

Hamilton College, Department of Government
Government 389W – Spring 2015
Capitalism, Democracy & the Workplace

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Class: MW 2:30–3:45pm, KJ236
Office Hours: T 1–4:30pm
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. By the end of the course, students will be able to (1) describe and explain key features of the contemporary organization of work; (2) systematically compare contemporary and historical analyses of work; (3) evaluate theoretical, empirical, and normative claims about the relationship between work and democracy; and (4) describe their own relationship to work and their professional goals in the context of course ideas.

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.

David Weil, *The Fissured Workplace* [978-0674725447]

Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth* [978-1107663657]

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* [978-0226025988]

Russell Muirhead, *Just Work* [978-0674024083]

Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work* [978-0822351122]

Course Requirements

Preparation and participation. This course is a collaborative research seminar. Assigned readings are resources for our individual research projects. All students are expected to participate in each session. We will depend on one another's ideas to produce the best possible research papers. In addition to classroom participation, the seminar will share a virtual classroom in the Slack web application at <http://govt389w.slack.com>. Here we will share course materials bibliographic information, relevant current events, and other asynchronous conversations. All assignments will be shared here. Your participation in this virtual classroom will form part of your overall participation grade.

Written assignments. 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 an ungraded autobiography assignment, a 5000-word research paper, one peer review, and three reaction papers. The writing process will include early drafts and revisions, with feedback from peers and the instructor. Seventy-five (75) percent of your grade is determined by written assignments.

Paper presentation. In lieu of a final exam, we will collaboratively prepare a summary of the course's research findings. A smaller team will present these findings at the Levitt Center to invited faculty.

Final grades will be determined according to the following rubric:

Assignment	Percentage
<i>Participation and preparation</i>	20
<i>Reaction Papers</i>	15
<i>Literature Review (Original)</i>	10
<i>Literature Review (Revised)</i>	10
<i>Analytic Essay</i>	10
<i>Peer Review (of Analytic Essay)</i>	5
<i>Introduction and Conclusion</i>	10
<i>Research Paper (Final)</i>	15
<i>Paper Presentation</i>	5
Total	100

Expectations and accommodations

[Notice: Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. 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 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>.

Course Schedule

Wed, January 21 – Course introduction

Unit I: Contemporary Work and its Discontents

Mon, January 26 – “The Fissured Workplace”

Weil, pp. 1–27.

Kuttner, “Why Work is More and More Debased” ([#general](#)).

Autobiography assignment due.

Wed, January 28 – Smith, “Explaining the fissured workplace”

Weil, pp. 42–76.

Cassiday, “Forces of Divergence” ([#general](#)).

Krugman, “Why Were in a New Gilded Age” ([#general](#)).

Research question due.

Mon, February 2 – “Forms of fissuring, pt. 1”

Weil, pp. 99–121 **OR** 159–181.

Decide reading groups in [#general](#).

First reaction paper due.

Wed, February 4 – “Forms of fissuring, pt. 2”

Weil, pp. 122–158.

Discuss research questions.

Divide presentation labor.

Unit II: Work and Democracy in History

Mon, February 9 – “Slavery, freedom, and labor.”

Gourevitch, pp. 1–17.

Writing a literature review: basics.

Wed, February 11 – “Republicanism as ideology.”

Gourevitch, pp. 47–66.

Navigating the scholarly literature.

Mon, February 16 – “Free labor and wage labor.”

Gourevitch, pp. 67–96.

Writing a literature review: intermediate.

Wed, February 18 – “Labor republicanism.”

Gourevitch, pp. 97–137.

Writing a literature review: advanced.

Mon, February 23 – “Work and domination today.”

Gourevitch, 174–190.

Discussion question due.

Wed, February 25 – “Author meets critics.”

Alex Gourevitch virtual class visit.

Mon, March 2 – **Work day.**

No reading.

Wed, March 4 – **Presentation meeting.**

No reading.

Literature review (original) due.

Unit III: Conceptual Issues in Work and Democracy

Mon, March 9 – “Hannah Arendt and the *vita activa*.”

Arendt, pp. 1–21.

Writing analysis: basics.

Wed, March 11 – “Approaches to Hannah Arendt.”

Markell, “The Architecture of the Human Condition” (#arendt).

Second reaction paper due.

Writing analysis: intermediate.

Mon, March 30 – “Labor.”

Arendt, pp. 79–135.

Decide reading groups in #arendt.

Wed, April 1 – “Work.”

Arendt, pp. 136–174.

Decide reading groups in #arendt.

Mon, April 6 – “Action.”

Arendt, pp. 175–248.

Decide reading groups in #arendt.

Wed, April 7 – **Work day.**

No reading.

Writing analysis: advanced.

Mon, April 12 – **Presentation meeting.**

No reading.

Circulate analysis for peer review.

Wed, April 14 – **Peer review.**

No reading.

Peer review comments due.

Unit IV: What is to be done?

- Mon, April 19 – “Policy approaches, pt. 1.”
Weil, pp. 183–213.
Revised literature review due.
- Wed, April 21 – “Policy approaches, pt. 2.”
Weil, pp. 214–242.
Analytic Essay due.
Peer review revision memo due.
- Mon, April 26 – “Postmodern approaches, pt. 1.”
Weeks, pp. 1–36.
Writing an introduction.
Discuss presentation.
- Wed, April 28 – “Postmodern approaches, pt. 2.”
Weeks, pp. 113–150 **OR** 151–174.
Decide reading groups in #general.
Introduction due.
- Mon, May 4 – **Work day.**
No reading.
Presentation practice.
Third reaction paper due.
- Wed, May 6 – “Communitarian approaches, pt. 1.”
Muirhead, pp. 30–70.
Conclusion due.
- Mon, May 11 – “Communitarian approaches, pt. 2.”
Muirhead, pp. 149–176.
Final paper due.