

POLI 396 – Radical and Utopian Politics – Fall 2019
Mondays 5:00-7:30 PM, CCC 231

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Office: CCC 474
Office Hours: Mon. 10-11 am & Fri. 11am - 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? What are the connections, as well as the disjunctions, between current ideas and 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 diverse array of modern radical and revolutionary projects. We begin with Marxism, which was birthed in the nineteenth century and played such a central role in the twentieth. After an introduction to theoretical Marxism we will study how it played itself out in the first great social revolution of the twentieth century, 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 the ways they have interacted with structure and historical circumstance to produce political strategies for social change, which in a dialectical manner produced new sets of circumstances and realities.

During the second half of the course, the focus broadens beyond class and capitalism to debates about violence and nonviolence, anti-colonialism, ecological critiques of capitalism and modernity, and some modern movements on both the right and the left. While most of the course focuses on leftist politics, during Week 11 we will examine ISIS and how it is fueled by religious fundamentalism. The following week we will consider some influential right-wing ideologies and the recent resurgence of white nationalism in the United States. The course ends with a look at some “utopian” ideas that have been gaining traction of late, including proposals for a basic income, a 15-hour work week, and open borders. Is our world today in need of new visions for the future? If so, is the idea of utopia necessary and important? What are the opportunities and obstacles to challenging and changing the status quo in today’s world? These are questions with which we will conclude.

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, discussion, and writing.
- 3) Create a classroom community that allows for creative, respectful, and wide-ranging discussion and sharing of complex and controversial 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 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, 4th Edition*. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Mahatma Gandhi. *Selected Writings*. Dennis Dalton, Editor. Hackett Publishing, 1996. **Note: This book is also available for free online through e-Reserves.**

e-Reserves

Additional readings are available on Canvas.

Course Requirements and Grading

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

Attendance and Participation	25%
Reaction Papers (5)	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 together 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 attendance grade; **if you miss more than three classes during the semester (3 weeks), you will receive a failing grade for Attendance and Participation**, which means you will earn anywhere from 60-0% of the total possible 25 points for Attendance and Participation, and risk failing the course. In addition to attendance, active participation in class discussions is expected. I will keep track of both attendance and participation and will refer to this when I calculate this portion of your final grade.

Movies

I will show three films over 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. All 3 films are on reserve at the library and can be viewed there.

Reaction Papers

Over the course of the semester each student will write five (5) 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 Canvas by noon on the day for which the reading is assigned.*** I will sometimes call on authors during class time to discuss 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.

Exams

There will be one exam, a take-home midterm consisting of two essay questions that will be due in class on **October 21st.**

Paper Project and Presentations

The major written assignment is a 7-10-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 revolution, revolutionary movement or leader, utopian community or project. It could also be a critical analysis of a 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.

I will provide detailed instructions, guidelines, and topic suggestions early on in the semester. During the first half of the semester, you will hand in a brief paper proposal for my review and feedback. 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 your paper with the class. Student paper presentations will take place on two days, December 9th, the last day of class; and December 18th from 5:00-7:00PM, which is when our final exam is scheduled.

The Writing Lab

The Writing Lab in the Tutoring-Learning Center (TLC) offers free one-on-one help with papers for any class at any point in the writing process, from outlining to checking a completed paper before submission. The Writing Lab consultants are successful UWSP students who can discuss any type of writing at any stage of the drafting process; including brainstorming, outlining, and research or citations. They work with experienced writers as well as struggling writers; we believe that everyone benefits from discussions about their writing.

Located in the basement of the library—ALB 018

All services are free

By appointment or drop-in times available

Call 715-346-3568 or email tlctutor@uwsp.edu for an appointment

Writing Lab Hours

Name	Day	Time	Location	Cost
Writing Lab (Drop-in or by appointment)	Mon. – Thurs.	9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Tutoring-Learning Center ALB 018	Free
Writing Lab (Drop-in or by appointment)	Fri.	9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Tutoring-Learning Center ALB 018	Free

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.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1 (9/2) – Labor Day Holiday – No class

Week 2 (9/9): Introductions & “Germinal”

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

Week 3 (9/16): 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 4 (9/23): The Russian Revolution & Marxism

Readings:

- Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, Chs. 1 & 2, pp. 16-68, and in Ch. 3, pp. 85-88, section titled, “Visions of the new world.”
- Richard Stites. “Utopia in Life: The Communal Movement.” In *Revolutionary Dreams*. Oxford U. Press, 1989, pp. 205-207 & 213-222. (e-Reserves)
- Athlyn Cathcart-Keays. “Moscow’s Narkomfin Building.” *The Guardian*, May 5, 2015. (e-Reserves)

Week 5 (9/30): The Russian Revolution – From Lenin to Stalin

Readings:

- Fitzpatrick, Chs. 3-6, pp. 69-174 (Note: No need to reread pp. 84-87; skip section in Ch. 5 on “Stalin vs. the Right”, pp. 124-130)
- Richard Stites. “The Dreamer in the Kremlin.” In *Revolutionary Dreams*. Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 37-46. (e-Reserves)
- Jonathan Brent. “The Order of Lenin: ‘Find Some Truly Hard People.’” *New York Times*, May 22, 2017.
- Kristen R. Ghodsee. “Why Women Had Better Sex Under Socialism.” *New York Times*, August 12, 2017. (e-Reserves)

Week 6 (10/7): The Ideological Origins of Social Democracy

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

Recommended Reading: Berman, Ch. 4. In this chapter Berman traces some of fascism’s intellectual roots to revisionist strains.

Week 7 (10/14): 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*, 111:743 (March 2012). (e-Reserves)
 - Anu Partanen. “What Americans Don’t Get About Nordic Countries.” *Atlantic*, March 16, 2016. (e-R)
 - Bhaskar Sunkara. “Socialism’s Future May Be Its Past.” *New York Times*, June 26, 2017. (e-Reserves)
- Recommended Reading:* Suzanne Daley. “Speeding in Finland Can Cost a Fortune, if You Already Have One.” *New York Times*. April 26, 2015. (e-Reserves)

Week 8 (10/21): Midterm Exam and Screening of “Gandhi”

No assigned readings; during class we will watch the film “Gandhi”

DUE IN CLASS: TAKE HOME MIDTERM

Week 9 (10/28): 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 (11/11): Egypt and the Arab Spring

Readings:

- James DeFronzo. Ch. 11, “The Arab Revolution.” In *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements, 5th Edition*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2015. Pages: 417-437 and 443-447. (e-Reserves)
- Selections in: Lina Khatib and Ellen Lust. *Taking to the Streets: The Transformation of Arab Activism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. (e-Reserves)
 - Lina Khatib and Ellen Lust, “Introduction. Reconsidering Activism in the Arab World: Arab Uprisings and Beyond,” pp. 1-21.
 - Rabab El-Mahdi, “Egypt: A Decade of Ruptures,” pp. 52-75.

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

Week 11 (11/4): Terrorism

Readings:

- Selections from 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)
- Graeme Wood. “What ISIS Really Wants.” *The Atlantic*, March 2015. (e-Reserves)
- Jack Jenkins. “What *The Atlantic* Gets Dangerously Wrong About ISIS and Islam.” *Think Progress*, Feb. 18, 2015. (e-Reserves)

Recommended:

- Podcast “Caliphate”.

Week 12 (11/25): Radical Rights: From Randian Libertarianism to Trumpian White Nationalism

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).
- George Hawley. *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*. Columbia University Press, 2017. Ch. 1 “The Alt-Right and its Predecessors”, pp. 11-50; & Ch. 5 “The Alt-Right and the 2016 Election”, pp.115-138. (e-Reserves)
- Adam Serwer. “The Nationalist’s Delusion.” *The Atlantic*, Nov. 20, 2017. (e-Reserves)

Week 13 (11/18): Ecologism & Environmental Activism

Watch on YouTube:

- “Is a warmer world a better world?” Global Weirding with Katherine Hayhoe. (6 mins) (Link to video is on e-Reserves)
- “How do we know this climate change thing is even real?” Global Weirding with Katherine Hayhoe (6 mins.) (Link to video is on e-Reserves)

Readings:

Philosophical Treatises on Ecologism

- Selections from *Political Ideologies*, Ch. 7 “Ecologism”, Matthew Festenstein and Michael Kenny, eds. Oxford University Press, 2005. (e-Reserves)
 - Introduction
 - Ernst Schumacher, from *Small is Beautiful* (Abacus, 1974).
 - 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).

Climate Politics and Activism Today

- Andrew Chatzky. “Envisioning a Green New Deal: A Global Comparison - Backgrounder.” Council on Foreign Relations, May 1, 2019. (e-Reserves)
- Joshua Busby. “Why Climate Change Matters More Than Anything Else.” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 97, Issue 4, July 1, 2018. (e-Reserves)
- Kara Moses. “Civil disobedience is the only way left to fight climate change.” *The Guardian*, May 13, 2016. (e-Reserves)
- Ann Barnard. “Greta Thunberg, Climate Activist, Arrives in NY with a Message for Trump.” *New York Times*, August 28, 2019. (e-Reserves)

Recommended:

- Pope Francis. *Encyclical: Laudato Si*, 2015.

Week 14 (12/2): Utopian Visions Today?

Readings:

- Rutger Bregman. *Utopia for Realists: How We Can Build the Ideal World*. Back Bay Books, 2018. Excerpts TBA.
- Aaron Bastani. *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*. Verso, 2019. Excerpts TBA.
- George Monbiot. “Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems.” *The Guardian*, April 17, 2016. (e-Reserves)

Watch:

- Trevor Noah’s interview with Rutger Bregman on “The Daily”. (Link on Canvas e-Reserves)

Week 15 (12/9): Student Paper Presentations

Finals Week – Weds., Dec. 18th 5:00-7:00PM - Student Paper Presentations