



Socialist Politics: A Reading List

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Compiled by Bread and Roses

For the first time in many decades, interest in socialism is surging in the United States. The political opportunities are immense, but how can today's new generation of socialists be as effective as possible? Though there are no easy answers for how to move forward today, we should try to base our practice on the main political lessons of the past, an accurate analysis of capitalism, and a viable strategy for socialist transformation.

Below is a list of readings on a range of key issues confronting socialist activists in the US. Though it presents a roughly coherent Marxist point of view concerning the

subjects under consideration, the inclusion of a particular reading does not imply full endorsement of every argument the author makes. The purpose is to offer some guidance to comrades in the DSA looking to further their self-education, either individually or as part of a reading group. We suggest that newcomers to socialist politics start by reading the pieces in the Introduction to Socialism section, followed by the articles with stars next to them.

Introduction to Socialism

- *Neal Meyer, “What Is Democratic Socialism?”
- Ramsin Canon, “What It Means to Be a Marxist”
- Nivedita Majumdar, “Why We’re Marxists”
- Various Authors, “The ABCs of Socialism”

Class Structure and Class Formation

Introductory

- *Hal Draper, “Why the Working Class?”
- Jane Slaughter, “The Political Revolution Goes to Work”
- Vivek Chibber, “The ABCs of Capitalism”
- Michael Zweig, “Six Points on Class”
- Karl Marx, “Bourgeois and Proletarians”

Advanced

- Erik Olin Wright, “Class Analysis” and “Class Structure”
- Vivek Chibber, “Rescuing Class from the Cultural Turn”
- Karl Marx, “Wage Labor and Capital”
- Kim Moody, “The New Terrain of Class Conflict in the United States ”
- Claus Offe and Helmut Wessenthal, “Two Logics of Collective Action: Theoretical Notes on Social Class and Organizational Form”
- Charlie Post, “The Myth of the Labor Aristocracy”

The Capitalist State

Introductory

- *Meagan Day, “Billionaire Bureaucrats”
- Kevin Young, Tarun Banerjee, and Michael Schwartz, “When Capitalists Go on Strike”
- Ben Tarnoff, “Building Socialism from Below: Popular Power and the State”
- Chris Maisano, “The Constitution and the Class Struggle”
- Michael McCarthy, “Seven Theses on the Capitalist Democratic State”

Advanced

- Ralph Miliband, “State Power and Class Interests”
- Ralph Miliband, “Lenin’s The State and Revolution”
- Fred Block, “The Ruling Class Does Not Rule: Notes on the Marxist Theory of the State”

Racial Oppression

Introductory

- *Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “Picking Up The Threads of Struggle”
- Paul Heideman, “Socialism and Black Oppression”
- Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “Martin Luther King Jr’s Radical Anti-Capitalism”
- Eric Blanc and Jeremy Gong, “How Class Should Be Central”
- Briahna Gray, “Beware the Race Reductionist”
- Eric Blanc, “Never Trust a Billionaire’s Antiracism”
- Suzy Lee, “The Case for Open Borders”
- Joe William Trotter Jr., “The Power of the Black Working Class”
- Robert Greene II, “The Legacy of Black Reconstruction”
- Robert Greene II, “Remembering the Black Panther Party”
- Brian Jones, “Martin Luther King’s Revolution”

Advanced

- Martha Gimenez, “Marxism and Class, Gender and Race: Rethinking The Trilogy”
- Adolph Reed, Ellen Meiksins Wood, Maurice Zeitlin, Steven Gregory, “Unraveling the Relation of Race and Class in American Politics”

- Barbara Jeanne Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America”
- Michael McCarthy, “Silent Compulsions: Capitalist Markets and Race”
- Adaner Usmani and John Clegg, “The Economic Origins of Mass Incarceration”

Women’s Oppression

Introductory

- *Johanna Brenner, “The Promise of Socialist Feminism”
- Barbara Ehrenreich, “What is Socialist Feminism?”
- Alex Press, “What’s next for #MeToo? The McDonald’s strikes have an answer”
- Tithi Bhattacharya, “Women are leading the wave of strikes in America. Here's why”
- Jenny Brown, “Not in Labor”
- Nancy Holmstrom, “The Socialist Feminist Project”

Advanced

- Martha Gimenez, “Capitalism and the Oppression of Women: Marx Revisited”
- Johanna Brenner and Maria Ramas, “Rethinking Women’s Oppression”
- Salar Mohandesi and Emma Teitelman, “Without Reserves”
- Johanna Brenner, “Materialism and Feminism”

LGBTQ Oppression

- *Jeremy Cohan and Ben Serby, “From Gay Rights to Queer Liberation”
- Fainan Lakha, “Socialists Must Defend Trans Life”
- John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity”
- Sherry Wolf, “An Injury to One is an Injury to All”

Socialist Strategy

Introductory

- *Meagan Day, “Why Socialists Should Fight for Structural Reforms”
- Ben Beckett, “Political Revolution in the Twenty-First Century”

- Chris Maisano, “Electoral Politics, Class Formation, and Socialist Strategy”
- Peter Gowan, “A Plan to Win”
- Peter Camejo, “Liberalism, Ultraleftism, or Mass Action”
- Asbjørn Wahl, “The Left in Government – A Strategic Project: Latin America and Europe Compared”
- Eric Blanc, “Why Kautsky Was Right (and Why You Should Care)”

Advanced

- Ralph Miliband, “Reform and Revolution”
- Nicos Poulantzas, “Towards a Democratic Socialism”
- Dylan Riley, “An Anticapitalism That Can Win”
- Hal Draper, “The Two Souls of Socialism”
- Karl Kautsky, “The Road to Power”
- V.I. Lenin, “‘Left-Wing’ Communism: An Infantile Disorder”

The Question of Organization

- *Sam Gindin, “Building a Mass Socialist Party”
- Catarina Principe and Dan Russell, “Asking the Right Questions”
- Ernest Mandel, “Vanguard Parties”
- Jared Abbott, “For a Democratic and Effective DSA”
- Vivek Chibber, “Our Road to Power”
- Solidarity, “Socialist Organization Today”
- Hal Draper, “Anatomy of the Microsect”
- Sam Gindin, “Beyond Social Movement Unionism”
- Jo Freeman, “The Tyranny of Structurelessness”
- Paul Heideman, “The Rise and Fall of the Socialist Party of America”
- Hal Draper, “Working Class Lifestyle and the Radical Sect”

The Dilemmas of Social Democracy

- *Peter Frase, “Social Democracy’s Breaking Point”
- Robert Brenner, “The Problem of Reformism”
- Chris Maisano, “Social Democracy’s Incomplete Legacy”
- Ralph Miliband and Marcel Liebman, “Beyond Social Democracy”

- Leo Panitch, “The Impasse of Social Democratic Politics”
- Adam Przeworski, “Social Democracy as a Historical Phenomenon”
- Jonas Pontusson, “Radicalization and Retreat in Swedish Social Democracy ”

The Problems of Socialist Transition

- *Carmen Sirianni, “Councils and Parliaments: The Problems of Dual Power and Democracy in Comparative Perspective”
- Bhaskar Sunkara, “The Few Who Won”
- Sean Larson, “Red Flags Over Germany”
- David Zachariah and Petter Nilsson, “Waiting in the Wings”
- Ralph Miliband, “The Coup in Chile”
- Tony Benn, “Obstacles to Reform in Britain”
- Jonah Birch, “The Many Lives of Francois Mitterrand”

The Democratic Party and Independent Politics

Introductory

- *Neal Meyer and Ben B., “The Case for Bernie 2020”
- Seth Ackerman, “A New Party of A New Type”
- Eric Blanc, “The Ballot and the Break”
- Jason Schulman, “Where is Our Labor Party?”
- Paul Heideman, “It’s Their Party”
- Shawn Gude, “The Business Veto”
- Kim Moody, “From Realignment to Reinforcement”

Advanced

- Robert Brenner, “The Paradox of Social Democracy: The American Case”
- Barry Eidlin, “The Phantom Limb”
- Thomas Ferguson, “From Normalcy to New Deal: Industrial Structure, Party Competition, and American Public Policy in the Great Depression”

The Labor Movement

Introductory

- *Jane Slaughter, “The Rank-and-File Strategy for Everyone”
- Barry Eidlin, “What is the Rank-and-File Strategy and Why Does it Matter?”
- Jane McAlevey, “Everything Old Is New Again”
- Alexandra Bradbury, “The Only Way To Survive Janus”
- Charlie Post, “The Forgotten Militants”
- Jeremy Gong, “Mayflies and Mass Strikes”
- Hal Draper, “Marxism and the Trade Unions”
- Jane Slaughter, “Labor Notes: Forty Years of Troublemaking”
- Meagan Day, “A Blueprint For Calling The Question”
- William P Jones, “The Making of the Black Working Class”
- Paul Prescod, “When the Mailmen Rebelled”

Advanced

- Kim Moody, “The Rank-and-File Strategy”
- Jeremy Brecher, “The Great Upheaval of 1877”
- Jeremy Brecher, “Mayday, the 8-hour Movement and the Knights of Labor”
- James P. Cannon, “The IWW”
- James P. Cannon, “The Great Minneapolis Strikes”
- Genora Dollinger, “The 1936-37 General Motors Sit-Down Strike”
- Michael Goldfield, “Worker Insurgency, Radical Organization, and New Deal Labor Legislation”
- Robert Korstad, “Civil Rights Unionism”

Climate Change

- *Matthew Huber, “Five Principles of a Socialist Climate Politics”
- Christian Parenti, “A Radical Approach to the Climate Crisis”
- Aylssa Battistoni, “There’s No Time for Gradualism”
- Kate Aronoff, “No Third Way for the Planet”
- Various Authors, “A Real Green New Deal Means Class Struggle”

Capitalism and Imperialism

- *Aziz Rana, “The Return of Left Internationalism”

- Ellen Meiksins Wood, “Globalization and Imperialism”
- Robert Brenner, “What Is, and What Is Not, Imperialism?”
- Vivek Chibber, “American Militarism and the US Political Establishment: The Real Lessons of the Invasion of Iraq”
- Anand Gopal, “We Have to End the Permanent Wars”

Where Did Capitalism Come From?

- *Ellen Meiksins Wood, "From Opportunity to Imperative,"
- Charlie Post, “Slavery and the New History of Capitalism”
- Robert Brenner, “Property and Progress”

The Socialist Future

- *Peter Frase, “Four Futures”
- James P. Cannon, “What Socialist America Will Look Like”
- Sam Gindin, “Socialism For Realists”