University of Wisconsin, College of Letters and Science
Department of Sociology
Political Seminar: A New Left? F2020

Cross listed in Sociology and Urban and Regional Planning 924-SEM-002
Meets with Public Affairs 974-SEM-003

Credits 3
Instructor Title and Name Professor Joel Rogers (he/him/his)
Instructor Availability M 3:15-5:15 PM
or by appointment
Instructor Email/Preferred Contact: jerogers@wisc.edu, 608.262.4266
Assistant: Michelle Bright (she/her/hers), michelle.bright@wisc.edu, 608.890.2543
Canvas Course URL https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/215513
Course Meeting Time and Location: M 9-11:30 AM
Instructional Mode Lectures all synchronous remote
Office hours Monday 3:15-5:15 PM

Course Description

The traditional institutions and practices of social democracy are in decline worldwide, but no convincing egalitarian-democratic alternative to social democracy has emerged. This course is about what that alternative might be – its assumptions about human nature and the economy, its suggestions and priorities for collective action, its imagined popular base, and its principles and public philosophy of governing.

These are hard issues, and there’s clearly no consensus answer to them that integrates the needed elements of any successful political strategy: story/analysis/vision; platform/program; intra- and extra-communication; leadership development; presences in social movements, advocacy and functional NGOs, and electoral politics; an accountable presence in the state; and money to fuel both this work and new society creation.

But I think that, with good heats and applied minds, we can make some progress toward a shared view of the demands and possibilities of meeting these functional requirements.

Course Schedule & Office Hours

This course, alas, is going to be taught entirely by remote, but synchronous with its stated time in the course timetable. Outside class you can always find me during my remote office hours (M 3:15-5:15) or by appointment, best scheduled through Ms. Bright.
Especially given all the stress of this moment, I’d like to make this course as relaxed as possible – a semi-structured but relatively free-wheeling conversation about egalitarian-democratic possibilities right now.

**Course Requirements, Grading**

Course requirements are simple. Do whatever reading is assigned in advance of showing up and participate as constructively as you can in the discussion; if takin the course for seminar credit, write a term and submit it shortly after the course ends.

To clarify further: You can take this course for S/U or A-F grading. For taking it S/U, the **Discussion** activity below is required. For those taking it for A-F grading and seminar credit, the **Term Paper** is also required.

**Discussion** – I’m going to put a premium on the quality of discussion, both inside and outside the seminar.

What I mean by “inside” is straightforward. Don’t talk too long; don’t interrupt; don’t be a jerky show-off; never attack people; be fearless in criticism of ideas; try to make rational hope possible rather than despair inevitable.

What I mean by “outside” is this. I’d like you to do the readings assigned for any given week the week before, and write up and **post to Canvas**, by **2 PM the Friday before**, a short (1-3 single-spaced pages) statement of comments or questions about them. My office will then gather them all and the post back to **Canvas** as a combined file later that day.

For those taking the course for seminar credit, this combined discussion contribution will count as 30% of your grade. For those taking is S/U, it’ll count for all.

**Term paper** – For those taking the course on an A-F basis, the other 70% will be based on a paper you write and due one week after the final class, and uploaded to **Canvas**: **Monday, December 14, 2020**. (I’m sorry about this deadline, but grades are due a week after that.) This paper can be on any topic considered in the course. It’ll be judged on its mastery of relevant material and strength and originality of argument.

I don’t want these papers to be big affairs. Exceptions can always be made, but you should shoot for something that’s **no more than 10K** words (excluding footnotes and references as well as exhibits) and it certainly can be less. I’m of course happy to talk over your proposed topic before you begin to write, but don’t need to.

**Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights** — The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or the Department Chair, Christine Schwartz, **socchair@ssc.wisc.edu**, 608.262.1498.
Department learning objectives — Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content I will cover in this course, I have designed this course to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of Sociology:

Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes: Sociology graduates can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the "why" and "how" of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.

See Things from a Global Perspective: Sociologists learn about different cultures, groups, and societies across both time and place. They are aware of the diversity of backgrounds and experiences among residents of the United States. They understand the ways events and processes in one country are linked to those in other countries.

Prepare for Graduate School and the Job Market: Students use their social research skills to identify opportunities for employment or further study, assess their qualifications for these opportunities, and identify strategies for gaining the necessary knowledge and experience to improve their qualifications. Students are encouraged to develop and maintain portfolios of their written work and educational experiences to aid them in preparing applications.

Reading for the first week

Because it’s already familiar to many of you and very easy to read, I suggest as reading for the first week (9/14), Erik Olin Wright’s How to Be and Anti-Capitalist in the 21st Century. This is currently available direct from the publisher Verso Press at 40% off thru September 30, 2020.

After that, a choice to make that I’d like to make with you

After that, however, I’m of two minds on what readings to assign.

We could continue to go a predominately book route, in which case I’d suggest – in no definite order, and among many possible alternatives (with a few shorter supplementary article-length readings) – some of these books as naturals:

- Sheri Rosen, The Primacy of Politics;
- Lane Kenworthy, Social Democratic Capitalism;
- Geoffrey Hodgson, Conceptualizing Capitalism
- Torben Iversen & David Soskice, Democracy and Prosperity
- Robert Sapolsky, Behave
- Wolfgang Streeck, How Will Capitalism End?
- Daniel Coyle, The Culture Code
- Paul Mason, Postcapitalism
- Mark Engler and Paul Engler, This is an Uprising
Or we could go a more article-heavy route. Here’s a list of some of the readings from a course on a similar topic done several years ago. This could of course be updated, but you can get the basic idea from what was done then:


   **Chapters 2-5.**


   **Chapters 4-7.**


   **Introduction, Chapters 1-2, 8-9, and Conclusion.**


   **DRAFT**

20. 112th Congress. (XXXX). Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill 2012.

   **Final, Maybe**


or


or UPDATED


48. Rogers, J. *Finance 001: The Capital Stack*

**In any case**

In any case, please think about this broad choice on the design of readings before class on the 14th.

**Other Institutional Notes**

**How to Succeed in this Course**

Resource links to other campus services:

- [University Health Services](#)
- [Undergraduate Academic Advising and Career Services](#)
- [Office of the Registrar](#)
- [Office of Student Financial Aid](#)
- [Dean of Students Office](#)
Students’ Rules, Rights & Responsibilities

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community. Rights & Responsibilities

UW-Madison Badger Pledge

Badger Pledge

Quarantine or Isolation Due to Covid-19

Students should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms and get tested for the virus if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Students should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.

Course Evaluations

Students will be provided with an opportunity to evaluate this course and your learning experience. Student participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

Digital Course Evaluation (AEFIS)

UW-Madison uses an online course evaluation survey tool, AEFIS. In most instances, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester when your course evaluation is available. You will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID where you can complete the evaluation and submit it, anonymously. Your participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

Academic Calendar & Religious Observances

See: https://secfac.wisc.edu/academic-calendar/#religious-observances

Academic Integrity Statement

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the
integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Statement**

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](https://www.mcburney.wisc.edu))

**Diversity & Inclusion Statement**

*Diversity* is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.