

Which of the four core texts would you like to write about? Explain in a paragraph why you chose this text.

### *Critical summary (5%) – Due Jan. 30*

The critical summary is a 900 word summary of a pre-selected academic article related to the text you’ve chosen for your research paper. For this assignment, you should summarize the main points of the article and highlight one strength and one weakness.

### *Research question (ungraded) – Due Feb. 11*

If you were writing your own paper prompt for the assignment, what would it be? Research questions in political theory fall broadly into two categories, interpretive “what?” or “how?” questions (for example, What does Adam Smith mean by  $x$ ? How does C. Wright Mills’s understanding of  $x$  shape his conception of  $y$ ?); and normative “is  $x$  desirable?” questions (for example, is Arendt’s account of work a desirable norm?)

### *Literature review (10% and 10%) – Original due Feb. 28; revised due Mar. 14*

The literature review critically analyzes in 1400 words the important interpretations of your chosen research question, and your chosen author or text. You are required to engage with at least 5 scholarly sources. What issues, themes, and questions have other scholars have identified as important? What themes form lines of agreement? What issues are sources of conflict in the literature? Have alternative interpretations argued against the desirability of your thinker’s norms? How does your research question address one of these preceding questions? (A possible template would be to write a one-paragraph answer to each of these questions.)

*Analytic essay (18%) – Circulated for peer review Apr. 8; Due Apr. 17* This section of your paper is the 2400-word answer to your research question. It’s central body of evidence should be the primary text you have chosen, with occasional substantive engagement with the material discussed in your literature review. A suggested template imagines three distinct 800-word sections that each treat a concept, theme, or argument with the literature. The analytic essay should conclude with a brief (2 or 3 paragraph) summary of the argument and concluding essay that answers, for example, how your chosen thinker would assess a related contemporary problem.

*Introduction and conclusion (10%) – Due Apr. 25* In 750 words, the introduction answers (in this order) why your research question is important, why your text makes a good data source for this question, and gives an overview of your paper’s argument. Your conclusion, another 500 words, should evaluate the normative significance of your argument. What does your chosen thinker tell us about the world today? How would the assess the current moment?