

POLI 396 – Radical and Utopian Politics – Fall 2020

In-person Track, Cohort 1: Mondays 5:00-6:10 PM, CCC 213

In-person Track, Cohort 2: Mondays 6:20-7:30 PM, CCC 213

Online Track: Asynchronous Assignments via Canvas

Professor Jennifer Collins

Office: CCC 474

E-mail: Jennifer.Collins@uwsp.edu

Student Hours (Virtually via Zoom; link is on Canvas):

Mon. 2-3 PM, Tues. 9-10 AM, & Thurs. 12 noon – 1 PM, or 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. We will also study right-wing reactions to socialism in some of the writing of Ayn Rand and Margaret Thatcher.

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 current movements of both the left and the right that have emerged in the United States in recent years, including the Black Lives Matter movement. While much of the course focuses on leftist politics, during Weeks 7 and 13 we will examine some ideologies and movements on the right, including strident defenses of free market capitalism as well as 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 the semester.

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 Modalities for Covid-19

This course will offer students two distinct pathways -- a hybrid modality that involves both online and in-person instruction and an asynchronous modality in which there will not be any face-to-face or synchronous instruction, instead everything will be done online. At the beginning of the semester students will indicate which of the two modalities they plan to follow, hybrid or online asynchronous. While the expectation is that whichever modality you choose, you will remain in that modality for the remainder of the semester, nevertheless there will be flexibility in response to student needs and circumstances that may arise as a result of the pandemic. For example, if a student in the hybrid modality becomes sick or must go into isolation, they will then switch to the online modality. Similarly, if you have signed up for the online modality, but would like to switch to the hybrid, let me know and we can figure out if this can be arranged. Key to this working will be regular communication; I will do my best to stay in touch with each of you, but you must also take responsibility for communicating with me and letting me know when and if you are facing circumstances that require changes or adjustments to how you are working in the course.

Many of the course components will apply to the whole class. For example, most weeks I will provide a recorded lecture that all students will be required to watch. The main difference is that students in the hybrid modality will meet in-person to discuss the assigned readings and films, whereas online students will engage in online asynchronous discussions. After Thanksgiving all instruction will go online. Our last two weeks of class will be held via Zoom. Students who have been taking the course asynchronously online are encouraged to join the class synchronously via Zoom for the final weeks of the semester. If this is not possible, please let me know and we can work out alternatives for this period.

Below you will see the course requirements for each modality. You will see that they are basically the same, the only difference being that for online students instead of attending and participating in face-to-face classes, they will participate in weekly online discussions. Given the similarity between activities and expectations between the two modalities, it should be easy for students to opt into the online modality if the need should arise.

Course Requirements and Grading for *Hybrid Modality*

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

Attendance and Participation	30%
Reaction Papers (4)	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
Research Paper, including paper proposal	25%

Research Paper Presentation	10%
TOTAL	100%

Course Requirements and Grading for *Online Asynchronous Modality*

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

Participation in Weekly Online Discussions	30%
Reaction Papers (4)	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
Research Paper, including paper proposal	25%
Research Paper Presentation	10%
TOTAL	100%

Weekly Class Meetings and Online Discussions

For most weeks during the semester there are assigned readings and sometimes assigned films. All students are expected to do these readings and watch the films before engaging in their respective discussion section. Students in the hybrid class will meet in person once a week on Mondays in either Cohort 1 (5-6:10 PM) or Cohort 2 (6:20-7:30 PM). The in-class meeting will be devoted to discussion of the topic for that week and the associated readings and/or films. I will not be lecturing in class. Online students will participate weekly in an online asynchronous discussion based on the same materials. The discussion board for online students will open on Mondays and close by midnight on Wednesday. Online students will contribute to the discussion board at their convenience over the span of those three days.

Both hybrid and online students are expected to do the following before engaging in their respective discussion groups:

1. Watch the recorded lecture for that week.
2. Review questions on the readings.
3. Complete all the assigned readings for that week and watch any assigned films. For example, before class on September 14, students will complete the readings by Karl Marx and watch the film *Germinal* and come ready to discuss these materials in class or engage in the online discussion.
4. Complete your reaction paper, if you are doing one for that week and upload it to Canvas.

Participation in your discussion section, whether in-person or online, is a crucial part of this course and will count for 30% of your grade. Students are expected to participate every week and will be graded weekly on their participation. Students in the hybrid section are expected to attend class every week to the extent possible. However, ***due to Covid-19, if you are at all symptomatic, do not come to class.*** If you must miss class, whether for medical or other reasons, you should plan to participate in the online discussion for that week. I also ask that you communicate with me and let me know what is going on. You can do so by sending me a message, preferably via Canvas Inbox.

Everyone's lowest participation grade (remember you will be graded weekly) will be dropped, so if there is a week that you must miss class and/or cannot participate in the online discussion, the zero for that week will be dropped. Any other missed weeks will count as zero and more than 2 zeros will constitute a failing grade for Participation. This means you will earn anywhere from 0-60% of the total possible 30 points for Participation, and risk failing the course.

After Thanksgiving, all instruction will go online. For those last two weeks of class I would like the whole class to participate together via Zoom. I will encourage those students who have been taking the course online

asynchronously up to that point to join the virtual Zoom classes for the last two weeks of the semester. If online students are unable to join the Zoom sessions, then I will work with you to create an alternate assignment.

Movies

There are three films assigned as part of the curriculum. *These movies are an important part of the course and viewing them is mandatory.* All three are available streaming and students will watch them on their own time.

Reaction Papers

Over the course of the semester each student will write four (4) 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 15% of your grade.

Exams

The one exam for this class is a midterm consisting of two essay questions. Students will have a week to work on the midterm and will upload it to Canvas.

Paper Project and Presentations

The major written assignment is a 6-9-page paper and 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 in the semester. During the first half of the semester, students will hand in a brief paper proposal for my review and feedback. At the end of the semester all students will be required to present their papers to the class. Student paper presentations will take place on the last week of class and during finals week.

The Writing Lab

The Writing Lab in the Tutoring-Learning Center (TLC) offers free one-on-one help with papers for any class. 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.

- **Writing Lab are currently being held virtually via Zoom**
- **By appointment or short notice times available**
- **You are able to send us your paper for revision via [an online form \(found here\)](#)**
- **All services in the Writing Lab are free**

If you have questions or would like to make an appointment, please contact the TLC via email (tlctutor@uwsp.edu) or phone (715-346-3568).

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 Canvas. You will upload all your written work (including the take-home midterm exam) to Canvas, which is connected to the Turnitin.com database. Your paper will be checked against Turnitin's database and the web to determine any cases of plagiarism. So please do your own writing, do not copy and paste from other people, and if you are going to include excerpts from someone else's work, make sure to put it in quotes and to properly cite the source.

Privacy and Recordings

Lecture materials and recordings for POLI 396 – Radical and Utopian Politics are protected intellectual property at UW-Stevens Point. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or share lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 2 (9/7) – Labor Day Holiday – No class meeting

- See Canvas Class Schedule for assignments & activities

Week 3 (9/14): Marxism

Watch: “Germinal”, French film based on the novel by Emile Zola (running time: 144 mins.)

Read:

- 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 (9/21): The Russian Revolution & Marxism

Read:

- 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 (9/28): The Russian Revolution – From Lenin to Stalin

Read:

- 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 (10/5): The Birth of Social Democracy in Europe

Read: Berman, Intro (entire); Ch. 2 (entire); Ch. 3 (pp. 47-54); Ch. 5 (pp. 96-99; 109-124); Chs. 7-9 (pp.152-218).

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

Week 7 (10/12): Social Democracy and its Discontents

Read:

Social Democracy

- 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)

Reactions from the Right to Socialism and Social Democracy

- “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).

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 (10/19): Midterm Exam and Screening of “Gandhi”

No class or discussion forums this week, instead you have the week to write your midterm exam.

DUE: Midterm Exam uploaded to Canvas by Wednesday 10/21 at midnight.

After turning in your exam, watch “Gandhi” in preparation for the coming week (Running time: 3 hours, 11 mins.)

Week 9 (10/26): 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 (11/2): 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.

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

Week 11 (11/9): Ecology, Climate Change, & The Green New Deal

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 Ecology

- Selections from *Political Ideologies*, Ch. 7 “Ecology”, 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).

Green New Deal

- Kate Aronoff, Alyssa Battistoni, Daniel Aldana Cohen, and Thea Riofrancos. *A Planet to Win: Why We Need a Green New Deal*. Verso, 2019. Excerpts TBA. (e-Reserves)

Week 12 (11/16) – The Black Lives Matter Movement and the call to Defund the Police

Readings:

- Annie Lowry. “Defund the Police.” *The Atlantic*, June 5, 2020.
- Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. “We Should Still Defund the Police.” *The New Yorker*, August 14, 2020.
- Jill Lepore. “The Invention of the Police.” *The New Yorker*, July 13, 2020.
- Other possible readings TBA

Week 13 (11/23): White Nationalism in the Age of Trump

Readings:

- 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)
- Other readings TBA

11/26-11/29 – Thanksgiving Break! Enjoy!!!

Week 14 (11/30): Utopian Visions Today - *Virtual Via Zoom*

Read

- Andrew Anthony. "Interview with Rutger Bregman - 'We could cut the working week by a third.'" *The Guardian*, Feb. 26, 2017. (e-Reserves)
- Rutger Bregman. *Utopia for Realists: How We Can Build the Ideal World*. Back Bay Books, 2018. Excepts TBA.

Watch:

- Rutger Bregman TED Talk
- Trevor Noah's interview with Rutger Bregman on "The Daily". (Link on Canvas e-Reserves)

DUE: Final Draft of Research Papers – Friday, December 4 at 5 PM

Week 15 (12/7): Student Paper Presentations - *Virtual Via Zoom*

Finals Week – Fri., Dec. 18th 12:30-2:30PM - Student Paper Presentations - *Virtual Via Zoom*