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# REES 1531/PSCI 1104

## SOCIALISM: THE DEMOCRATIC PATH

**MITCHELL A. ORENSTEIN, PROFESSOR**  
**RUSSIAN AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES AND POLITICAL SCIENCE**  
CLASS MEETINGS: TR 145-314PM (SPRING 2024)  
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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Socialism has become a hot topic in US politics. Some advocate it as an ideology that supports economic equality; others decry it as a path towards excessive state control. But what does the word socialism really mean? Why does it mean different things to different people? How did it develop historically? Which countries identify with socialism and why? Is socialism opposed to capitalism or complementary to it? This course takes a global perspective on socialism as a socio-economic system. It explores how socialism developed in theory and practice in dozens of countries worldwide, with an emphasis on Western democracies such as France, Germany, Great Britain, and the US, as well developing countries such as China and Rwanda. It follows the rise of a democratic path to socialism after the Second World War, the neoliberal turn of the 1980s, and contemporary debates and policy proposals.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Attendance and Participation: 15%

Students are required to attend class and participate in class discussions and projects. No use of electronic devices permitted during class time.

Midterm: 25%

An in-class midterm exam will cover socialism in theory and practice.

Final: 25%

An in-person final exam will cover public policy analysis of new socialist programs.

Paper: 35%

In the final paper, students will provide a detailed assessment of a socialist policy proposal in any country that may be one of the ones discussed in class or another one, with the instructor's permission. Topics must be approved by the instructor. No use of AI permitted.

### **BOOKS TO PURCHASE**

Ghodsee, Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism, ISBN: 978-1645036364. [Amazon](#).  
Kenworthy, Would Democratic Socialism Be Better?, ISBN: 978- 0197636810. [Amazon](#).  
Paul, The Case Against Socialism, ISBN: 978-0062954862. [Amazon](#).  
Piketty, Time for Socialism, 2021, ISBN 978-0300259667. [Amazon](#).

## WEEKS 1 & 2 • JANUARY 18, 23, & 25

### INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

Introduction: What is Socialism? What is Democratic Socialism or Social Democracy? How Are These Terms Understood and Used in US Political Discourse?

#### REQUIRED READING:

William Galston and E.J. Dionne, Jr., "[Socialism: A Short Primer](#)," Brookings (2019).

Rand Paul, [The Case Against Socialism](#), Parts I and IV.

Pew Research Center, "[Modest Declines in Positive Views of Socialism and Capitalism in US](#)."

Peter Slevin, "[Too Many, Tangled American Definitions of Socialism](#)," [The New Yorker](#).

#### RECOMMENDED READING:

"[Socialism: Utopian and Scientific](#)," Friedrich Engels, Chapters 1 and 3.

Mike Savage et al., "[A New Model of Social Class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey Experiment](#)," 2013.

#### VIDEO:

[History of Socialism in America](#), PBS Origins.

[What Germans Think About Capitalism](#)

[Great British Class Survey](#)

[American Capitalism versus German "Socialism"](#) Incomes and cost of living compared.

## WEEK 3 • JANUARY 30 AND FEBRUARY 1

### SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND THE MIXED ECONOMY

Guest Speaker (February 1): Professor Sheri Berman, Barnard College

#### REQUIRED READING:

Sheri Berman, "[Understanding Social Democracy](#)."

Robert Dahl, "[Why All Democratic Countries Have Mixed Economies](#)," Nomos 35, 1993.

Gary Dorrien, "[The Birth of Social Democracy](#)," Commonweal (2019).

Sheri Berman, "[Can Social Democrats Save the World \(Again\)](#)," Foreign Policy, 2020.

#### RECOMMENDED READING:

Karl Marx, "[The Communist Manifesto](#)," Chs 1, 2, and 3.

Karl Polanyi, [The Great Transformation](#).

Joseph Schumpeter, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy," Part 1 ([free version of this book](#)):

Giddens, Anthony. [The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy](#), 2013.

Sheri Berman, "[Rediscovering Social Democracy](#)," Dissent, 2000.

Sheri Berman, "[Unheralded Battle](#)," Dissent, 2009.

## VIDEO:

### WEEK 4 • FEBRUARY 6 & 8 ORIGINS AND VARIANTS OF THE WELFARE STATE

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

Why did Bismarck introduce the first national welfare state programs in Germany in the 1880s? To what extent was he influenced by the rise of socialism? What are the three ‘worlds’ of welfare capitalism? How do the Bismarckian conservative and social democratic worlds differ? What were the origins of the social democratic welfare states in Scandinavia?

#### REQUIRED READING:

Esping-Andersen, [The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism](#), 1990, chs. 1-3.

Boissoneault, [Bismarck Tried to End Socialism’s Grip—by offering Government Health Care](#).

Bartlett, [A Conservative Case for the Welfare State](#).

Andersen et al., [“The Nordic Model, Embracing Globalization and Sharing Risks”](#)

#### RECOMMENDED READING:

Louis Menand, [“How the New Deal Went Down,”](#) The New Yorker, 2013.

History Channel, [The New Deal](#).

Mark Blyth, [“The Transformation of the Swedish Model: Economic Ideas, Distributional Conflict, and Institutional Change.”](#)

New Deal, [“What Was the New Deal?”](#)

The Living New Deal, [Philadelphia, PA New Deal Projects](#)

## VIDEO:

[Sir William Beveridge Talks to Pathe Gazette.](#)

[How World War 2 Created a Welfare State.](#)

[Sir William Beveridge Explains his Proposals.](#)

[Our Plain Duty: FDR and Social Security.](#)

[Health for All \(Bismarck\).](#)

### WEEK 5 • FEBRUARY 13 & 15 NEOLIBERALISM AND THE RETREAT OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

Why did neoliberalism overturn the social democratic consensus? What are the key tenets of neoliberalism? Are they losing sway today? Why have social democratic parties proven unable to capitalize on rising dissatisfaction with capitalism?

#### REQUIRED READING:

David Harvey, [A Brief History of Neoliberalism](#), ch. 1.

Berman and Snegovaya, "[Populism and the Decline of Social Democracy](#)," JoD, 2019.  
Monbiot, "[Neoliberalism: The Ideology at the Root of All Our Problems](#)," The Guardian, 2016.  
Mudde, "[Why Copying the Populist Right Isn't Going to Save the Left](#)," The Guardian, 2019.  
Benedetto, Hix, and Mastrorocco, "[The Rise and Decline of Social Democracy, 1918-2017](#)."

#### **RECOMMENDED READING:**

Hilary Appel and Mitchell A. Orenstein, *From Triumph to Crisis: Neoliberal Economic Reforms in Postcommunist Countries*, 2018, ch. 1.

Nancy Fraser, "[The End of Progressive Neoliberalism](#)," Dissent, 2017.

Saad-Filho, "[Crisis in Neoliberalism or Crisis of Neoliberalism](#)," Socialist Register, 2011.

Li, "[After Neoliberalism. Empire, Social Democracy, or Socialism](#)," Monthly Review, 2004.

#### **VIDEO:**

### **WEEK 6 • FEBRUARY 20 & 22**

#### **WOULD DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM BE BETTER? IS CAPITALISM THE ENEMY?**

##### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

Would democratic socialism be better than social democratic capitalism? How does Kenworthy use those terms? What are the benefits and disadvantages of a mixed economy? Are capitalism and socialism compatible?

##### **REQUIRED READING:**

Kenworthy, Would Democratic Socialism Be Better?, chs. 1-8 and 17.

#### **VIDEO:**

### **WEEK 7 • FEBRUARY 27 & 29**

#### **GENDER AND SOCIALISM, MIDTERM EXAM**

Guest Speaker (February 27): Professor Kristen Ghodsee, University of Pennsylvania  
Midterm Exam (February 29)

##### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

Do women or men do better under socialism? Do welfare states have gendered impacts? What are some of the prominent critiques of the welfare state? Can state power be liberating?

##### **REQUIRED READING:**

Kristen Ghodsee, Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism.

### **WEEK 8 • SPRING BREAK**

### **WEEK 9 • MARCH 12 & 14**

#### **UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME**

##### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

What is universal basic income? How utopian an idea is it? What would its effects be? Who would reap the benefits? Who would pay the costs? Does it complement or contradict principles

of social democracy? Are a negative income tax or tax credit plausible alternatives? What about developing countries? What is the movement for a global social floor and how feasible is that?

**REQUIRED READING:**

Piketty, Basic Income or Fair Wage?, pp. 54-57.

Piketty, Basic Income in India, pp. 235-39.

Matthews, "[Democrats Have United Around a Plan to Dramatically Cut Child Poverty](#)," 2019.

Prochazka, "[Taiwan Makes History with Universal Cash Payment Plan](#)," 2023.

Van Parijs, Philippe. "[Basic income and social democracy](#)," 2016.

Reed and Lansley, "[Universal Basic Income: An Idea Whose Time Has Come?](#)"

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

Hoynes and Rothstein, "[Universal Basic Income in the United States and Advanced Countries.](#)"

Banerjee et al., "[University Basic Income in the Developing World](#),"

Sujata Gupta, "[Alaska's Free Money For Residents Hints at How Universal Basic Income May Work](#)," Science News, 2019.

Kenworthy, "[A Decent and Rising Income Floor](#)," The Good Society, 2019.

Knowledge at Wharton, "[Why Alaska's Experience Shows Promise for Universal Basic Income.](#)"

"[Finland Ends Homelessness and Provides Shelter for All in Need](#)," Scoop.me, 2019.

Ioana Marinescu, "[No Strings Attached: The Behavioral Effects of U.S. Unconditional Cash Transfer Programs](#)." Roosevelt Institute, 2017.

**VIDEO:**

Jeffrey Sachs, "Can Universal Basic Income Fix America's Inequality?"

<https://bigthink.com/videos/jeffrey-sachs-on-universal-basic-income-and-social-democracy>

**WEEK 10 • MARCH 19 & 21**

**ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY**

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

Beyond the welfare state, socialism has stood for economic democracy through cooperative or state ownership or co-determination. How has economic democracy been expressed in different countries and what does it mean today?

**REQUIRED READING:**

Kenworthy, "Economic Democracy," Would Democratic Socialism Be Better?, ch. 12.

Tom Malleon, [After Occupy: Economic Democracy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#), chs. 1-3.

Piketty, [Time for Socialism](#), pp. 1-26.

Piketty, "Rethinking the Capital Code," pp. 138-141.

"[1945 Labour Party Election Manifesto](#)"

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

[Codetermination and Power in the Workplace](#). Economic Policy Institute.

**VIDEO:**

German Works Council

Worker Cooperatives

Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative

## **WEEK 11 • MARCH 26 & 28**

### **WEALTH TAX**

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

What is the rationale behind a wealth tax? Is it practical? Would wealthy people actually pay it? Is it a good means of raising revenue? Promoting equality?

#### **REQUIRED READING:**

Saez and Guzman, "How Would a Progressive Wealth Tax Work?," 2019.

Broadway and Pesiteau, "The Tenuous Case for an Annual Wealth Tax," 2018.

Piketty, Wealth Tax in America, pp. 226-229.

Piketty, Suppression of the Wealth Tax: A Historical Error, 142-46.

Piketty, Yellow Vests and Tax Justice, 217-21.

#### **RECOMMENDED READING:**

Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, The Triumph of Injustice: How the Rich Dodge Taxes and How to Make Them Pay, Norton, 2019.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. "The effects of income, wealth, and capital gains taxation on risk-taking." In *Stochastic Optimization Models in Finance*, pp. 291-311. Academic Press, 1975.

#### **VIDEO:**

## **WEEK 12 • APRIL 2 & 4**

### **UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE**

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

Should societies guarantee universal access to health care? What are the pros and cons? Is health care a right or a privilege? An economic burden or boon? How should health systems be organized? Why has the US lagged in providing universal health care? Should it now? And, if so, how? What would be the tradeoffs required?

#### **REQUIRED READING:**

Kenworthy, "Affordable Healthcare for All," *Would Democratic Socialism be Better?*, ch. 9.

Sachs, "Jeffrey Sachs: American Can Save \$1 Trillion and Get Better Health Care," CNN, 2017.

Sachs, "Achieving Universal Health Coverage in Low Income Settings," *The Lancet*, 2012.

World Health Organization Report on Universal Healthcare.

"Universal Health Care: Lessons From the British Experience" Donald W. Light.

Senator Bernie Sanders Medicare-for-All Plan.

Pew Research on Healthcare: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/03/most-continue-to-say-ensuring-health-care-coverage-is-governments-responsibility/>

“Unpacking the Sanders Medicare-For-All Bill” Katie Keith and Timothy Jost:  
<https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20170914.061996/full/>

“[Does Universal Health Insurance Make Health Care Unaffordable? Lessons from Taiwan](#)” by Jui-Fen Rachel Lu and William C. Hsiao:

“[Where the 2020 Candidates Stand on Medicare For All](#)” Abigail Abrams.

“[Why Can European Countries afford Universal health care but not the US?](#)” By Kent Kroger.

“[The Sanders Single-Payer Health Care Plan: The Effect on National Health Expenditures and Federal and Private Spending](#)” By Lisa Clemans-Cope:

Eichorn and Hutchinson, “[Why Medicare for All is Not Good for America](#),” US News, 2019.

#### VIDEO:

### WEEK 13 • APRIL 9 & 11 THE GREEN NEW DEAL

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

What do advocates mean by a Green New Deal? Is it mainly about the environment or inequality? What are the policies by which it would be achieved?

Required Reading:

Kenworthy, “A Livable Planet,” *Would Democratic Socialism Be Better?*,” ch. 16.

Sierra Club, “[What is a Green New Deal?](#)”

H.R. 109 [Recognizing the Duty of the Federal Government to Create a Green New Deal](#).

David French, “[The Green New Deal is Everything that is Wrong with Progressive Environmentalism](#),” *National Review*, 2019.

“[Five Ways to Fund a Green New Deal](#),” New Economics Foundation.

Lisa Friedman, “[What is the Green New Deal? A Climate Change Proposal Explained](#),” *New York Times*, 2019.

European Commission, “[A European Green Deal](#),” 2019.

Piketty, “The Illusion of Centrist Ecology,” pp. 244-48.

#### RECOMMENDED READING:

Naomi Klein, “On Fire: The (Burning) Case for a Green New Deal,” Simon and Schuster, 2020.

#### VIDEO:

### WEEK 14 • APRIL 16 & 18 FREE COLLEGE EDUCATION AND STUDENT DEBT RELIEF

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

Should college education be free? Who would benefit? Would anyone lose out? What about student debt relief? What would be the effects? Tradeoffs? Alternatives?

#### REQUIRED READING:

### Should College Be Free? Pros, Cons, and Alternatives

Clare Lombardo, “Student Debt Forgiveness Sounds Good: What Might Happen If the Government Did It?,” NPR, 2019.

How Australia Gets Student Loans Right,” The Atlantic, 2016.

Why Free College Tuition is Spreading from Cities to States

GAO, “Education Could Do More to Help Insure Borrowers are Aware of Repayment and Forgiveness Options,” 2015.

Roger Geiger, “Does Higher Education Cause Inequality?”

Biffel, Gudrun, and Joe Isaac. "Should higher education students pay tuition fees?" *European Journal of Education* 37, no. 4 (2002): 433-455.

### **VIDEO:**

**WEEK 15 & 16 • APRIL 23, 25 & 30  
CONCLUSION AND EXAM REVIEW**

FINAL EXAM TBA