

Democracy Under Attack: What should unions do?

2022 HTUP Workshop
March 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 2022
3:00-8:30 pm EDT
Online on Zoom

Wednesday, March 16

3:00-4:30 pm EDT

Session 1: “Welcome, Introduction, Ice Breaker”

[Alida J. Castillo](#), Director, Harvard Trade Union Program, Harvard Law School
[Marcy Goldstein-Gelb](#), Co-executive director of National COSH (National Council for Occupational Safety and Health)
[Abhi Adhikari](#), Founder of Workership explains the platform to increase participant engagement during workshop

4:30-5:00 pm

Break

5:00-6:30 pm

Session 2: “Rightwing Populism, Authoritarianism, and the Future of Organized Labor Part 1: Understanding the nature of right-wing populism”

[Bill Fletcher, Jr.](#), Author



The class will focus on understanding the nature of right-wing populism as a global threat to democracy and to the traditionally disenfranchised (including but not limited to workers). It will also focus on the particular role that organized labor can play in advancing democracy and defeating all forms of right-wing authoritarianism. It is the second part that shall be handled via a scenario that focuses on the January 6th coup attempt in Washington, DC. The class could be six hours over two days.

3/16 Part 1: Understanding the nature of right-wing populism

3/18 Part 2: How should organized labor have responded had the 6 January coup attempt in the USA succeeded?

Readings:

“TRUMP, RIGHT-WING POPULISM, AND THE FUTURE OF ORGANIZED LABOR,”

Bill Fletcher Jr. and José Alejandro La Luz, Chapter 3 pp50-66 in *Labor in the Time of Trump*, Edited by Jasmine Karrissey, Eve Weinbaum, Clare Hammonds, Tom Juravich, and Dan Clawson, ILR PRes, 2019 at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xfJ2kCdWd47FC-LIa7ue0kdMAYRlxlg7/view?usp=sharing>

“Race Is About More Than Discrimination Racial Capitalism, the Settler State, and the Challenges Facing Organized Labor in the United States,” Bill Fletcher Jr. in MONTHLY REVIEW, July – August 2020, pp 21-31 at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SM6jimjFTFcDKdeWh8gg3te2PcqOCa2t/view?usp=sharing>

“Stars and Bars: Understanding Right-Wing Populism in the USA,” Bill Fletcher Jr. in Socialist Register, 2016 pp. 1-17 at

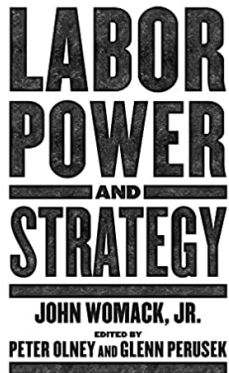
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UACH7sJ5oRzL_HTY9vbaKjDK0e2HK-Hp/view?usp=sharing

6:30-7:00 pm

Break

7:00-8:30 pm	<p>Session 3: “Rightwing Populism, Authoritarianism, and the Future of Organized Labor Part 1: Understanding the nature of right-wing populism” - continued Bill Fletcher, Jr., Author</p>
Thursday, March 17	
3:00-4:30 pm EDT	<p>Session 4: “Active Listening” Florrie Darwin, Lecturer, Program on Negotiation, Harvard Law School, Senior Research Fellow in the Labor and Worklife Program, Harvard Law School</p> <p>Of the many skills necessary for conducting effective negotiations, active listening is at the top of the list. One successful FBI negotiator has referred to active listening as “the stealth weapon” of successful negotiators. When deployed properly, active listening develops rapport and builds trust, as it helps you gain more information, improve your understanding of other points of view, and work cooperatively with others. In this module we will identify and practice specific micro-skills of active listening, and work towards using those strategies to foster more effective communication across all contexts—professional (both across-the-table and with our own constituents), political, and personal.</p>
4:30-5:00 pm	Break
5:00-6:30 pm	<p>Session 5: “Strategic Planning and Strategic Choice in Face of Uncertainty” Elaine Bernard, Wertheim Fellow, LWP and Former Executive Director, Labor and Worklife Program, Harvard Law School</p> <p>Strategic Planning requires organizations to look at the economic, social, and political challenges ahead, assess their resources, choose priorities, set goals and chart a course for the future. But what happens when a global pandemic profoundly changes everything and places new demands on the union, its members, and resources. Is strategic planning still necessary, or even possible with so much uncertainty? Bernard argues that it is not only possible but more important than ever as employers and governments seek to redefine work and employment relations in face of a continuing pandemic.</p> <p>Reading: “Leadership in a Permanent Crisis,” by Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, Harvard Business Review, July–August 2009, pp. 62-69. At https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tJ-938bsPEh1de5afUsnh5U-CNJJ6pE/view?usp=sharing</p>
6:30-7:00 pm	Break

7:00-8:30 pm



Session 6: "Labor's Special Power and Strategic Use of It."

[John Womack Jr.](#), Robert Woods Bliss Professor of Latin American History and Economics, emeritus, Harvard University, and
[Glenn Perusek](#), Instructor, Building Trades Academy, Michigan State University

What would it take to unionize Amazon, or Walmart? To force reform of health care in America? To unionize FEDEX, subcontracted ("independent contract") labor, including truckers, or unionize the media monopolies that have taken hold of our information and imaginations? How is it possible to organize those without hope working on the margins? This presentation lays out a timely plan for identifying chokepoints and taking advantage of supply chain issues in order to seize and build labor power and solidarity.

Readings:

Kate Bronfenbrenner, "Unions turn to global campaigns," Democratic Left, September 13, 2016. At

https://www.dsausa.org/democratic-left/unions_turn_to_global_campaigns_dl/

Peter Olney and Rand Wilson, "The message from the Amazon union defeat in Alabama is clear: Keep organizing," Portside, April 10, 2021, at

<https://portside.org/2021-04-10/message-amazon-union-defeat-alabama-clear-keep-organizing-0>

John Womack, "Technology, work and strategic positions in the oil industry in Mexico: 'Development,' 1908-1910," pages 1-4., at

<http://www.economia.unam.mx/amhe/memoria/simposio20/John%20WOMACK%20Jr.pdf>

Further Reading:

Glenn Perusek, "Strategy, Tactics and Organizing," Stansbury Forum, January 2020, at <https://glennperusek.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/strategy-tactics-and-organizing-january-2020.pdf>

Kate Bronfenbrenner and Tom Juravich, "The evolution of strategic and coordinated bargaining campaigns in the 1990s: The Steelworkers' experience," in Rekindling the movement, ed. Lowell Turner, Harry Katz and Richard Hurd (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), at

https://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/handle/1813/74999/Bronfenbrenner_20_The_Evolution_of_Strategic.pdf?sequence=1

Basil Liddell Hart, Strategy (New York: Praeger, 1954), pp. 330-353, chapters 19 and 20, "The theory of strategy," and "The concentrated essence of strategy—and tactics." at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VvZNxtwatmgdZzznE-j55nUmA2wvNZs6/view?usp=sharing>

Friday, March 18

3:00-4:30 pm EDT	<p>Session 7: “Workers Fight Back” Stephanie Luce, Professor of Labor Studies, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies</p> <p>In the past few months, we've seen record numbers of U.S. workers quitting their jobs, on top of a longer trend of people leaving the workforce altogether. This has come alongside an uptick in strikes, interest in union organizing, and support for unions. Some of these trends appear to be taking place in other countries as well. What exactly is going on in the labor market and how do we make sense of it? What should unions do in response to the changing labor market and nature of work?</p> <p>Readings: Kim Moody, "Upticks, Waves, and Social Upsurge," Spectre https://spectrejournal.com/upticks-waves-and-social-upsurge/?fbclid=IwAR2picEe23Av-oBjij5bzPwCd7D-4vWvSqj9qZ35DXPcGJgeg-md905Lohl</p> <p>Lauren Kaori Gurley, "The Starbucks Unionization Effort Is Now An 'Unprecedented' Nationwide Movement," Motherboard Tech by Vice https://www.vice.com/en/article/wxdz9y/the-starbucks-unionization-effort-is-now-an-unprecedented-nationwide-movement</p> <p>If you have time, skim through the subreddit Work Reform, https://www.reddit.com/r/WorkReform/ - or if you can, the Facebook page “NO ONE WANTS TO WORK,” https://www.facebook.com/groups/236075831625905</p>
4:30-5:00 pm	Break
5:00-6:30 pm	<p>Session 8: “Rightwing Populism, Authoritarianism, and the Future of Organized Labor Part 2: How should organized labor have responded had the 6 January coup attempt in the USA succeeded?” Bill Fletcher, Jr., Author</p>
6:30-7:00 pm	Break
7:00-8:30 pm	<p>Session 9: “Rightwing Populism, Authoritarianism, and the Future of Organized Labor Part 2: How should organized labor have responded had the 6 January coup attempt in the USA succeeded?” continued - Small group presentations Bill Fletcher, Jr., Author</p>
Wednesday, March 23	
3:00-4:30 pm EDT	<p>Session 10: “A Sustainable Democracy Needs Democratized Firms. The Central Role of Unions” Isabelle Ferreras, senior tenured fellow, Belgian National Science Foundation (F.N.R.S., Brussels), professor of sociology, Université catholique de Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium) and Senior Research Associate, LWP, Harvard Law School.</p> <p>If we worry about the future of democracy, I will show that we need to act about corporate governance. Indeed firms are political entities that operate under the capital investors’ despotic rule, and this situation threatens the possibility for democracy to have a future by further intensifying the contradiction between capitalism and democracy.</p>

Firms as Political Entities

Saving Democracy through
Economic Bicameralism

Isabelle Ferreras



After 5 decades of alignment with *shareholder primacy* enabled by Friedman’s doctrine, the US Business Roundtable recently declared that corporations should serve all their “stakeholders,” -- understood as "*customers, suppliers, the communities in which they work, shareholders, and employees.*" This language only further blurs what is at stake: the centrality of workers in any economic endeavor. Whether or not they are legally recognized as employees or as outsourced, off-shored throughout the supply chain, gig workers, etc., workers form the “labor investment” necessary for the service or the product of any firm to exist. They are not merely impacted by a firm’s actions; their lives are literally governed by it. As citizens in the political field, and mere human resources in the economy, they experience first-hand the contradiction between capitalism and democracy. If we want to nurture a healthy democracy, we need to ensure that those who are governed by the rules and decisions (of the firm) have a meaningful say about these. I will show how we can learn from history about how to deal with this situation, and we will review the central role that unions have in democratizing firms, and then will have in democratized firms.

Youtube Video: [How can we save democracy?](#) (5:19 min)

Readings:

Isabelle Ferreras interview by Lauraq Amico, “Do Democracy and Capitalism Really Need Each Other,” Harvard Business Review, March 11, 2020 at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eM2Z_v4t_zXf3kFRZGngT19SyHtM-xDB/view?usp=sharing

Isabelle Ferreras, “Those Who Work are Labor Investors: Recognizing the Two Core Constituencies of Capitalist Firms,” in Worker Voice and the New Corporate Boardroom, Aspen Institute, August 23, 2021, at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vv4QVHWI2_Ujl0-Csuh-w2W-PSbh1Sxc/view?usp=sharing

Julie Battilana adn Isabelle Ferreras, “From shareholder Primacy to a Dual Majority Board,” in Worker Voice and the New Corporate Boardroom, Aspen Institute, August 23, 2021, at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tjfp31aR77GESGAXD9-c0uS7B3yHesnO/view?usp=sharing>

4:30-5:00 pm

Break

5:00-6:30 pm

Session 11: “Recent Supreme Court decisions and their impact on the labor movement and workers rights”

[Benjamin Sachs](#), Kestnbaum Professor of Labor and Industry, Harvard Law School and Co-Director of the Labor and Worklife Program and Sharon Block, Executive Director, Labor and Worklife Program, Harvard Law School

6:30-7:00 pm

Break

7:00-8:30 pm

THE RISE OF THE
WORKING-CLASS
SHAREHOLDER

LABOR'S
LAST BEST
WEAPON

DAVID WEBBER

Session 12: "Economic Democracy as a Missing Link"

[David Webber](#), Professor of Law, Boston University and
[Christopher Mackin](#), Fellow, Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations

Readings:

From "*The Rise of the Working-Class Shareholder: Labor's Last Best Weapon*,"
by David Webber, 2018.

Preface at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CnrgY7xXP-8iFNkQI7AKU1LEth1woZ_3/view?usp=sharing

Chapter 1: "Safeway" at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BOr4qChtWkI2NGXwt2-WBRJ5fMaREX8Z/view?usp=sharing>

Chapter 8: "The Retirement "Crisis" and the Future of Labor's Capital" at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qA3W-wfCC6kml-hzAQYgp0RYVpW_a5AK/view?usp=sharing

Andrew Cumbers, Economic Democracy: Why Handing Power Back to the People Will Fix our Broken System, December 5, 2019, at

<http://theconversation.com/economic-democracy-why-handing-power-back-to-the-people-will-fix-our-broken-system-126122>

Christopher Mackin: Toward an Economic Democracy: Why the coronavirus is an opportunity to re-shape the relationship between workers and their employers, March 25, 2020 -

<https://newrepublic.com/article/157055/toward-economic-democracy>

Thursday, March 24

3:00-4:30 pm EDT

Session 13: "Is This the End of American Democracy?"

[Richard Parker](#), Lecturer, Harvard's Kennedy School of Government

That remarkable question has powered an enormous cascade—a tsunami, in fact—of hand-wringing books, articles, speeches, ads, and interviews since January 6th, 2020—but how should we be answering it, beyond hand-wringing?

If you think our democracy is indeed in imminent peril, there seem to be three answers: to raise cries of alarm about the danger, to call for mobilizing the means to resist (and, hopefully, defeat) it—and to try to better understand what is in fact happening and whether we really are facing "the end of American democracy".

I'm going to engage you in that third alternative—because while I see large, real dangers ahead for our country, I also think "American democracy" has been tested deeply and repeatedly since 1776, and survived—and in some ways come out a better country, and us a better people. The issue is how to make sure that happens again this time.

To set up my argument, I'm going to challenge you to consider the long view as context for the short. The long view is to look soberly at America over the past 250 years, using a handful of presidential regimes and the crises they faced as another way of seeing big earlier "end of democracy" moments. The short view—no less important for being "short"—is what you and I need to do in the current moment about our own crises.

I've attached here a few articles I'd like you to read before we have that discussion.

The first is "What's gone wrong with democracy?"

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TMnYVDpUQO6qWeudujKda31uUNlquG8/view?usp=sharing>

The article appeared in *The Economist* seven years ago—but note that it starts with "the Ukraine crisis" as its topic. As you read, ask yourself if you agree about a) the rise of China and its challenging new prosperity, b) the West's financial (and now pandemic/economic)

crises and underlying economic insecurities, and c) the failed attempts to create democracy in the developing world as critical global factors in “democracy’s problems”. And what then do you think about the article’s idea that “the distemper of voters”—a perennial risk for democracies—is now bubbling up in America (and several other countries) in clearly dangerous ways?

The next article, “Thirty Glorious Years”

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eJ9JQDQT7FUJeslo6fJ8r3qm4ympnb6Z/view?usp=sharing>

revisits the remarkable egalitarian prosperity that characterized America and much of the West between the end of World War II and Watergate—and it contrasts what now seem like “The Golden Years” to many with the pervasive rise of inequality ever since.

The article’s goal is not simply to contrast then and now but to show why that earlier egalitarian prosperity was lost because “a truce between capitalist growth and democratic fairness” was broken, sometimes inadvertently but all too often deliberately and systematically.

That truce, the article argues, was broken in four different but related ways: first, through the erosion of organized labor; then by the repeated assaults of an aggressive new global finance capitalism; third with the dismantling of governments’ protections of citizens as well as major cuts in large-scale public spending on physical infrastructure and human capabilities. All of this was then “justified” politically by the “neoliberalism” that emerged in the Democratic Party as the new “centrist balance” to the evermore reactionary conservatism of the Republican Party.

So where do we go from here?

We can—and must—talk about the immediate and near-term fights over voting rights legislation and reconstituting Build Back Better; the imminent threats Moscow, Beijing, and the Middle East all pose; and the 2022 and 2024 elections hurtling towards us—and how to win all of those challenges.

But I’m also going to argue that we also need a deeper, structural understanding of why the current challenges—which do place democracy at risk—are the latest expression of both the problematic “nature of democracy” ---and the fact that we are still a “very incomplete democracy”

To do that, I’ve given you a third reading, “Why the Biden Presidency Feels Like Such a Disappointment”

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16lmdGeK8auO7XN9pPJT1FexSSRa7lJv/view?usp=sharing>

It argues that we can understand the history of American politics through a model of “presidential regimes” or eras—and that each era has characteristic features as it addresses core problems the nation is facing when the new regime is launched—launched because the preceding regime can’t solve the core problems we’re confronting.

This model sees us at the end of “the Reagan regime” but without yet a distinctive form to the new regime that will replace it, as the Reagan regime replaced the Roosevelt regime back in the 1970s and 80s.

Why is this so? Because the article argues (and I will discuss further), the Biden administration isn’t building on an underlying energy and will to coalesce into a new regime.

Presidential cycles form when a transformative President solidifies a coalition voter base and an overarching narrative ideology that will hold that base together over time that goes beyond just the transformer’s own administration for several decades. But the energy and will to coalesce a new regime requires not just top-down harnessing of those forces by presidents and their governing allies but by a clarity of purpose and goal among the much broader range of leaders at all levels operating below that Washington power-elite level.

How to harness those energies is where I want to convert my talk into our conversation—by encouraging an open back-and-forth about how to strategically lay the foundations of that new regime.

Building such a coalition—a viable and supple coalition of voters that seeks commonality but doesn’t expect or demand perfect unity is the question before us. The enormous influx of new voters through immigration these past 40 years, the exhaustion of the neoliberal narrative, the shift of ideological focus from an accommodating centrism to what characterizes great regime changes—the willingness to undertake ground-shaking change that crosses national borders to address global issues, from climate change to global tax evasion---all these are features of our times.

Organized (or better, re-organized) labor—not a same-old labor bureaucracy—is one of the key instruments for executing that shift to a new regime cycle.

We won’t conclude our conversation with formulaic or simple answers—but I promise you you’ll leave with fresh eyes and fresh energies, better prepared for the work ahead.

Here I’ll leave you with a fourth reading: “Whose Century?”

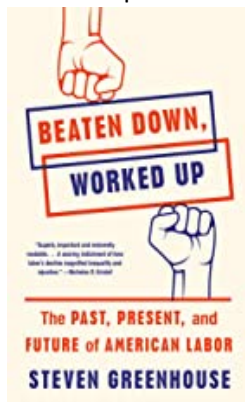
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x_4Psa0UqLDzYaQikiQkUwxA3MeQUy64/view?usp=sharing that weaves together the global competition between the US and China, the fundamental threat posed by human destruction of the natural world, and the ongoing re-expression of the class warfare that was first most vividly defined against the backdrop of the 19th century’s struggle to create democracies built on more than the votes of a few white men and an economy built on the backs of an industrial working class and rural peasantry.

I’m looking forward to a brisk discussion.

4:30-5:00 pm

Break

5:00-6:30 pm



Session 14: “America’s Unions Can Do Far More to Unionize Workers & Defend Our Democracy”

[Steven Greenhouse](#), Journalist, and former NYT reporter

It is undeniable that American corporations are extremely aggressive in fighting unions and that the playing field is tilted against unions when they seek to organize anti-union employers. It is also undeniable that the Republican Party has consistently sought to weaken the union movement in recent decades.

Nevertheless, unions, despite the obstacles they face, can and should be trying far harder to unionize large numbers of workers -- this is an extraordinary moment for unions: with an extremely pro-union president, huge popular support for unions and widespread worker anger about the shabby way employers treated them during the pandemic. Plus, unions, with their unique position in American society and politics, can and should do more in politics and in communicating with workers to help defend our democracy against forces seeking to sabotage it.

Readings:

From *“Beaten Down, Worked Up: The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor”* by Steven Greenhouse

Chapter One: Losing Our Voice (Overview) at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1P8-J6OxB2mudR2S01G4NvfKTTq6H2TyX/view?usp=sharing>

Chapter Three: Helping Workers Win the Jackpot (About the Hugely Successful Culinary Union in Las Vegas) at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZXBVZtqyUzx-sHneacUvZKWkt_GLNfuH/view?usp=sharing

“A Look at How Unions Lift Workers,” by Steven Greenhouse, American Prospect, November 22, 2021, at

<https://prospect.org/labor/look-at-how-unions-lift-workers/>

“Workers Across the U.S. Are Rising Up: Can They Turn Their Anger into a Movement,” by Steven Greenhouse, The Guardian, January 3, 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jan/03/us-unions-leaders-labor-movement-strikes> or

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-_anFjdvmOB-1aMjgC2fbdPvsFH2Jz/view?usp=sharing

Further reading:

From *“Beaten Down, Worked Up: The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor”* by Steven Greenhouse

Chapter Twenty -- Teachers Catch #RedforEd Fever -- On the huge wave of teachers’ strikes in 2018 at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lgN3L2TmDcRBuLo6OnyIGD9PXUY6MU6M/view?usp=sharing>

Chapter Thirteen -- The Assault on Public Sector Unions -- Scott Walker's & the GOP's war on public-sector unions at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V2_VRPz4LyovAmOzi6tLkJZJ2yPnfVAN/view?usp=sharing

Even further reading:

Chapter Nineteen -- Best Foot Forward -- On Bargaining for the Common Good –A Great Example of Labor-Management Cooperation (Kaiser Permanente and St. Paul teachers' union) at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ghbt-M44K7bj1MUvpnS1DX-QuEbWwAin/view?usp=sharing>

Chapter Eight -- I Am A Man -- On the Memphis Sanitation Workers Historic 1968 strike s all about the Memphis sanitation workers' strike -- all about AFSCME, at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ulFQwdTGBgfQ8Hhplk5s-Jpjn5YCDKmx/view?usp=sharing>

Chapter Sixteen -- The Fight for \$15 -- How some creative labor strategists built a huge movement to help low-wage workers, at

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CBHf8nzBDAF4koXWw_zwrOHvtPsSwHul/view?usp=sharing

6:30-7:00 pm

Break

7:00-8:30 pm

Session 15: Panel: “Fighting Back: New Labor Organizing for Overcoming the ‘One-sided Class War’”

Participants: [Michelle Miller](#), Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director, Coworker.org
[Mazahir Salih](#), Executive Director, Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa
[Marcy Goldstein-Gelb](#), Co-executive director of National COSH (National Council for Occupational Safety and Health)
Moderator: [John Trumbour](#), Research Director, LWP, Harvard Law School

Mega-billionaire Warren Buffett made the famous statement that the wealthy are fighting a one-sided class war, and they are winning. Despite an inhospitable climate, this panel will provide new visions of labor organizing that have provided breakthroughs for many workers. There will also be opportunities for dialogues with the labor leaders in the HTUP workshops, who can explore how innovations in labor organizing might be activated to reach their members and workers seeking to build solidarity.

