

Political Science 287/W: Theories of Political Economy  
Instructor: James Johnson (jd.johnson@rochester.edu)  
Spring 2020 ~ M-W 10:25-11:40 ~ Morey 504  
Office Hours: Th 12:00-1:30 \* Harkness Hall 312

*"There is little discussion either of the feasibility or desirability of workplace democracy today. ... [Y]et the institution of employment, one of the most central institutions of our society, remains undemocratic."*

~ Carole Pateman (Presidential Address to APSA – 2010)

This class is an intellectual experiment prompted by an actual political-economic experiment. Several American cities, including Rochester, are exploring the use of worker cooperatives – firms that are owned and democratically controlled by the people who work in them – as part of broader community economic development initiatives. Cooperatives are proposed both as a remedy for economic hardship and in hopes of empowering local communities politically. This experiment prompts a whole set of questions at the intersection of political theory and economics. The course explores some of those questions. Mostly I am interested in whether the expectations reformers are placing on worker coops are plausible. I am interested, too, in getting you to think about the predicament we face in the city where you spend ten months of the year as students in the College.

**Grading:** I do not care what grade you get in the course. By that I mean that while I would like you to do well, and hope that happens, whether you do so or not really depends on you. If you do the required work, it is very likely a good grade will follow; if not, it is almost certain that a good grade will not follow.

*Please note!* There is no party line in the course, meaning I do not care if you agree or disagree with me, with one another, or with any (or all?) of the readings. I care about your willingness to stick your neck out, to think critically, and to articulate *your* views clearly both orally and in writing.

**Participation:** The course will be run primarily the way I run graduate seminars. Given the nature of the undertaking it is imperative that students actively participate in class. That means that I expect students not only to keep up with the reading, but also to read with care and to demonstrate this in class discussions. The regularity of your participation and especially your willingness to stick your neck out in seminar discussion will constitute 30% of your grade for the course. I will keep track of who speaks in class for this purpose.

Policy on Attendance: Given the nature of the class *attendance is not optional*. If you need to miss class for some reason, please let me know.

Policy on Electronic Devices: My policy on electronic devices in class (meaning any screen connected to silicon chips) is restrictive. No cell phones at all! Turn them off and put them away when you get to class. Laptops or tablets are allowed solely for access assigned readings or notes. In general, you should disconnect from the internet. In fact, be retro (!), *if you have readings or notes you will need in class, you are better off getting them off of your devices and onto paper*. If I detect you engaged in social media during class I will ask you to shut off your device and put it

away. If this happens a second (or subsequent) time I will ask you to leave class. This will obviously impact your ability to participate in discussions and thereby your final grade.

**Written Assignments:** Beyond classroom participation there are two types of written assignment for the course.

(1) Your contribution to a group data gathering project. I will explain this in class. But essentially, we will work as a cooperative to conduct a census on what is known as the “solidarity economy” in Upstate and Western New York (everything above NYC). We will divide into groups and each group will take responsibility for a geographical area or a type of cooperative entity. The task will be to scour the web and record basic information about these enterprises. Ultimately, all this data will be made available via a web page I am going to design and house here at UR. Your contribution to this project will constitute 20% of your grade for the course.

(2) A final research paper on a topic directly related to the topics we cover in the course. I am less interested in the number of pages you submit than in the quality of the argument and evidence you bring to bear on your chosen topic. There is no specific length (number of pages) for this paper. But since that inevitably makes students anxious, think in the area of 20 double spaced pages (in 12-point font with one-inch margins). To prepare for this paper you **MUST** speak with me at least twice one-on-one during office hours. You must discuss possible topics for your paper no later than the end of week eight (March 4<sup>th</sup>). Soon thereafter I will want a progress report: you must meet with me again to discuss difficulties, ideas, questions no later than week thirteen (April 15<sup>th</sup>).

***PLEASE NOTE:** If you fail to meet with me about your paper by these dates you will lose one third of a letter grade off the actual grade you make for the paper itself. (For example, if I would grade your paper as a B+ you will make only a B, etc.). This sanction applies to each meeting.*

What I am looking for in this assignment is for you to make connections between the topics we cover in readings & class discussions and the goals, activities and arguments that the institutions, associations and thinkers advance. The connections can be either positive (meaning the thinker or association exemplifies something in the readings) or contrastive (meaning the thinker or association seems to provide a counterexample). Your grade will reflect the quality of reasoning and evidence you bring to bear in presenting and defending your argument. Your grade on the final paper will constitute 50% of your course grade.

Statement on Academic Honesty: I operate on the assumption that every student in the course is familiar with and abides by the College policies on Academic Honesty. If you are not familiar with those policies, please go to the Board on Academic Honesty web page and familiarize yourself. You can find that page here: <http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/>. Ignorance of the policy is no excuse.

I will provide specific instructions for each course assignment. In any event, I take a very dim view of cheating and plagiarism of any sort. It makes me very cranky. So, I will refer any and all suspected instances to the Board on Academic Honesty. The easiest way to avoid such unpleasantness is to not succumb to temptations to cheat, plagiarize, bend the rules, exploit loopholes, and so forth. As a default, if you are unsure in any way about whether something is “allowed” ask me.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability of any sort that might impact your ability to meet the expectations laid out in this syllabus I encourage you to speak with me in person as early in the term as is possible. If you are not comfortable speaking to me directly, you should contact the Office of Disability Services who can assist you in making your needs clear to myself and your other teachers. You can find them here:

(<https://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/index.html>). In any case, we can make reasonable accommodation regarding any and all expectations & assignments.

Policy on late assignments: Except in the direst circumstances I very much frown upon late assignments. I will deduct one third of a letter grade for every day an assignment is late. (This means if your grade would have been a B+, one day late gets you a deduction to B, two days a deduction to B-, etc.). If you anticipate a problem getting an assignment in on time (due to, say, religious holidays, travel for athletic teams, etc.) please speak to me *in advance*. I will make reasonable accommodation to address such difficulties. In particular, I will gladly accommodate faith-based exceptions to any expectations or assignments laid out above.

## Readings

The required reading for this course is difficult, it is diverse, and there is a lot of it. Moreover, none of the reading is presented in predigested textbook form. In both senses the reading load for this course might seem totally unreasonable! My excuse is that the problems we will be addressing are crucially important and complex. In that sense, it is imperative that you do the reading and that you do so prior to class. I have ordered books (marked \*) at the University Bookstore. All are readily available in used paperback versions from your preferred e-purveyor. I will make the books and other readings available on Blackboard and through reserve at Rush Rhess. Many of the assigned readings are, as is clear from the syllabus, available directly on line – I have provided links where this is the case.

### Western NY as a Developing Country?

Cohen, Cathy and Michael C. Dawson. 1993. "Neighborhood Poverty and African American Politics," *American Political Science Review* 87:286-302.

Kneebone, Elizabeth, Carey Nadeau, and Alan Berube. 2011. The Re-Emergence of Concentrated Poverty: Metropolitan Trends in the 2000s. Metropolitan Policy Program. Brookings Institution.

[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2011/11/03-poverty-kneebone-nadeau-berube/1103\\_poverty\\_kneebone\\_nadeau\\_berube.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2011/11/03-poverty-kneebone-nadeau-berube/1103_poverty_kneebone_nadeau_berube.pdf)

Kneebone, Elizabeth. 2014. The Growth and Spread of Concentrated Poverty, 2000 to 2008-2012. Policy Brief. Brookings Institution.

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2014/concentrated-poverty#/M10420>

Doherty, Edward. 2013. Poverty and the Concentration of Poverty in the Nine-County Greater Rochester Area. Rochester Area Community Foundation.

<http://roc.democratandchronicle.com/assets/pdf/A22162251210.PDF>

Doherty, Edward. 2015. Benchmarking Rochester's Poverty: A 2015 Update and Deeper Analysis of Poverty in the City of Rochester. Rochester Area Community Foundation. <http://www.racf.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Poverty%20Report%20Update%202015-0108.pdf>

EdBuild. 2016. *Fault Lines – America's Most Segregating School District Boundaries*. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/edbuild-public-data/data/fault+lines/EdBuild-Fault-Lines-2016.pdf>

Anderson, Elizabeth. 2011. "Why Racial Integration Remains an Imperative," *Poverty & Race* 20(4): 1-2,17-19.

## Thinking About Political-Economic Development

\* Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Knopf.

## Democracy: Publics, Problems, and Pragmatism I

\* Dewey, John. 1927. *The Public and Its Problems*. Swallow Press.

Dewey, Jon. 1939. "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us," in *The Political Writings* Ed. Debra Morris & Ian Shapiro. Hackett.

## Democracy: Publics, Problems, and Pragmatism II

\* Unger, Roberto Mangabeira. 2009. *The Left Alternative*. Verso. <http://www.robertounger.com/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/the-left-alternative.pdf>

Christopher Ansell. 2012. What is a "Democratic Experiment"? *Contemporary Pragmatism* 9: 159–180.

Jack Knight & James Johnson. 2007. "The Priority of Democracy: A Pragmatist Approach to Political-Economic Institutions and the Burden of Justification," *American Political Science Review* 101: 47-61.

## Worker Cooperatives: A Potential Partial Remedy to Pressing Problems?

Riley, David. 2015. "To Fight Poverty, City Eyes Co-op Businesses," *Democrat & Chronicle* (8 February). <http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2015/02/08/rochester-democracycollaborative-cooperative-businesses-worker-poverty/23090949/>

Riley, David. 2016. "Mayor: Worker Coops Can Curb Poverty," *Democrat & Chronicle* (24 February). <http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2016/02/23/mayor-lovely-warren-rochester-worker-cooperatives-can-curb-poverty-democracy-collaborative/80809332/?hootPostID=f7d6c9de8b8e03c5eec17e65e8ce9dde#>

Riley, David. 2016a. "What Can Cleveland Co-ops Teach Rochester?" *Democrat & Chronicle* (10 April). <http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2016/04/10/mayor-lovely-warren-cleveland-evergreen-cooperatives-co-ops-teach-rochester/82436948/>

Palmer, Tim. 2015. *US Worker Cooperatives: A State of the Sector*. Democracy at Work Institute. <http://institute.usworker.coop/resources/us-worker-cooperatives-state-sector>

Kerr, Camille. 2015. *A Brief Visual Guide to Understanding Employee Ownership Structures*. Democracy at Work Institute. <http://institute.usworker.coop/sites/default/files/resources/EOStructures.pdf>

Rogers, Joel. 2013. "Using State and Local Policies," *The Good Society* 22: 91-109.

Alperovitz, Gar, Ted Howard and Thad Williamson. 2010. "The Cleveland Model." *The Nation* (11 February). <http://www.thenation.com/article/cleveland-model>

Epstein, Keith. 2015. "Rebuilding the Rust Belt," *Politico Magazine* (19 February). <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/02/what-works-cleveland-115324.html#.VdNqZOWPib8>

### **Different Models: Rochester & Jackson**

Bonanno, Jessica, Violeta Duncan, and Ted Howard. 2016. *Rochester's Market Driven Community Cooperatives Corporation: A Feasibility Analysis & Implementation Plan*. Democracy Collaborative. <http://democracycollaborative.org/content/rochester-s-market-driven-community-cooperatives-corporation-feasibility-analysis>

Akuno, Kali & Ajamu Nangwaya, eds. 2017. *Jackson Rising*. Daraja Press. Chapters 1, 3-6, 8.

### **Institutional Mechanisms: Markets, Firms, States**

\* Lindblom, Charles. 2002. *The Market System*. Yale University Press. [Available as e-book via UofR Library: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/rochester/Doc?id=10170836> ]

Coase, Ronald. 1937. "The Nature of the Firm," *Economica* 4: 386-405.

Albert Hirschman. 1970. *Exit, Voice & Loyalty*. Harvard University Press. [Pages 21-54; 76-105; 120-6].

### **Governing the Firm**

\* Dow, Gregory. 2003. *Governing the Firm: Workers Control in Theory & Practice*. Cambridge University Press. [Available as e-book via UofR Library: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/rochester/Doc?id=10070239> ]

Anderson, Elizabeth. 2017. *Private Government*. Princeton UP. Pages 37-71; 99-116; 126-44.

## Democratizing Finance?

Lazonick, William. 2014. "Profits Without Prosperity," *Harvard Business Review* (September) 46-55.

Block, Fred. 2014. "Democratizing Finance," *Politics & Society* 42: 3-28.

Nembhard, Jessica Gordon. 2013. "Community Development Credit Unions: Securing and Protecting Assets in Black Communities," *Review of Black Political Economy* 40:459-490.

Dicamillo, Nathan. 2018. "The Little Bank that Could," *New York Times* (April 13).  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/13/business/the-little-bank-that-could.html>

## Problems of Implementation & Transition I

\* Ostrom, Elinor. 1990. *Governing the Commons*. Cambridge University Press.

James Tully. 2013. "Two Ways of Realizing Justice and Democracy: Linking Amartya Sen and Elinor Ostrom," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*. 16: 220-232.

## Problems of Implementation & Transition II

\* Nembhard, Jessica Gordon. 2014. *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice*. Penn State University Press.

## Problems of Implementation & Transition III

Abell, Hilary. 2014. *Worker Cooperatives: Pathways to Scale*. Democracy Collaborative.  
<http://democracycollaborative.org/workercoops>

Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis. 1993. "A Political and Economic Case for the Democratic Enterprise," *Economics & Philosophy* 9:75-100.

Elster, Jon. 1989. "From Here to There; or, If Cooperative Ownership Is So Desirable, Why are There So Few Cooperatives?" *Social Philosophy and Policy* 6: 93-111.

Fleurbaey, Marc. 2008. "Workplace Democracy as a Public Good," *Revue de Philosophie Économique* 9:110-28.

## Schedule

### **January**

15 Introduction

20 *MLK Day – No Class*

22 Cohen-Dawson; Kneebone (2); Doherty (2)

27 EdBuild; Anderson

29 Discussion of Group Project

### **February**

3 Sen

5 Sen

10 Dewey (x2)

12 Dewey (x2)

17 Unger

19 Unger; Knight & Johnson; Ansell

24 Riley (3); Palmer; Kerr; Rogers

26 Alperowitz; Epstein; Bonnano

### **March**

2 Lindblom

4 Lindblom

9 *Spring Break*

11 *Spring Break*

16 Hirschman

18 Coase

23 Dow (Chs 1-7)

25 Dow (Chs 8-12)

30 Anderson

Group Projects Due

### **April**

1 Block; Lazonick

6 Nembhard; DiCamillo

8 Catch Up

13 Ostrom (Chapters 1-3)

15 Ostrom (Chapters 4-6); Tully

20 Nembhard

22 Nembhard

27 Abell; Elster;

29 Fleurbay; Bowles-Gintis

### **May**

6 Final Paper Due

(5 PM)