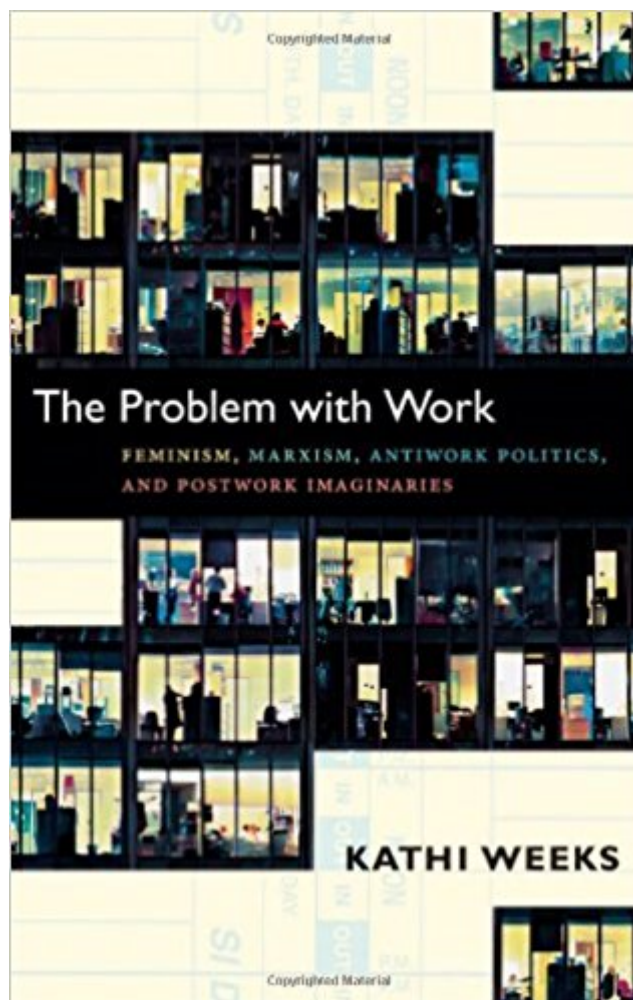


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# The Problem With Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, And Postwork Imaginaries (a John Hope Franklin Center Book)



## Synopsis

In *The Problem with Work*, Kathi Weeks boldly challenges the presupposition that work, or waged labor, is inherently a social and political good. While progressive political movements, including the Marxist and feminist movements, have fought for equal pay, better work conditions, and the recognition of unpaid work as a valued form of labor, even they have tended to accept work as a naturalized or inevitable activity. Weeks argues that in taking work as a given, we have “depoliticized” it, or removed it from the realm of political critique. Employment is now largely privatized, and work-based activism in the United States has atrophied. We have accepted waged work as the primary mechanism for income distribution, as an ethical obligation, and as a means of defining ourselves and others as social and political subjects. Taking up Marxist and feminist critiques, Weeks proposes a postwork society that would allow people to be productive and creative rather than relentlessly bound to the employment relation. Work, she contends, is a legitimate, even crucial, subject for political theory.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Finally, a well-reasoned and critical treatise on the nature of work has appeared that grapples with the work ethic and wrestles it into submission.” - *The Right to Be Lazy* blog  
“The Problem with Work . . . is bold for several reasons. Not the least of which is for its

fundamental argument that work should be understood as a concern of political theory, that work is a matter of power and domination as much as it is productivity and economics. This academic provocation aside, Weeks's book is bold in taking up the critique of work, in claiming anti-work politics. In doing so it breaks both with the dominant ideology that makes work a testament to one's moral worth and with the center-left contestation of this ideology that demands more aggressive jobs programs to put people to work.

— Unemployed Negativity blog

"[T]his is well worth a read, as Weeks presents a set of imaginative and insightful ideas in a clear and thoroughly argued format."

— Ruth Lorimer, *Socialist Review*

"Faced with the neoliberal fiat that market values now define what is valuable as such, and that now, more than ever, work is the sole aim for which we all must live, Kathi Weeks stares back without blinking and demands something different. She urges readers to insist on less work and more money, and to do so in a self-consciously militant, utopian register. Combining an imaginative critique of neoliberalism's warp-drive work ethic with a subtle and badly needed recuperation of the utopian as a mode of political theory and action, *The Problem with Work* makes a vital contribution to feminist theory, Marxist theory, and the growing political-theoretical literature on time and temporality."

— Paul Apostolidis, *Theory & Event*

"Put another way, *The Problem with Work* ... raise[s] key issues for feminism, including the question of whether capitalism can serve the interests of women today and in the future... Th[is book] should be widely read, discussed, and debated..."

— Julie P. Tarrant, *Signs*

"*The Problem with Work* is one of the most exciting and original works of social theory that I have read in a great many years. Kathi Weeks's argument is daring and extremely well executed, and her book is remarkable for its clarity, compulsive readability, and insightful synthesis of critical social theories. This is a truly wonderful book."

— Judith Grant, author of *Fundamental Feminism: Contesting the Core Concepts of Feminist Theory*

"Kathi Weeks's excellent book shows us that the project to build a postwork society is a feminist project, one that understands that the real liberation of labor must be the liberation from labor."

— Antonio Negri, author of *The Labor of Job: The Biblical Text as a Parable of Human Labor*

"Less work or better work? Should alienated labor be a focus of political economic critique or is it more important to question the centrality of work to life and productivity to self-worth? Kathi Weeks builds a feminist political theory of work from these questions. The result is a provocative argument that not only sheds new light on second-wave feminism by putting the 1970s demand for wages for housework in dialogue with autonomist Marxism but reminds that tradition of its debts to feminist theory and activism."

— Lisa Disch, University of Michigan

"[Weeks] convincingly shows

how an imperative to be productive, at work, in the home, school and in life generally (Åçâ –â„çFive Top Tips for Productive Dating Profiles!Åçâ –â„ç), is central to the way capitalism not only puts us to work but makes us want to be put to work. We think work is right and just and when we imagine another world, even a Åçâ –Ëœpost-revolutionary worldÅçâ –â„ç, we imagine a world of work. Weeks argues that we need to break the hold that work has on our imaginations.Åçâ –Â• (Nicholas Beuret Red Pepper)Åçâ –Â•“The Problem with Work ... raise[s] key issues for feminism, including the question of whether capitalism can serve the interests of women today and in the future... Th[is book] should be widely read, discussed, and debated...Åçâ –Â• (Julie P. Torrant Signs)Åçâ –Â•“ThereÅçâ –â„çs no better way to spend the summer months than by thinking about waged labor, which is why IÅçâ –â„çm currently reading *The Problem with Work*, an inventive examination of how seemingly reformist measures such as universal basic income and reduced workweeks can be used as stepping stones toward a world beyond the daily grind.Åçâ –Â• (Frank Reynolds *The Nation*)Åçâ –Â•“The Problem with Work . . . is bold for several reasons. Not the least of which is for its fundamental argument that work should be understood as a concern of political theory, that work is a matter of power and domination as much as it is productivity and economics. This academic provocation aside, WeeksÅçâ –â„ç book is bold in taking up the critique of work, in claiming anti-work politics. In doing so it breaks both with the dominant ideology that makes work a testament to oneÅçâ –â„çs moral worth and with the center-left contestation of this ideology that demands more aggressive jobs programs to put people to work.Åçâ –Â• (Unemployed Negativity blog)Åçâ –Â•“[T]his is well worth a read, as Weeks presents a set of imaginative and insightful ideas in a clear and thoroughly argued format.Åçâ –Â• (Ruth Lorimer *Socialist Review*)Åçâ –Â•“Faced with the neoliberal fiat that market values now define what is valuable as such, and that now, more than ever, work is the sole aim for which we all must live, Kathi Weeks stares back without blinking and demands something different. She urges readers to insist on less work and more money, and to do so in a self-consciously militant, utopian register. Combining an imaginative critique of neoliberalismÅçâ –â„çs warp-drive work ethic with a subtle and badly needed recuperation of the utopian as a mode of political theory and action, *The Problem with Work* makes a vital contribution to feminist theory, Marxist theory, and the growing political-theoretical literature on time and temporality.Åçâ –Â• (Paul Apostolidis *Theory & Event*)

Kathi Weeks is Associate Professor of WomenÅçâ –â„çs Studies at Duke University. She is the author of *Constituting Feminist Subjects* and a co-editor of *The Jameson Reader*.

This is a highly original work by a leading scholar who works on the nexus between Feminist theory and Marxist thought.

Excellent copy!!!!

This book presents important ideas and cogent analysis. Alas, impenetrable academic jargon makes it a real chore to get at them. The content amply repays the effort.

This is an excellent book. But I will not buy any more serious non-fiction in the Kindle version until the original page numbers are displayed, and it is possible to jump to the end notes and back to the main text without having to search for where you left off.

I don't know why the evaluation of this book is so low. It's probably one of the best book theoretically and practically I read in 2016. Because it's an interpretive work (proposing a non-orthodoxical reading of much abused Weber (as an idealist) and Marx (as a materialist)) on theorist in hopes of proposing a view on the future possibilities, it's densely composed. So I might not recommend this book for someone who is looking for a casual, simple, reductive explanation on the work ethic, but I would recommend this book to anyone who would like to think about capitalist subjectivity, morality, and activist possibility. This book is powerful and inspirational (particularly the last chapter about utopianism which activists rarely address even if they speak of it all the time). The sentences are beautiful and easy enough to get the reader to the point without confusion.

This book is for nerds and virgins.

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