Socialisms: Historical Sociology of Utopias and Geopolitics

A Graduate Seminar

Convenor: József Böröcz

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Dept of Sociology
Rutgers University
Spring 2004: 16.920.571.01
Tue 4:10–6:50 Lucy Stone Hall (Livingston Campus) A 256

offc hrs: Tue, 3–4pm, Lucy Stone Hall B 207
or by appt (use email for contact)
This is a graduate seminar in the historical sociology of utopias and geopolitics. It scrutinizes the history of socialisms as ideas as well as specific socio-political, -economic and -cultural practices by engaging a critique organised by two perspectives: /1/ historical macro-sociology in the world-systems mould and /2/ (post-)colonial analysis. We do not cover world-systems analysis or post-colonial work per se: I assume the participants’ basic familiarity with the issues and sensibilities of those perspectives. If you feel you need to brush up on either, I recommend these books as a point of departure (not part of the course):


The purpose of this course is gaining literacy in, devising critiques of and deriving inspiration for further work on, socialisms. You are expected to:

- come to class prepared, with an active interest in both macrosocial analysis, an investigative curiosity and a mature intellectual agenda relating to the issues at hand,

- present one or two 5-10-minutes-long, sharply focussed remarks introducing the given week's readings as a stimulus for class discussion (schedule of remarks will be assigned in first class meeting),

- bring a less-than-one-page list of substantive problem items (the most clearly formulated critical questions you would pose to the authors if they were here) to each class, in as many copies as members of the class,

- contribute your unique perspective, erudition and experience to the discussions, and

- write a high-quality research paper on a relevant subject on time.

Grading is a judicious combination of your contribution to the discussions, your presentations, homeworks (if any) and your paper. Paper topics and conditions subject to class decision on format. TBA.

The books have been ordered through the Livingston College Bookstore. You will also find them on Graduate Reserves in Alexander Library.
Schedule

20 January 2004 – Class Cancelled: József is out-of-town. :-(

27 January – Introduction: Issues and Approaches


30 January – Makeup Class: The Manifesto, Read from the Rest-of-the-World

Required Reading:


Plus: discussion of I am Cuba

3 February – Utopia and Socialism

Required Readings:

• Levitas, Ruth. 1990. The Concept of Utopia. Syracuse University Press. Chapters:
  - Introduction (1–8)
  - Ideal commowwealths: the emerging tradition (9–34)
  - Castles in the air: Marx, Engels, and utopian socialism (35–58)
  - Mobilising myths: utopia and social change in Geoges Sorel and Karl Mannheim (59–82)


10 February – Class vs Nation: Which Is Total, Which Is Particular?

Required:

  - Preface (xli–xlvii)
  - What is Orthodox Marxism? (1–26)
  - The Marxism of Rosa Luxemburg (27–45)
  - Class Consciousness (46–82)

Recommended:


17 February – The Global: Abandoned – To Be Seduced?

Required:

• Callinicos, Alex. 1990. Trotskyism. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.


  → Volume 1, 1945–1955: From the Critique of Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism. Chapters:

  General Introduction (3–36)
  1. On the Regime and against the Defense of the USSR. (37–43)
  2. The Problem of the USSR and the Possibility of a Third Historical Solution (44–55)
  5. Socialism or Barbarism (76–106)
  12. The Situation of Imperialism and Proletarian Perspectives (256–89)

Recommended:

Trotsky, Leon. 1959 (1932). The Russian Revolution. The overthrow of tzarism


24 February – €-Communism

Required:

  - 1 Eurocommunism: Myth or Reality? (9–34)
  - Appendix One: Joint Declaration of the Italian and Spanish Communist Parties, 12 July 1975 (330–3)
  - Appendix Two: Joint Declaration of the French and Italian Communist Parties, 15 November 1975 (334–8)

Recommended: rest-of-book

2 March – Hegemonies

Required:

  - Introduction (1–6)
  - 1 Hegemony: the Genealogy of a Concept (7–46)
  - 2 Hegemony: the Difficult Emergence of a New Political Logic (47–92)

Recommended:

• rest-of-book

9 March – Tito’s Imperialist Chained Dog

Required:

• State Prosecutor’s Office. 1949. László Rajk and His Accomplices before the People’s Court. Budapest: State Prosecutor’s Office. Chapters:

  Required:

  - The Indictment (5–27)
  - Examination of László Rajk (31–81)
  - Speeches for the Defence (274–88)
  - The Last Plea: László Rajk (289–90)
  - The Verdict (303–6)


Recommended: rest-of-book

Spring Recess

23 March – Classess and Raceless Society?

Required:


30 March – The Soviet Model and the Globe

Required:


6 April – After the Soviet Project I: What’s LEFT?

Required:


13 April – After the Soviet Project II:

Required:


20 April, 27 April: Research Discussion Days: topics TBA