

PECO 5503F - Special Topics in Work and Labour I: Labour, Labourism, and the History of Social Democracy

Draft, final version to be provided in class

Fall 2026

Institute of Political Economy

Instructor: Dillon Wamsley

Email: DillonWamsley@cunet.carleton.ca

Thursdays 11:35 am – 2:25 pm

Office: Dunton Tower Room 1503

Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:30-5:45 by appointment. Location posted in Brightspace.
Other times via Zoom by appointment.

Course Brightspace Page Link: <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/452885>.

Course Calendar Description

This course explores the historical relationship between trade unions, labour parties, and social democratic governments in the West from the early 20th century to the present. Students will examine the formation of social democratic parties, postwar social democratic governance, the neoliberal turn and the Third Way, and the recent revival of labourism, including in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. Students will assess the possibilities and limitations of contemporary social democracy.

Course Overview

This course examines the historical relationship between trade unions, labour parties, and social democratic governments in the West from the early 20th century through the neoliberal era. A central theme of the course is the tradition of labourism, an incremental approach to centre-left governance established in the Anglosphere. The course begins by exploring the political and ideological influences behind the formation of social democratic parties in the early-20th century, including historic tensions between labour unions and political elites. It then surveys social democratic governments in power during the mid-20th century, including the UK Labour government, welfare state coalitions, and the integration of trade unions into corporatist governance and capital-labour accords. The course then turns to the neoliberal period, focusing on the Third Way political movement of the 1990s and 2000s and its role in transforming social democracy. It concludes by examining the

2008 crisis, the rise of populism, and the apparent revival of labourism and social democracy by centrist governments, including the Biden administration in the USA, the Starmer government in the UK, and the Albanese government in Australia. The course assesses the prospects and limitations of these political formations, and their relationship to neoliberalism and social democracy. Students will produce a reflection paper on course readings and a final research paper examining a case study of their choice, selected from the course calendar.

Preclusions: none

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of central theories and influences of social democracy and labourism in relation to key texts in the field;
- Demonstrate advanced knowledge of the origins, development, and transformation of social democracy and its relationship to trade unions and the tradition of labourism;
- Apply core theoretical concepts to understand contemporary dynamics in labourism and social democracy;
- Communicate complex theoretical concepts and empirical dynamics of social democracy in written and oral formats at a graduate level.

Texts & Course Materials

For a complete list of course texts, see the 'course calendar' section of this syllabus below. All readings will be available via the course ARES and Brightspace pages. Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course.

Course Calendar

Week 1 September 10: Introduction & Key Concepts

Sassoon, D. (2014). *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (2nd ed.). London, England: I.B. Tauris. (pp. 5-60).

Week 2 September 17: Origins and Dilemmas of Social Democracy and Labourism

Berman, S. (2006). *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. (Introduction; Chapters 2-3)

Przeworski, A. (1985). *Capitalism and Social Democracy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 1).

Saville, J. (1973). The Ideology of Labourism. In R. Benewick, R. N. Berki, & B. Parekh (Eds.), *Knowledge and Belief in Politics: The Problem of Ideology*. London, England: Allen & Unwin.

Week 3 September 24: Trade Unions, Social Democracy, and the Capitalist State

Korpi, W. (1983). *The Democratic Class Struggle*. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Chapters 1-2).

Panitch, L. (Jan/Feb 1981). *Trade Unions and the Capitalist State*. New Left Review, 1/125, pp. 21-43.

Swenson, P. (1991). Bringing Capital Back in, or Social Democracy Reconsidered: Employer Power, Cross-Class Alliances, and Centralization of Industrial Relations in Denmark and Sweden. *World Politics*, 43(4), pp. 513-544.

Recommended: Korpi, W. (2006). Power Resources and Employer-Centered Approaches in Explanations of Welfare States and Varieties of Capitalism: Protagonists, Consenters, and Antagonists. *World Politics*, 58(2), pp. 167-206.

Week 4 October 1: Class Coalitions and Welfare States

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Chapters 1-2)

Hicks, A. (1999). *Social Democracy and Welfare Capitalism: A Century of Income Security Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. (Introduction; Chapters 2-3)

Deeming, C. (2013). The Working Class and Welfare: Francis G. Castles on the Political Development of the Welfare State in Australia and New Zealand Thirty Years on. *Social Policy & Administration*, 47(6), 668-691.

Week 5 October 8: Socialism, Social Democracy, and Postwar Capitalism in Britain

Crosland, C. A. R. (1956). *The Future of Socialism*. London, England: Jonathan Cape. (pp. 1-80)

Miliband, R. (1961). *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour*. London, England: George Allen & Unwin. (Introduction; Chapters 1, 9).

Week 6 October 15: New Social Movements and the Critique of Social Democracy

Sassoon, D. (2014). *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (2nd ed.). London, England: I.B. Tauris. (pp. 357-406).

Gorz, A. (1982). *Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism*. London, England: Pluto Press. (Preface; Chapter 6).

Hall, S., Williams, R., & Thompson, E. P. (1967). *May Day Manifesto*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin. Available online from: [May Day Manifesto](#).

Wainwright, H. (1979). Introduction. In H. Wainwright, S. Rowbotham, & L. Segal, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*. London, England: Merlin Press.

Week 7 October 22: The Crisis of the Postwar Order and Social Democracy

****Reflection papers due***

Hobsbawm, E. J. (1978). The Forward March of Labour Halted? *Marxism Today*, 22(9), 279-286.

Panitch, L. (1984). *Working-Class Politics in Crisis: Essays on Labour and the State*. London, England: Verso. (Chapter 1, "The Impasse of Social Democratic Politics").

Ross, G., & Jensen, J. (1986). Post-War Class Struggle and the Crisis of Left Politics. *Socialist Register*, 22, pp. 18-48.

October 26-30: No Class, Fall Break

Week 8 November 5: Third Way Transformations

Giddens, A. (1999). *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. (Chapters 1-2).

Moschonas, G. (2002). *In the Name of Social Democracy: The Great Transformation, 1945 to the Present*. London, England: Verso. (Chapters 8, 12, 13).

Mudge, S. L. (2018). *Leftism Reinvented: Western Parties from Socialism to Neoliberalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Chapter 2).

Week 9 November 12: New Labour and Centre(-Left) Neoliberalism

Hay, C. (1999). *The Political Economy of New Labour: Labouring Under False Pretences?* Manchester, England: Manchester University Press. (Chapter 1).

Panitch, L., & Leys, C. (Eds.). (2001). *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour*. London, England: Verso. (Introduction; Conclusion).

Toye, B., & Wamsley, D. (2025). Reframing Centre-Left Neoliberalism: New Keynesian Theory, Third Way Ideology, and the Construction of an Elite Consensus in the US, Britain, and Australia. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 27(4), 1454-1476.

Week 10 November 19: The Collapse of the Centre-Left? The 2008 Crisis and the Populist Challenge

Bremer, B. (2023). *Austerity From the Left: Social Democratic Parties in the Shadow of the Great Recession*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. (Introduction; Conclusion)

Borriello, A., & Jäger, A. (2023). *The Populist Moment: The Left after the Great Recession*. New York, NY: Verso. (Introduction; Chapters 1, 3-5).

Optional case studies: US (Bernie Sanders), UK (Corbyn), Spain (Podemos), Greece (Syriza) (see Borriello & Jäger, 2023).

Week 11 November 26: The Return of Social Democracy?

Manwaring, R., Duncan, G., & Lees, C. (2024). Thin Labourism: Ideological and Policy Comparisons Between the Australian, British, and New Zealand Labour Parties. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 26(1), 39-61.

Manwaring, R., & Foley, E. (2026). A New Era of 'Minimal Social Democracy'? Comparing UK Labour under Keir Starmer. *British Politics*, 21(2). Online. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41293-025-00295-4>.

Diamond, P., et al. (2026). UK Keir Starmer's Statecraft: A Critical Appraisal of Labour in Power. *British Politics*, 21(16). Online. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41293-026-00307-x>.

Elrod, A. (2024). What was Bidenomics? *Phenomenal World*.
<https://phenomenalworld.org/analysis/what-was-bidenomics/>.

Optional case studies: UK (Starmer Labour government), US (Biden administration), Australia (Albanese government).

Week 12 December 3: Beyond Social Democracy?

***Final research papers due**

Przeworski, A. (2026). The Future of Social Democracy. In T. Feldmann, J. Hinnfors, & M. Wickham-Jones (Eds.), *Practical Social Democracy* (Ch 3, pp. 50-68).

Jäger, A. (2026). *Hyperpolitics: Extreme Politicization Without Political Consequences*. London, England: Verso.

Evaluation

The following components will be used to assess the performance of students in this course:

Component	Weight	Deliverable
Participation	30%	Seminar participation + reading presentation
Reflection paper	20%	5-7 page double-spaced reflection paper
Research paper	50%	10-12 page double spaced research paper

Participation (30%)

At this level of academe, students are expected to attend all weekly seminar sessions and come prepared to discuss all assigned readings. Students are expected to evaluate the underlying assumptions and differences between weekly readings, the core debates authors are participating in, and the wider significance of the readings in relation to course

themes. Successful seminar participation means not merely stating one's opinion but also engaging thoughtfully in dialogue and discussion with the classroom.

Each student will *present on one of the week's assigned readings* to begin classroom discussion (5-10 minutes), setting out what is at stake in the reading, the debates they are engaged in, and its broader significance. Finally, students will *submit two critical questions* to the instructor each week based on the weekly readings in advance of the seminar, identifying what they believe to be the most significant questions raised by the readings.

Reflection paper (20%)

Students will produce a 5-7 page double-spaced reflection paper. Students will explore a central course theme addressed in weekly readings in a week of their choice (ideally, from weeks 1-7), examining a conflict, tension, or persistent debate in the history of social democracy, labourism, and/or the labour movement. The paper is expected to set out the terms of the debate and reflect on its enduring significance in relation to core course themes. No outside reading is required.

Research paper (50%)

Students will produce a 10-12 page double-spaced research paper based on a case study outlined on the course calendar (see above). Papers will examine the prospects and limitations of these political formations, their relationship to social democracy and/or labourism, and relate them to core themes explored throughout the course. In examining these case studies, students are expected to use outside material, though papers should be focused on addressing central themes of the course. Students are expected to *schedule a meeting with the instructor* during office hours to discuss their paper topic, well in advance of week 12.

Grading

Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale

90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

WDN = Withdrawn from the course

ABS = Student absent from final exam

DEF = Deferred (see below)

FND = (Failed, no Deferred) = Student could not pass the course even with 100% on final exam

Please note, however, that at the graduate level, a final grade of less than B- at the end of the term is considered a failure. As a result, the grading scheme will be as follows:

A: Excellent, high quality, and very insightful work; reveals a very solid engagement with the course materials and an outstanding capacity to articulate their significance; excellent communication skills (written/oral); highly sophisticated analytical and critical thinking skills. A+ grades will be reserved for exceptional work that is of publishable quality; A- marks indicate that there is space for improvement in certain identifiable respects even within an overall strong performance.

B: Some good insights but with some significant shortcomings too; the capacity to understand and meaningfully engage with the course materials is visible, but the quality of the work is uneven and presents some important flaws or omissions. Some ideas could be more fully articulated, explained, illustrated, or developed.

C: At the graduate level, this is considered a fail. This means that the work does not meet the overall expectations for the assignment, including that it fails to meet the basic guidelines for the assignment, or that it reflects poor analytical or communication skills.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Submission of Term Work

Course assignments will be submitted through the course **Brightspace** page link **by 11:59 pm** on the due date outlined in the course calendar above.

All assignments must follow a style guide (e.g., APA, Chicago Manual of Style); citations can be formatted in either the “notes and bibliography” or “author-date” style, so long as one of these options is used consistently throughout the document

Deferred Assignments and/or Grades

In the interest of fairness to all students, any assignment turned in late without an extension will be subject to a penalty. Late assignments will be penalized by 3% per calendar day (to a maximum of 25% total); no assignments will be accepted after two weeks (unless an alternative arrangement has been made).

Extensions on assignments (to a maximum of 72 hours, in most circumstances) will only be granted in advance. Please reach out early and let me know if you are having, or anticipate having, problems completing course assignments on time. I am here to help you get the assistance you need to succeed in this course. Extensions may be granted in the event of extenuating circumstances. I want to help you get into the habit of turning in work on time.

If, due to illness or circumstances beyond your control, you are unable to submit essential assignments before the end of the term, only official deferrals petitioned through the Office of the Registrar will be honoured.

Diversity and Inclusion in Learning

This course is committed to fostering an inclusive and respectful learning environment. Students are encouraged to engage critically with the course materials, including in relation to questions of representation and knowledge production. Although many assigned readings come from traditionally dominant voices in the discipline, particularly white men from the Global North, the course recognizes the important contributions of women, Indigenous scholars, people of colour, and thinkers from diverse geographic contexts. Throughout the course, we will critically examine whose perspectives are represented and whose have been marginalized, and how diverse voices have contributed to and challenged the field.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Carleton's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) addresses academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, misrepresentation, impersonation, withholding of records, obstruction/interference, disruption of instruction or examinations, improper access to and/or dissemination of information, or violation of test and examination rules. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's academic integrity rules.

Plagiarism

The Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include, but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, websites, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- Using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- Submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own; and
- Failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Procedures in Cases of Suspected Violations

- Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy are serious offences which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. When an instructor suspects a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy, the Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous process for academic integrity allegations, including reviewing documents and interviewing the student. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of “F” for the course. More information on the University’s Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

AI use in this course: The use of Generative AI in this course is generally discouraged but can be used sparingly for basic word processing functions, including grammar and spell checking (e.g. Grammarly, Microsoft Word Editor), brainstorming ideas, or sourcing initial background information or sources about a topic (e.g., Copilot, Chat GPT, Claude). However, the expectation is that you will produce original work and will not use AI as a substitute for your own thinking, analysis and writing.

Documenting AI use: It is not necessary to document the use of AI for the permitted purposes listed above. If you have questions about a specific use of AI that isn't listed above, please consult your instructor.

Why have I adopted this policy? This policy ensures that student voices and ideas are prioritized and authentically represented, maintaining the integrity of the work produced by students while allowing basic support to enhance clarity, correctness, layout and flow of ideas. The goal of adopting a limited use of AI is to help students develop foundational skills in writing and critical thinking by practicing substantive content creation without the support of AI.

Limitations: Students may not use AI to generate summaries of assigned readings, outline or structure a written assignment, generate text or scripts for course assignments, or record or transcribe class discussion.

As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described here with the course instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.

Student Mental Health

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus):

- Crisis/Urgent Counselling Support: 613-520-6674 (Mon-Fri, 8:30-4:30)
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24hrs a day, 7 days a week

- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1
- **Carleton Resources:**
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
 - Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
 - Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
 - Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
 - Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
 - Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>
- **Off Campus Resources:**
 - Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
 - Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
 - Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
 - The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

Requests for Academic Accommodation

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the *Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances*, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).