

**SYLLABUS: RADICAL SOCIAL THEORY
AND REVOLUTIONARY PRACTICE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
SOCIOLOGY 233R, FALL 2018
PROFESSOR: WILLIAM I. ROBINSON
OFFICE HOURS: T, 3:30-4:30, WED. 3:30 – 4:30
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Course Description and Overview

The great British historian Eric Hobsbawm famously called the 20th century the “age of extremes”: two world wars and fascism but also socialist, anti-colonial and national liberation revolutions. While the 20th century socialist-oriented revolutions failed to bring an end to capitalism, the global capitalist system is now spiraling into ever deeper crisis and humanity faces the risk of destruction and mayhem surpassing that of the previous century. There is the specter of fascism and war worldwide, to which we must add global climate change and ecological holocaust, unprecedented global inequalities, the collapse of states, escalating repression against the global working class, the poor, and oppressed communities, and even the danger of genocide. Are there renewed prospects for anti-capitalist revolutions in the new century? Any attempt to explore that question must be predicated on studying the experience of revolutionary theory and practice in the 20th century. If we do not understand our past we cannot understand the present and nor can we shape the future. How do we assess 20th century revolutions and what lessons do they offer for emancipatory struggles in the 21st century?

This is a course on revolutions in the 20th century and the leaders associated with those revolutions as political strategists and as social theorists. It is impossible to do justice to this topic in single 10-week seminar. There were of course thousands of revolutionary social theorists and practitioners in the 20th century. The selection here is of those who are identified with the leadership of socialist-oriented revolutions and who left a legacy of theoretical work and political strategy that continues to inform – and inspire - radical social movements and revolutionary struggles in the 21st century as well as theoretical debate in the social sciences.

NOTE: This is *not* a course on radical theorists in the academy. For that you can take other courses. We will look at revolutions and near revolutions in Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. We will read Marx and Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Gramsci, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara, Mariátegui, Allende, Cabral, Fanon, Huey Newton, Angela Davis, and Subcomandante Marcos. I encourage you to read more and branch out on your own.

REMEMBER: we only have 10 weeks – we will barely scratch the surface!

While this seminar requires less reading than my other seminars it does require that you complete all readings two days before our class meetings. It also requires critical thinking and active participation. I understand that students are at different stages in their studies. You may feel at times overwhelmed, experience frustration or confusion. Whether you find yourself lost, confused, elated over the learning experience, or simply reviewing what you may already be familiar with, I encourage you to raise questions – any and every question! - throughout the course, to discuss your concerns in class, and to drop by during my office hours. I also recommend that you form study groups to discuss readings and assist each other in the learning

process. Above all, I hope this course inspires you, beyond continuing to study the experiences of earlier revolutions and revolutionaries, to participate as more effective organic intellectuals in the vital struggles of our day.

Required Readings

- 1) Reading Packet of Selected Articles and Book Excerpts (available at SBprinter, UCEN)
- 2) Paul Le Blanc, *From Marx to Gramsci* (Haymarket)
- 3) Che Guevara, *Global Justice: Liberation and Socialism* (Ocean Press)
- 4) V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (Haymarket)
- 5) Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, edited by Phil Gasper (Haymarket)
- 6) Socialist Alternative website, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/> (OR OTHER WEBSITE: TO BE EXPLAINED)

Course Requirements and Grading

Attendance is required. Ten percent of your grade (10 points) will derive from attendance and another 25 points will derive from active and meaningful participation in class discussion. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignments. Another 40 points of your grade will derive from written responses to readings in the form of weekly written reflections on the readings. The remaining 25 points of your grade will derive from a final assignment (details below). Each of 8 assigned reflections will score a maximum of 5 points, for 40 points in total. In the event one of the programmed themes is canceled due to unforeseen circumstances you will automatically receive your 5 points.

Structure of Seminar

The course is divided into the following weekly themes:

- 1 - Oct. 3: Introduction to seminar
- 2 - Oct. 10: Overview by Paul Le Blanc and Marx and Engels
- 3 - Oct. 17: Lenin and Bolshevik revolution
- 4 - Oct. 24: Conclusion of Lenin; Trotsky and Luxemburg
- 5 - Oct. 31: Gramsci and Summary/Conclusions first part of course
- Note:** Some of you may be more excited about the second part of the course, but you cannot get there without the first part
- 6 - Nov. 7: Mao and the Chinese Revolution
- 7 - Nov. 14: Guevara, Mariategui, Allende and the Latin American Revolution
- 8 - Nov. 21: Amílcar Cabral, Franz Fanon, and the African Revolution
- 9 - Nov. 28: special screening of *The Battle of Algiers*
- 10 - Dec. 5: Other voices and course conclusions

Format of Seminar

The Monday night prior to each class meeting students will e-mail their briefs to me and to all other participants in the seminar. Everyone will read each other's briefs before class. The instructor will open each meeting with initial discussion and occasionally with powerpoints on the week's topic as well as in response to the questions raised in your briefs. On some occasions the instructor will give a more extensive lecture on the week's topic. Following the instructor's opening statements, we will go around the room once. Each student will make a 2-minute (*maximum*) opening statement, which will consist of a comment or two on the week's reading and the major discussion points that you feel it raises and would like to see discussed. After this we will move into seminar open-discussion mode. The instructor will also participate directly in and guide discussion, occasionally present additional lecture material, and interject otherwise when appropriate.

Please consider the following as we move into open discussion:

- *There is no such thing as a stupid question or an obvious answer* (recall, moreover, that asking a question is always more radical – literally and figuratively – than a statement of fact). If you do not know the definition of a term or are not familiar with a concept or do not understand something from the readings the chances are there are many others – maybe the whole class – who also have such questions or concerns. I am paid to be here working with you: ask anything and everything. If I don't know the answer we will explore it together.
- I will not be authoritarian in facilitating discussion but I want you to *try not to ramble on*, to state things as succinctly as possible, to formulate your point, and for the group discussion to remain focused.
- We will try to address in discussion everyone's concerns but I want you make an effort to stay focused and to follow up on what we are discussing before you move to a new discussion point. If we are all over the map all at once we will not have meaningful discussion.
- I may occasionally call on someone to express their views so be prepared.
- Note that the readings and topics are cumulative. What I mean by this is that each week builds on the previous so in each seminar meeting we may continue earlier discussions. We should try to link each current discussion to insights and topics in earlier discussions.

We will end seminar discussion at 7:45 and use the remaining 5 minutes to discuss the topic and readings for the next week.

Weekly Reflection Essays and Final Assignment

Abstracts/Briefs

Briefs are due each Monday by 5 p.m. You should e-mail me (and the full class list) your abstract as a *Word* attachment (wirobins@soc.ucsb.edu). In the past my seminar students have sent these late into the evening. I would appreciate them by 5:00 pm *and I will not accept them after 7:00 pm. If they arrive after 8:00 pm Monday evening I will not read them. I return them to you without points.* The abstracts should be a double-spaced and typed 12 p. font, 2 pages (2 pages, 3 *maximum*) response to the readings. These are brief reflection essays and should include an analytical engagement with the reading and the topic that explicitly includes: 1) aspects of the reading that you would like to focus on, including historical context, terms and concepts that you did not understand or wish to have clarified. In my opening comments I will attempt address some of these matters; 2) how you feel that the readings may (or may not) have relevance to the contemporary world and current events. The pedagogical purpose of these briefs is for you to organize and clarify your own thoughts on the readings and subject matter, and to prepare you for meaningful seminar discussion.

Final Assignment

The final assignment should be a brief discussion of how the content of this course and the readings may be applied to your particular area of MA or PhD research. If nothing in the course is directly applicable to your MA or PhD research then you may write on one or more theory or theorist that you found most inspiration and apply it to a current event topic (details to be explained). These papers should be *no more than 5 pages* and you should include a bibliography and appropriate citations. Additional readings are not required for the term paper, but you are free to incorporate additional material if you so wish. The paper does NOT require new research or fieldwork. The style may be more loose and discursive. These assignments are due in final exam week and the specific date will be established later.

A Note on the Readings and on the Amount of Readings for this Course

As a rule of thumb, students are expected to read approximately 100 pages per week for an undergraduate course and 200 pages per week for a graduate course. Except for the first two weeks, you will be reading less than 200 pages each week, and sometimes significantly less. This way you will have a breather in between more intensive reading, and on week nine we will have no readings. *Please plan the 10 weeks accordingly so as to keep up with the readings.*

Note that none of the readings are theoretically dense, with the possible exception of a few passages by Marx. However, all of the readings are linked to actual historical events of the 20th century (and reference to earlier historical events), and many of these readings refer to polemics

addressed in the heat of battle. You may therefore get lost in some of the readings. If so, take into account two things: 1) make sure to ask questions, in your briefs and in seminar discussion, with regard to context and meaning; 2) the point of reading this earlier history of revolution is to better understand the contemporary world and its challenges. Therefore, we must make an effort to see how the historical readings sheds light on our 21st century reality.

Week-by-Week Schedule of Readings and Topics:

Below you will find a week-by-week breakdown of required readings. I also include a list of supplemental readings on each revolutionary after the required readings.

1) Oct. 3: Introduction to Seminar

No readings required.

2) Oct. 10: Marxism and Revolution, Marx and Engels (total reading: 250 pages)

- Gasper (ed), *The Communist Manifesto* (read entire book, cover to cover)
- Le Blanc, From Marx to Gramsci, pp. xi-23, 29-48
- Socialist Alternative website, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/>

Supplemental Readings:

- Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*
- C. Wright Mills, *The Marxists*
- Sholomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*
- Biko Agozino, “The African Paradigm in Capital: The Debts of Karl Marx to People of African Descent”, in *Review of African Political Economy*, 41, 2014.
- David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*
- Mary Gabriel, *Love and Capital: Karl and Jenny Marx and the Birth of a Revolution*
- Mterell Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic*
- Tom Bottomore, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*

3) Oct. 17: Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution (total reading: 178 pages)

Readings:

- Le Blanc, 53-75, 81-95

- V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (read *Introduction* and then text up to pp. 142)
- Socialist Alternative website, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/>

Supplemental Readings:

- Robert C. Tucker, *The Lenin Anthology*
- John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World*
- Nadezhda Constantinova Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin*
- Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought: Theory and Practice in the Democratic and Socialist Revolutions*
- Tariq Ali, *The Dilemmas of Lenin: Terrorism, War, Empire, Love, Revolution*
- Neil Faulkner, *A People's History of the Russian Revolution*

4) Oct. 24: More by Lenin, then on to Luxemburg and Trotsky and the near-revolution in Germany (total reading: 104 pages)

Reading:

- Le Blanc, 193-248, 265-275, 281-314, 322-329
- Socialist Alternative website, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/>

Supplemental Readings:

- Paul Frolich, *Rosa Luxemburg*
- Victor Serge and Natlaia Sedova Trotsky, *The Life and Death of Leon Trotsky*
- Peter Hudak and Kevin B. Anderson (Eds), *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*
- Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky Speaks*

5) Oct. 31: Gramsci and conclusion of first part of course (total reading: 43 pages)

Readings:

- Le Blanc, 333-376

Supplemental Readings:

- Guisepppe Fiori, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary*
- Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*

- Roger Simon, *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction*

6) Nov. 7: Mao Zedong and the Chinese Revolution, Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese Revolution (total reading: 109 pages)

Readings:

- Mao: Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society; Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan; On Guerrilla Warfare; On Contradiction
- Ho Chi Minh: The Path the Led me to Leninism; Consolidation and Development of Ideological Unity Among Marxist-Leninist Parties
- Socialist Alternative website, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/>

Supplemental Readings:

- Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, *Selected Words of Mao Zedong*
- Nigel Harris, *Mandate of Heaven: Marx and Mao in Modern China*
- Elliott Liu, *Maoism and the Chinese Revolution: A Critical Introduction*

7) Nov. 14: Mariátegui, Che, Allende and Latin American Revolutionary Movements (total reading: 154 pages)

Readings:

- Vanden and Becker: Amauta: An Introduction to the Life and Works of José Carlos Mariátegui
- Mariátegui: The Unity of Indo-Hispanic America; Peru's Principal Problem; The Economic Factor in Peruvian History; Man and Myth; Women and Politics; Feminist Demands
- Che Guevara: *Global Justice* – read entire book. The endnotes will give you context
- Salvador Allende: Speech to the Chilean Parliament; Speech to the United Nations
- Socialist Alternative website, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/>

Supplemental Readings:

- Jon Lee Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*
- Michael Lowy, *The Marxism of Che Guevara*
- Harry E. Vanden and Marc Becker (eds), *José Carlos Mariátegui: An Anthology*
- David Deutschmann and María del Carmen Ariet (eds), *The Che Guevara Reader*

- Margaret Randall, *Haydée Santamaría, Cuban Revolutionary: She Led by Transgression*
- Mike Gonzalez, *In the Red Corner: The Marxism of José Carlos Mariátugui*

8) Nov. 21: Amílcar Cabral, Franz Fanon, and the African Revolution (total reading: 119 pages)

Readings:

- Leo Zeilig: Why Revisit Fanon?
- Fanon: The Pitfall of National Consciousness
- Gibson: Some Reflections on Amílcar Cabral's Legacy
- Cabral: Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea; Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories...; The Weapon of Theory;
- Angela Davis, Amílcar Cabral
- Urdang, Reflections on Cabral Liberation of Women
- Socialist Alternative website, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/>

Supplemental Readings:

- Amílcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea*
- Amílcar Cabral, *Return to the Source*
- Firoze Manji and Bill Fletcher Jr., *Claim No Easy Victories: The Legacy of Amílcar Cabral*
- Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*
- Peter Hudis, "Racism and the Logic of Capitalism: A Fanonian Reconsideration", in *Historical Materialism*, 26(2), 2018, special issue on identity politics
- Franz Fanon, *Voices of Liberation* (edited by Leo Zeilig)
- Socialist Alternative website, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/>

9) Nov. 28: Screening of The Battle of Algiers Global Capitalism and Global Crisis

Readings: No Readings, get a jump-start on the final readings

10) Dec. 5: Other Voices, Concluding Thoughts (total reading: 130 pages)

Readings:

- Subcomandante Marcos: Marxism According to Insurgent Erika; Above, Thinking

- White: Theory's Geography and Calendar
- Huey P. Newton: Intercommunalism
- Cedric Johnson: The Panthers Can't Save Us Now
- Robinson: Marx After Post-Narratives
- Chi Chi Shi: Defining My Own Oppression
- Federici: Marxism and Feminism
- Socialist Alternative website, <https://www.socialistalternative.org/>