

## A #PostTrumpSyllabus: Making Strategic Sense for a Post-Trump America

Please share widely! URL: <<https://goo.gl/NA1NCe>> By Jeremy Posadas, PhD

### HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE LIST:

- **You don't have to read everything below!** Use it as a well to return to again and again whenever you need to refresh your thinking and nourish your strategic roots.
- Start by committing to read, *this year*, the 7 articles & 4 books in the "Express Version."
- Form a learning circle with 3-5 other people (ideally of different races, classes, and/or parties).
- Read the theory-of-change (strategic roadmap) outlined below the readings.
- Look over the other two sections ("Expanded" and "In-Depth") and see what else raises your curiosity.
- Share this list with others who are wanting to deepen their learning.

This list arises from the current context in which I live and work: as a person of color on the rural border of Texas and Oklahoma. It is premised on a particular set of commitments and a related analysis of how we got here and how we get out of here. It will likely be unsatisfactory to those who don't share those commitments or analysis.

*New items may be added occasionally. Initially posted on 11/30/2016; most recent additions on 2/5/2017.*

The letters in brackets indicate a 4-stage comprehensive analysis (if you want to read them that way):

**[A]** Key Conceptual Foundations

**[B]** WTF Is Going On?

**[C]** HTF Did We Get Here?

**[D]** WTF Do We Do Now?

**\*\* EXPRESS VERSION — if nothing else, read these 7 articles & 4 books this year \*\***

**[A]** Michael Zweig, *The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret*, 2nd ed.

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0801477336>>

**[B]** Ryan Cooper, "2009: The Year the Democratic Party Died" (first in a 4-part series)

<<http://theweek.com/articles/661871/2009-year-democratic-party-died>> (links to [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), and [Part 4](#))

**[C]** Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer — and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class* <<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1416588701>>

**[B]** Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1620972255>>

**[B]** Sean McElwee, "Why Non-Voters Matter"

<<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/why-non-voters-matter/405250>>

**[D]** Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, and Steve Max, *Organizing for Social Change*, 4th ed.

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0984275215>>

**[D]** Nathan Robinson, "Bad Ways to Criticize Trump"

<<https://www.currentaffairs.org/2016/12/bad-ways-to-criticize-trump>>

**[D]** Hal Walker, “The Front of the Classroom” (a compelling account of Democrats’ cluelessness)  
<[https://medium.com/@hal\\_walker/the-front-of-the-classroom-1245dc1838b2](https://medium.com/@hal_walker/the-front-of-the-classroom-1245dc1838b2)>

**\*\* EXPANDED VERSION \*\***

**[B]** Jennifer Sherman, *Those Who Work, Those Who Don't: Poverty, Morality, and Family in Rural America*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0816659052>>

**[B]** Alexander Zaitchik, *The Gilded Rage: A Wild Ride Through Donald Trump's America*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1510714286>>

**[B]** Katherine Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/022634911X>>

**[D]** Jane McAlevey, *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/019062471X>>

**[A]** Steven Greenhouse, *The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1400096529>>

**[A]** **[D]** David Weil, *The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad for So Many and What Can Be Done to Improve It*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0674725441>>

**[C]** **[B]** Matt Stoller, “How Democrats Killed Their Populist Soul”  
<<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/10/how-democrats-killed-their-populist-soul/504710>>

**[A]** **[B]** Jake Rosenfeld, *What Unions No Longer Do*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0674725115>>

**[B]** **[C]** Nicholas Carnes, *White-Collar Government: The Hidden Role of Class in Economic Policy Making*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/022608714X>>

**[D]** Edward Chambers, *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for Power, Action, and Justice*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0826414990>>

**[D]** Alexia Salvatierra and Peter Heltzel, *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0830836616>>

**[D]** Jonathan Matthew Smucker, *Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1849352542>>

[A] Dorothy Sue Cobble (editor), *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0801489431>>

[A] Sean Thomas-Breitfeld, Linda Burnham, Steven Pitts, Marc Bayard, and Algernon Austin, *Black Workers Matter*  
<<http://www.discountfoundation.org/blackworkersmatter>>

[D] Richard Kahlenberg and Moshe Marvit, "Labor Organizing as a Civil Right"  
<[https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online\\_articles/labor-organizing-as-a-civil-right](https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/labor-organizing-as-a-civil-right)>

[D] Van Jones, *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0061650765>>

[D] Dean Baker, *The End of Loser Liberalism: Making Markets Progressive*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0615533639>>

[B] Sean McElwee, Brian Schaffner, and Jesse Rhodes, *Whose Voice, Whose Choice? The Distorting Influence of the Political Donor Class in Our Big-Money Elections*  
<<http://www.demos.org/publication/whose-voice-whose-choice-distorting-influence-political-donor-class-our-big-money-electi>>

[B] Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page's study demonstrating that "majorities of the American public actually have little influence over the policies our government adopts [...] policymaking is dominated by powerful business organizations and a small number of affluent Americans" (links to a good [non-specialist summary](#), the [original scholarly article](#), a [summary of critiques](#), and the authors' [response to critiques](#))

[B] Liza Featherstone (editor), *False Choices: The Faux Feminism of Hillary Rodham Clinton*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1784784613>>

## \*\* IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS \*\*

[B][D] Benjamin Page and Lawrence Jacobs, *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0226644553>>

[B][D] Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0226293653>>

[B] Andrew Gelman, *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0691143935>>

[B][C] Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0806136278>>

**[D]** Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0691156654>>

**[B]** David Callahan and Mijin Cha, *Stacked Deck: How the Dominance of Politics by the Affluent and Business Undermines Economic Mobility in America*

<<http://www.demos.org/stacked-deck-how-dominance-politics-affluent-business-undermines-economic-mobility-america>>

**[B]** Adam Lioz, *Stacked Deck: How the Racial Bias in Our Big Money Political System Undermines Our Democracy and Our Economy*

<<http://www.demos.org/publication/stacked-deck-how-racial-bias-our-big-money-political-system-undermine-s-our-democracy-a-0>>

**[D/A]** Cass Sunstein, *The Second Bill of Rights: FDR's Unfinished Revolution — And Why We Need It More Than Ever*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0465083331>>

**[A]** Sarah Leonard and Nancy Fraser, "Capitalism's Crisis of Care"

<<https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/nancy-fraser-interview-capitalism-crisis-of-care>>

**[B/C]** Arne Kalleberg, *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s to 2000s*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0871544806>>

**[B]** Jennifer Silva, *Coming Up Short: Working-Class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0190231890>>

**[B]** Allison Pugh, *The Tumbleweed Society: Working and Caring in an Age of Insecurity*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0199957711>>

**[B]** Katherine Newman and Victor Tan Chen, *The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0807041408>>

**[B]** Katherine Newman, *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0375703799>>

**[B]** Sarah Halpern-Meekin, Kathryn Edin, Laura Tach, and Jennifer Sykes, *It's Not Like I'm Poor: How Working Families Make Ends Meet in a Post-Welfare World*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0520275357>>

**[B]** Sharon Hays, *Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0195176014>>

**[B]** Kathryn Edin and Luke Shaefer, *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0544303180>>

**[C]** Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0393337669>>

**[C]** Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0691123683>>

**[C]** Risa Goluboff, *The Lost Promise of Civil Rights*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0674034694>>

**[C]** Paul Frymer, *Black and Blue: African Americans, the Labor Movement, and the Decline of the Democratic Party*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0691134650>>

**[C]** Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1595587071>>

**[C]** Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0300171501>>

**[C]** Thomas Edsall with Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0393309037>>

**[C]** Lily Geismer, *Don't Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party*

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0691157235>>

**[A]** Nancy Fraser et al., *Adding Insult to Injury: Nancy Fraser Debates Her Critics* (esp. the chapter "From Redistribution to Recognition?")

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1859842232>>

**[A]** Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed.

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0415520312>>

**[A]** Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*, 3rd ed.

<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1442202181>>

**[A]** Sarah Jaffe, "Trickle-Down Feminism"

<<https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/trickle-down-feminism>>

[A] Joseph DeFilippis, Lisa Duggan, Kenyon Farrow, and Richard Kim (editors), "A New Queer Agenda," *Scholar & Feminist Online* 10.1-2  
<<http://sfonline.barnard.edu/a-new-queer-agenda>>

[A] Ryan Conrad (editor), *Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/1849351848>>

[A] Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, rev. ed.  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0822360403>>

[A] Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0822362767>>

[C] Harold Meyerson, "If Labor Dies, What's Next?"  
<<http://prospect.org/article/if-labor-dies-whats-next>>

[C] [D] Andrew Battista, *The Revival of Labor Liberalism*  
<<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0252032322>>

[D] Josh Eidelson, "Alt-Labor"  
<<http://prospect.org/article/alt-labor>>

[D] Danae Lopez, "Worker Centers: Labs of Organizational Innovation"  
<<https://tcf.org/content/facts/worker-centers-labs-organizational-innovation>>

[D] Shayna Strom, "Organizing's Business Model Problem"  
<<https://tcf.org/content/report/organizings-business-model-problem>>

**\*\* A ROADMAP OUT OF HELL \*\***

The [theory-of-change](#) that animates this syllabus assumes that

(a) enacting policy through state and federal legislatures is a worthwhile and indispensable major component of disrupting and diminishing white supremacy and patriarchy, as well as mitigating and equalizing the effects of climate change;

(b) there is no way to amass the legislative majorities necessary to enact such policies without organizing a lot of the eligible voters who currently [do not vote](#) at all or only rarely (roughly 40% of the electorate);

(c) these persistent non-voters (PNVs) — given what the best available [research](#) tells us about their [economic situations](#), [policy preferences](#), and [motivations for not voting \[pdf\]](#) — are less likely to be

converted into progressive consistent voters by an agenda whose gravitational center is race, gender/sexuality, and/or the environment per se, but rather by an agenda that will bring bring them tangible basic economic security.

The theory-of-change works backwards as follows:

(8) Stock the federal judiciary with judges and justices who will uphold and protect the non-reformist reforms ([definition](#)) enacted below and complete SCOTUS' aborted project of establishing a [Second Bill of Rights](#). *But this is impossible without...*

(7) Enacting, through the Congress and the state legislatures, a portfolio of non-reformist reforms that push the [Overton window](#) ever further towards complete economic, social, environmental, and cultural justice. *But this is impossible without...*

(6) Electing progressive majorities in both houses of the Congress and in as many state legislatures, without dependence on Wall Street donors. (“Progressive” here means “a portfolio of non-reformist reforms that push the Overton window ever further towards complete economic, social, environmental, and cultural justice.”) *But this is impossible without...*

(5) Assembling and mobilizing an electoral coalition — one that consistently turns out to vote in every election *and* is large enough to win progressive legislative majorities at both the federal and state levels — of working-class people of whiteness, working-class people of color, and professional/managerial-class people of all races. *But this is impossible without...*

(4) Converting at least one-fourth of persistent non-voters in each state into consistent voters who support a progressive agenda. *But this is impossible without...*

(3) Repeatedly prioritizing, publicizing, and pursuing — over multiple election cycles — the enactment, at local, state, and federal levels of an agenda focused on **ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL** and with core concerns of social, environmental, and cultural justice embedded within it — because that’s the kind of agenda that will give non-voters of all races a path for concretely pursuing their self-interest in elections. *But this is impossible without...*

(2) Reviving, as well as establishing new, national-scale person-to-person organizing networks and institutions (including especially, but not limited to, labor unions) that draw working-class people of whiteness and working-class people of color together in the pursuit of shared material interests and invite professional/managerial-class people of all races into effective solidarity with working-class peoples. (See sub-strategy for this below.) *But this is impossible without...*

(1) Establishing multiple mechanisms by which professional/managerial-class people of all races residing in currently “blue” [metro areas](#) can listen empathetically — on a long-term basis and in a way

that leads professional/managerial-class people to cultivate genuine, action-generating solidarity — to working-class people of all races residing in currently “red” metro areas in a different [region](#) of the country.

*Sub-strategy for Step (2) above:*

(1) Organize locally around municipal minimum wage ordinances that raise the minimum wage into a livable wage indexed to inflation. (In blue states that already have a high minimum wage, the initial issue can be establishing a statewide system for universally affordable, safe, high-quality childcare.) Define a living wage based on the [Economic Security Institute](#)'s definition of [basic economic security](#), which is localized to geographies within each state. (If state law preempts local minimum-wage ordinances, then jump to the next sub-step.) Keep at this, election after election, until the ordinance is passed. If municipal bodies won't pass it, run candidates (in primaries as necessary) who are publicly committed to passing it, elect them, and then force them to follow-through on their commitment.

(2) Link up these local groups (where they aren't already linked) into a statewide network that organizes a multi-year campaign to raise the statewide minimum wage to a livable wage indexed to inflation (or establish a statewide system for universally affordable, safe, high-quality childcare). Keep at this, election after election, until it is enacted. Run state-legislature candidates (in primaries as necessary) who are publicly committed to enacting it, and then force them to follow-through on their commitment.

(3) Leverage the organizing capacity built through (1) and (2) to target take-overs of state legislative seats throughout the state with candidates who support a comprehensive progressive agenda (see above).

(4) Concurrent with (3), after winning a statewide livable minimum wage indexed to inflation, organize to repeal the state's [right-to-work](#) law (or, if the state doesn't have one, organize to establish a statewide universally affordable, safe, and high-quality childcare system).

(5) Once right-to-work is repealed (or, if the state has no right-to-work law) fight like hell to organize community support for new worker unions in every workplace. (These are the single best mechanisms for mobilizing large swaths of a state for progressive political engagement, year after year.)

**TL;DR: #BuildWorkingClassPower!**