

POLI 396 – Radical and Utopian Politics - Spring 2014

Tuesdays 5:00-7:30 PM, CCC 234

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**Office Hours: Tues. & Fri. 11:00am -12:00 noon
and by appointment**

Course Description

Why do people rebel? What visions and blueprints for the future have revolutionaries and utopian theorists put forth? What strategies are used to pursue radical social change? How and why are revolutionary and utopian visions altered in the process of their pursuit? What impact have radical and utopian politics had on our world? What forms are radical politics taking today and what are the connections, as well as the disjunctions, between these movements and those of the recent past?

These are some of the questions we will grapple with, without assuming we can definitively answer any of them. Utopian imaginings, rebellion, and revolution have been and continue to be an essential part of changing the world. In this course we will examine a number of very different modern radical and revolutionary projects. We begin with Marxism, which was birthed in the 19th century and which played a central role in 20th century politics. After an introduction to theoretical Marxism we will study how it played itself out in the first great 20th century social revolution, the Russian Revolution. Then we turn to a less examined, but no less important offshoot of Marxism, Social Democracy. In examining both the Russian Revolution and Social Democracy we will maintain a dual focus on ideas and how they have interacted with structure and historical circumstance to produce political strategies for social change, which in a dialectical manner produced a new set of circumstances and realities. While most of the course focuses on leftist politics, during Week 7 we will examine radical defenses of unfettered capitalism and strident individualism from the right. We will read Ayn Rand and other theorists from the radical right and consider how their ideas are reflected in the Tea Party Movement.

In the second half of the course the focus broadens beyond class and capitalism in Europe and the United States to consider debates about violence and nonviolence, ecological critiques of capitalism and modernity, the impact of globalization on radical politics, and connections between various contemporary movements from Egypt to Mexico to Wisconsin to Wall Street. We will read Gandhi, Osama Bin Ladin, a Zapatista manifesto, and several other contemporary radical activists and thinkers. Finally, we will consider the relevance of utopian and radical thinking today: is utopianism still relevant or are we in a post-utopian moment? Are there compelling reasons to rebel today? What are the obstacles faced by movements today that seek to challenge the status quo?

Course Objectives

- 1) Dream. Allow ourselves to entertain and engage ideas and visions for changing the world.
- 2) Develop knowledge of languages and theoretical tools that allow us to critique both the world as it is, as well as radical projects for social change. This will be done through reading, in-class discussion, and writing.
- 3) Create a classroom community that allows for creative, respectful, and wide-ranging discussion and sharing of complex ideas and problems, thereby developing our skills in democratic discourse and debate. We will work on building this community through ongoing classroom discussion throughout the semester. Student research presentations will serve as the culmination of this process of exchange.
- 4) The research paper and presentation aims to offer students the opportunity to pursue in greater depth a topic of particular interest and thereby to further develop skills in independent research, writing, and presentation.
- 5) Gain an understanding of the ways our world has been shaped by radical politics and utopian visions.

Assigned Texts:

Text Rental

- Sheri Berman. *The Primacy of Politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Books Available for Purchase at the UWSP Bookstore

- Sheila Fitzpatrick. *The Russian Revolution, 3rd Edition*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Mahatma Gandhi. *Selected Writings*. Dennis Dalton, Editor. Hackett Publishing, 1996.

E-reserves

Additional readings are available on D2L and E-reserves.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade will be based on your performance in the following areas:

Attendance and Participation	25%
Reaction Papers (8)	20%
Midterm Exam – Take home	20%
Research Paper, including paper proposal	25%
Research Paper Presentation	<u>10%</u>
TOTAL	100%

Attendance and Participation: Class sessions will combine both lecture and discussion. Attendance and participation in class discussions are crucial parts of this course and will count for 25% of your grade. You are expected to attend all class sessions and to come prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that day, as well as any films that are shown that week. More than **one** unexcused absence will result in a lowering of your participation grade and **if you miss more than three classes during the semester (3 weeks) you will forfeit any points for attendance and participation.** In addition to regular attendance, active participation in class discussions is important. I will keep a record of student participation and will refer to this when I calculate this portion of your final grade.

Paper Project and Presentations: The major written assignment is a 9-12 page paper and a class presentation. This project may take the form of a traditional research paper that explores a clearly defined question and topic related to a particular revolution, revolutionary movement or leader, utopian community or project. It could also be a critical analysis of a particular thinker, book, or a comparison of two or more revolutionary theorists or actors. Alternatively, you might choose to develop your own utopian proposal, or to investigate (including, where possible, interviews or reading blogs) a current movement, project, or individuals who are engaged in activities that in some way “challenge the system” or represent utopian or alternative ways of living. In the case of the latter two ideas, your utopian proposal or the project you are writing about will have to be theoretically explained and discussed with some reference to other radical and/or utopian ideologies, theories, or projects. If you choose, this could also be a partly collaborative effort, with each student taking responsibility for a specific part of the paper. In a case like this, of course, the paper in length would be equivalent to two individual papers.

Detailed instructions, guidelines, and topic suggestions will be provided early on in the semester and during the first half of the semester you will hand in a brief paper proposal that I will review and give you some feedback on. At the end of the semester all students will be required to make a formal presentation of their paper project to the class. The form the presentation takes is up to you, but it should effectively serve to share with the class what you have worked on. Student paper presentations will take place at the very end of the semester: if need be, I will schedule a few presentations for the last hour of class on April 29; the bulk of student presentations will take place during our final class on May 6 and during the scheduled slot for our final exam on Tuesday, May 13 from 7:15PM to 9:15PM.

Reaction Papers: Over the course of the semester each student will write a total of eight (8) reaction papers (1-3 double-spaced pages) in response to the assigned readings for that week. If appropriate, you may make connections to the films shown as well. Reaction papers *must be posted to the appropriate D2L dropbox by 9am on the day for which the reading is assigned*. I will sometimes call on authors during class time either to read or discuss part of their paper or general concepts in the assigned readings. I will not accept reaction papers after the class for which the reading is assigned. Likewise, you are to write no more than one paper per class. Together these papers will count for 20% of your grade.

Academic Integrity and Turnitin.com: All students are expected to abide by the guidelines for academic integrity contained in the UW System Administrative Code. As a student it behooves you to be well acquainted with these guidelines and to understand clearly what constitutes plagiarism, as violations can result in severe consequences. We will use the plagiarism detection program, Turnitin.com, via D2L. You will upload all your written work (including the take-home midterm exam) to the appropriate D2L dropbox, which is connected to the Turnitin.com database. *Please note that if you fail to upload a paper to D2L you will not receive credit for the assignment.*

Exams: There will be one exam, a take-home midterm consisting of two essay questions that will be due in class on **March 11**.

Movies: I will show three films during the course of the semester. *These movies are an important part of the curriculum, and viewing them is mandatory.* If you miss the showing then you will need to view them on your own time. The first two are on reserve at the library and can be viewed there, the third one, “The Square”, is available on Netflix.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1 (1/21): Introductions & “Germinal”

In-class screening of “Germinal”, French film based on the novel by Emile Zola (144 mins.)

Week 2 (1/28): Marxism

Readings:

- Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels. “The Communist Manifesto.” In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, pp. 157-186. (E-reserves)
- Karl Marx, “Alienated Labor.” In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, pp. 58-68. (E-reserves)

Week 3 (2/4): The Russian Revolution

Readings:

- Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, Introduction & Chs. 1-3 (pp. 1-92).
- Richard Stites. “Utopia in Life: The Communal Movement.” In *Revolutionary Dreams*. Oxford U. Press, 1989, pp. 205-207 & 213-222. (E-reserves)

Week 4 (2/11): The Russian Revolution

Readings:

- Fitzpatrick, Chs. 4-6 (pp. 93-172)
- Richard Stites. “The Dreamer in the Kremlin.” In *Revolutionary Dreams*. Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 37-46. (E-reserves)

Week 5 (2/18): Social Democracy

Reading: Berman, Intro (entire); Ch. 2 (entire); Ch. 3 (pp. 47-54); & Ch. 5 (pp. 96-99; 109-124)

Week 6 (2/25): Social Democracy in Sweden and Post-war Europe

Readings:

- Berman, Chs. 7-9 (pp.152-218)
- Frederick Hale. “Sweden’s Welfare State at a Turning Point.” *Current History*, Vol. 111, No. 743 (March 2012). (E-reserves)

Week 7 (3/4): The New Radical Right: From Ayn Rand to the Tea Party

Readings:

- “The Money Speech” is a famous excerpt from Ayn Rand’s last and very long novel, *Atlas Shrugged*. New York: Plume Press, 1999: pp. 410-415. (E-reserves)
- Selections in: *Political Ideologies*, Ch. 3 “Conservatism”, Matthew Festenstein and Michael Kenny, eds. Oxford University Press, 2005. (E-reserves)
 - Ayn Rand, from *The Fountainhead* (Grafton, 1972).
 - Margaret Thatcher, from *In Defence of Freedom* (Unwin Hymann, 1990).
 - Robert Nozick, from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books, 1974).
- Dick Armey and Matt Kibbe. *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2010. Ch. 4, “What We Stand For” (E-reserves)
- Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, Introduction: “I Want My Country Back” (pp. 3-13); and Ch. 1 “Behind the Costumes and Signs: Who Are the Tea Partiers?” (pp. 19-44). (E-reserves)

Week 8 (3/11): Midterm Exam and Screening of “Gandhi”

No assigned readings

DUE IN CLASS: TAKE HOME MIDTERM

During class we will watch the film “Gandhi”

March 15-23 – SPRING BREAK!!! Enjoy!

Week 9 (3/25): Gandhi on Nonviolence and Freedom

Readings:

From Part I of *Mahatma Gandhi, Selected Political Writings*:

- Introduction (pp. 3-22)
- Introduction (p. 29)
- “The Crime of Chauri Chaura” (pp. 31-34, start with italicized section on p. 31)
- “Non-violence”, “My Path”, and “On the Verge of It” (pp. 41-44)
- All selections from “Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience, Passive Resistance, Non-cooperation” (including section introduction in italics) to “Duty of Disloyalty” (pp. 50-81)

From Part II of *Mahatma Gandhi, Selected Political Writings*, pp. 97-151.

Week 10 (4/1): Terrorism

Readings:

- Osama Bin Laden. “Text of Fatwa Urging Jihad Against Americans (1998). In *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives, 2nd Edition*. John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007: pp. 430-432. (E-reserves)
- “Fatwas: Suicide Bombings and Martyrdom.” In *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives, 2nd Edition*. John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007: 469-472. (E-reserves)
- Selections in: Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat*. New York: Random House, 2006. (E-reserves)
 - Ch. 1 – “What is Terrorism?” (entire)
 - Ch. 3 – “What Causes Terrorism?” (pp. 38-48 & 60-70)
 - Ch. 4 – “The Three Rs: Revenge, Renown, Reaction” (pp. 71-79)
 - Ch. 7 – “Why the War on Terror Can Never Be Won” (pp. 169-180 & 193-199)
- Mark Juergensmeyer. “Gandhi vs. Terrorism.” *Daedalus* (Winter 2007): 30-39. (E-reserves)

Week 11 (4/8): Egypt and the Arab Spring

Readings: TBA

Film Screening: “The Square”, Jehane Noujaim, director. A documentary on Tahrir Square and three years of revolutionary political upheaval in Egypt. (104 mins.)

Week 12 (4/15): Ecologism & Environmental Politics

Read the following selections in: *Political Ideologies*, Ch. 7 “Ecologism”, Matthew Festenstein and Michael Kenny, eds. Oxford University Press, 2005. (E-reserves)

Selections:

- Introduction
- Ernst Schumacher, from *Small is Beautiful* (Abacus, 1974).
- Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, and Jordan Randers, from *Beyond the Limits: Global Collapse or a Sustainable Future* (Earthscan, 1992).
- Arne Naess, from *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- Murray Bookchin, from *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Black Rose Books, 1986).
- Jonathan Porritt, from *Seeing Green: the Politics of Ecology Explained* (Blackwell, 1984).

Listen to the following interview: Derrick Jensen interviewed by Amy Goodman on Democracy Now, November 26, 2010. A link to the interview is on E-reserves under “Jensen”. This piece is a half hour long and is preceded by another interesting interview with Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef. Once you get to the Democracy Now webpage, to skip the Max-Neef interview just click on the play button and scroll over to the 28-minute mark, which is the point at which the interview with Jensen begins.

Week 13 (4/22): Alter-Globalization Movements & the Power of Utopia Today

Readings:

- Naomi Klein, “Reclaiming the Commons.” *New Left Review*, Vol. 9 (May-June 2001): 81-89. (D2L)
- Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). “Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona.” In *Contemporary Latin American Social and Political Thought*, Ivan Marquez, ed. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008: pp. 282-300. (E-reserves)
- José Pedro Zúquete. “Another World is Possible? Utopia Revisited.” *New Global Studies*, Vol. 5, Issue 2 (2011). (E-reserves)

Week 14 (4/29): U.S. Progressive & Left Movements Today: From Wisconsin to Occupy Wall St. First Student Paper Presentations

Readings:

- Marie Jo Buhle and Paul Buhle, eds. *It Started in Wisconsin: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Labor Protest*. New York and London: Verso, 2011. pp. 3-26 & 35-45.
- Sarah van Gelder and the staff of *Yes! Magazine*, eds. *This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement*. San Fransisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2011. pp. 1-13; 15-24; 39-44; and 52-62.

Week 15 (5/6): Student Paper Presentations

Finals Week – TUESDAY, MAY 13, 7:15-9:15PM: Student Paper Presentations