

Archive of the Social Science Seminar



2021-2022 | Political Mobilizations and Social Movements

Cover photograph: Demonstrators march with flags and signs during a protest against Chile's state economic model in Santiago, Chile on October 25.
Credit: Ivan Alvarado/Reuters

Archive of the Social Science Seminar

2021-2022

Founded in 1973, the School of Social Science is the most recent and smallest of the four Schools of the Institute for Advanced Study. It takes as its mission the analysis of contemporary societies and social change. It is devoted to a pluralistic and critical approach to social research, from a multidisciplinary and international perspective. Each year, the School invites approximately twenty-five scholars who conduct research with various perspectives, methods and topics, providing a space for intellectual debate and mutual enrichment. Scholars are drawn from a wide range of disciplines, notably political science, economics, law, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, and literature. To facilitate intellectual engagement among the visiting scholars, the School defines a theme for each year.

Besides the informal conversations that take place all year long, the scientific activity of the School is mostly centered on two moments. The weekly Social Science Seminar offers the opportunity to all members to present their work, whether it is related to the theme or not. The Theme Seminar meets on a bimonthly basis and is mostly based on discussion of the literature and works relevant to the theme. In 2021-2022, the theme was “Political Mobilizations and Social Movements.” The program was led by Wendy Brown, UPS Foundation Professor, and Didier Fassin, James D. Wolfensohn Professor, in collaboration with Alondra Nelson, Harold F. Linder Professor in the School.

School of Social Science
2021-2022

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Social Science Seminar

A SCENE AT THE BORDER
NOCTURNAL ENCOUNTERS AND POLITICAL DRAMATURGIES

Didier Fassin

Politics of immigration are commonly presented in terms of policies of control of flows, especially since 2015 when many displaced persons arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean causing what was called the “migrant crisis” by governments or the “refugee crisis” by non-governmental organizations. The talk – and more generally the research conducted in the past three years, during the winter and summer, at the French Italian border in the Alps, with Anne-Claire Defossez – adopts a different perspective, focusing on individuals rather than populations, practices rather than policies, the everyday rather than alleged crises.

The ethnography on which the presentation is based is that of an encounter near a pass between two Afghan families who are trying to cross the border, several border police officers whose task is to arrest and deport exiles found on the French territory, and a group of volunteers who go on nightly rescue missions to get these exiles to safety before the police intercept them. I show that this scene is paradigmatic of the daily interactions not only between exiles and the police and between exiles and volunteers, but also between the police and the volunteers since the former attempt to intimidate and deter the latter through fines, hearings, custody and even trials based on false accusations. The scene has for background the tightening of border control, and the transformation of what used to be a free traffic zone between France and Italy under the Schengen regulation into a highly tense area where exiles risk their lives crossing through the mountain above the pass, where the state has deployed an impressive military presence and where a unique social movement has emerged to assist them.

The scene reveals that the repressive turn has produced what is perhaps the least cost-effective public policy carried out by the French government, since despite the highly expensive apparatus implemented, almost all exiles end up succeeding in crossing the border, a fact acknowledged by police officers as well as state officials, which suggests that these policies should be regarded as dramaturgies revealing the performative function of the politics of immigration. In parallel, from a methodological perspective, this ethnography in which the ethnographer is a rescuer and gets arrested, thus turning the participant observation into an observant participation, leads to a reflection on the risks but also the benefits of such practice for the understanding of the scene from inside, which poses interesting epistemological and ethical questions.

September 27, 2021

TOWARD A NEW THEORY OF THE POLITICAL IMAGINARY

Yves Winter

Over the course of the past two decades, the neologisms “social imaginary” and “political imaginary” have become ubiquitous in the theoretical social sciences. But what do we actually mean by “collective imaginary”? How does a collective imaginary differ from the imagination? Does the imaginary designate the content of the imagination? Or does it refer to a whole range of tacit significations that we do not actually imagine, because we take them for granted and because they are part of our practical background of which we are not actively conscious? Is “imaginary” simply a new word for culture, understood as the totality of significations embodied in public symbols? Is an imaginary the result of our symbolic practices—the product of our thinking, writing, and speaking, or is it, by contrast, a condition of these practices, or both? Is there only one social imaginary at any given time, or are there multiple ones? If there is more than one, how do they relate to one another? Are they contiguous, overlapping, or competing? How do social imaginaries change? Are they transformed from within or replaced from without, by alternative and competing imaginaries?

A genealogy of the term “imaginary” reveals that this idea was developed in a mid-century French intellectual and political context, where the word had specific philosophical and political determinations. In the post-war era, multiple traditions—phenomenology, psychoanalysis, feminist theory, Marxism/post-Marxism, anthropology—appropriated the category of the imaginary and forged divergent versions of the concept. In contemporary usage, especially in anglophone social theory, the imaginary has been unmoored from this history and lost much of the philosophical and political determinations it had in these earlier moments. Reconstructing these distinct traditions therefore enables an assessment of the different and conflicting formulations of collective imaginary in contemporary theoretical and political discourse.

A critical theory of the collective imaginary should be able to address six key questions: (1) Form. In what sense is a social or political imaginary actually imagined and by whom? (2) Function. What role do imaginaries play in society and in particular what is their function with regard to social order? (3) Materiality. Where is the imaginary located? Is it in our minds, in cultural objects, in practices? How can it best be studied? (4) Scope. What are the ingredients of the imaginary and what are its limits? How do we distinguish it from cultural objects, significations, and patterns that are not part of the imaginary? (5) Scale. At what scale do imaginaries operate? How do we distinguish between social and political imaginaries? (6) Dynamics. How do imaginaries change?

October 4, 2021

NI UNA MENOS AND THE GLOBAL FEMINIST TIDE

Cecilia Palmeiro

In the last five years, feminisms around the world have caused the earth to tremble. Women and those with feminized bodies have been composing a collective political subject through the organization of oceanic demonstrations of hundreds of thousands and even millions of people across the planet. While some scholars talk about a fourth wave, this new subject recognizes itself as a Global Feminist Tide, *la marea* in Spanish and in Italian, as it was originally formulated. The concept mobilized the idea of a massive tide of feminized bodies, albeit without invoking an essential biological identity: the tide crosses borders, languages, identities, generations, ethnicities, and social classes – transversally, horizontally, intersectionally, and in solidarity. The notion of tide (*marea*) has become one of the key conceptual tools produced by the movement to reflect on itself, and to do so in ways that are very different from the periodization of feminist waves in the global north which neglects feminist movements that originated in peripheral countries (indigenous, communitarian feminisms, non-western matriarchal cultures, etc). Aquatic metaphors in both cases are useful in that they describe the different flows of energies that feminist social movements have deployed throughout history. In this case, the tide appears as the force that disrupts and displaces waves.

My study elaborates the notion of political translation as a central practice of this feminist revolution. By political translation, I mean a spontaneous and collective translation flow between different national and regional languages, between visual and verbal languages, between different levels of a language (from everyday to theoretical language, and vice-versa), including poetry and the languages of social media, public discourse and the bodily languages of social protest. My argument is that this idea of political translation can describe the logics of our activist network; considering the fact that Ni Una Menos is a hashtag, the name of a collective, the name of a broader social movement, a claim, a utopia, a keyword, password, a declaration of solidarity, and a collective war cry.

Ni Una Menos, as a formulation that comes from poetry, was condensed and transformed into a hashtag – a translation from poetry into a social media slogan and a historical keyword. The fact that the hashtag went viral can be explained in terms of the urgency and the appeal of the claim, its catchy poetic sound, and its focus on gender in terms of grammar. The stress put on the grammatical gender of the pronoun expresses the gender-based character of femicide, which is neither a private nor a domestic issue. The expressive power of the claim and its mobilizing effects set the bar for the creation of a new political language, a language coming from poetry and from a political tradition of radicalized queer and feminized voices; a lineage in which the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo meet feminism and the LGBT movement, a language able to connect the plane of bodies with the plane of discourse and to express collective impulses of social transformation – our desire for a different life. Indeed the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo are considered to be founders of the Argentinean/Latin American human rights movement. They campaigned against the last civic-military dictatorship (1976-1983) which was responsible for the forced disappearance of 30,000 people. As mothers of the disappeared, they confronted the perpetrators of genocide and created a movement that helped reestablish democracy in 1983. Today, they continue fighting for human rights in a broad sense and searching for their disappeared children and grand-children. They are a crucial point of reference for the women's movement and, through their involvement in the Ni Una Menos movement, have begun to recognize themselves as feminists.

It can be said that our political translation is fueled by a flux of desire that traverses languages and levels as a political force. In fact, #NosMueveElDeseo (#DesireMovesUs) is one of our hashtags that has been adopted by a myriad of groups and collectives around the world.

For its massive and radical character, the period extending from the emergence of the Ni Una Menos (Not One Woman Less) movement in Argentina in 2015 constitutes a distinct historical era in terms of political struggles, which is my object of study.

October 11, 2021

THE POWER OF MOVEMENT

SAHARAN PERSPECTIVES ON POLITICS

Judith Scheele

The Sahara and its margins have recently provided the stage for a broad range of protest movements, from the 'Arab springs' in Tunisia and Libya in 2011 and the ousting of putative presidents-for-life in Algeria and Sudan in spring 2019 to militia-style politics in Libya via anti-slavery movements in Mauritania, armed independentist and jihadi groups in northern Mali and beyond, and chronic rebellion in northern Chad. Some of these protests seem instances of a global pro-democracy movement directed against corrupt and out-dated kleptocracies. Others appear rather as the 'resurgence' of 'traditional' political patterns of organization, such as the 'tribalization' of Libyan politics or indeed the apparent revival of practices associated with slavery. Yet others seem to be both 'old' and 'new', 'global' and 'local', as is the case with jihadi groups. Some of these political movements have been met with enthusiasm by European and international observers, others with mistrust or downright hostility, yet others have led to international military interventions that are still ongoing and create their own political realities on the ground. They have, in any case, been understood as radically different phenomena, the 'new social movements' as urban, open, peaceful, and cosmopolitan; the others as rural, 'backward', and intrinsically violent. On the ground, however, they have often involved the same places and people, simultaneously or sequentially. This is so especially in the Sahara proper, large chunks of which have been (practically or officially) under military rule for decades, and where 'civil society activists' routinely find themselves imprisoned as 'jihadis'.

This uncertainty indicates not so much local political confusion, but the inadequacy of metropolitan analytical categories. While political anthropologists and related disciplines produce increasingly sophisticated analyses of state institutions, their day-to-day workings and the 'state effect' they spread even beyond their immediate reach, other forms of political life have largely dropped out of the analytical canon. This leaves us unprepared when attempting to account for political life that takes place beyond state institutions and their satellites (NGOs, 'civil society'). Proposals ranging from 'tradition' (Bayat) via 'communities' (Hallaq) and 'Zomia' (Scott) to a 'political society' (Chatterjee) that remains largely structured by its relations to the state are unsatisfactory, if only in their assumption of unknowability or homogeneity. Complex political thought is not the monopoly of state-like institutions, and local political practices have their own often self-conscious and trans-local – or even transnational – histories. In this seminar I propose to look at a set of Saharan political institutions and principles that, to varying degrees, inform political choices made locally, especially in moments of crisis. These range from local assemblies, which can be found throughout northwest Africa on all levels, to more abstract principles of interactions such as those implied in compensation payments and patterns of hospitality. These vary greatly throughout the Sahara and over time, but together they constitute a shared political repertoire and language that people can draw on in different ways, often to counter, contain, reshape or replace state initiatives, as and when they think this is appropriate. This repertoire, I argue, might provide us with a much-needed conceptual alternative to centralized state traditions which pervade metropolitan political theory. Ethnographic and historical examples are drawn from fieldwork carried out, since 2003, in Algeria, Mali and Chad.

October 18, 2021

TOWARD A MORAL ECONOMY OF ANTIRACISM IN FRANCE

Magali Bessone

My aim in this project is to be able to reply to the question “what is racism?” and to engage in the resolution of conceptual and normative disagreements about what is correctly considered as racist. Such project is undertaken with some epistemic and methodological convictions that lead me to propose a critical theory approach, away from a priori or top-down theorizing, but rooted in practice and aiming at practice. As critical, a theory of racism has to be grounded in an inquiry on racial struggles and resistance, and explicitly endorse emancipatory and egalitarian objectives: its goal should be racial justice. So if I want to be able to determine when any use of the term “racist” is correct, it presupposes that I know why I want to use “racism” in these cases, what the normative value is of declaring or interpreting such behavior or law as “racist”, and why my favorite definition of racism better meets this normative value than rival propositions.

With this in mind, I’ll first present what, in my opinion, is lacking in the current accounts of racism, which are distributed between two main positions, those defending that racism is correctly and only attributed to individuals, and those arguing that racism is a correct attribute of institutions, structures or systems. I’ll argue that these accounts fail to address two main challenges, an epistemic and a normative one. Epistemically, they tend to propose either a homogenizing definition of racism, or a too loose, a-critical one. Normatively, they fail to correctly take into account the moral dimension that is always at the core of racism discourses: they either reduce it to individual intentionality or reject it as “moralism”.

In order to address these challenges, I’ll suggest that it is best to engage in two methodological shifts: first, we should engage in a socio-political inquiry about the uses of the concept in antiracist movements, i.e. these movements whose *raison d’être* is to contest, undermine and oppose (their version of) “racism”, as well as in anti-anti-racist movements, who contest the validity of the diagnosis of racism and the legitimacy of the struggle of anti-racism. In order to know what racism is, the right question is to ask what ‘racism’ *does* in antiracist and anti-anti-racist discourses and practices. This should allow me to reply to the epistemic challenge and adopt a critical contextual characterization of racism as an essentially diverse type of (individual or institutional) social practice. To reply to the normative challenge, I suggest that a second shift is needed: approaching anti-racism with the paradigm of “moral economy” makes it possible to understand the conceptual disagreements about the relation of racism to universalism or particularism, to republicanism and state violence, to ethnocentric fear and construction/exclusion of foreigners, to paternalism and denial/claim of political standing from racialized subjects, to colonialism, history and memory, to body assignation and colorblindness, to the constant balance between inequality erasing and difference recognizing, as moral conflicts – involving competing moral emotions, dissensus over values and norms. This should help me situate antiracism and racism within a more ample theorizing of racial justice by identifying the correct principles that can delineate racial justice as a complement to social justice: respect, epistemic empowerment, reparations.

October 25, 2021

DROPPING CRUMBS AS WE GO

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AS POLITICAL PRAXIS

Anthony Alessandrini

To borrow a phrase from Begüm Başdaş and Tül Akbal, two of the founding members of the Istanbul-based “Kampüssüzler Ders Ortakları” (“Campus-less Study Collective”), the Solidarity Academies of Turkey might be best described as “the good that evil produced.” The particular evil is the Erdoğan government’s violent purge of academics, which has been ongoing for many years but has reached a particular level of intensity since 2015. In response, a number of academics in and from Turkey facing this campaign of state repression have worked to found “Solidarity Academies” (Dayanışma Akademileri), a loose network of alternative public education projects that include Solidarity Academies in Ankara, Kocaeli, İzmir, and Dersim, as well as related community education projects in other cities, including Mersin Kültürhane (Culture House), Eskişehir Okulu (Eskişehir School), Ankara Sokak Akademisi (Ankara Street Academy), and in Istanbul, the Kampüssüzler (“Campus-less”) Group, which provides classes, “shadow advisement,” and other forms of support for young and precarious academics under threat by the state. Meanwhile, outside Turkey, members of the network have set up the “Off-University,” an online “university without walls” based in Germany, among other projects.

The Solidarity Academies might best be seen as part of a rich tradition of radical community education projects, which have often emerged from within ongoing political mobilizations and social movements. Central to my argument is that such educational projects, rather than partaking in the distinction between “thought” and “action” found in conventional educational institutions, break down this distinction by fighting to create the spaces to even exist. Put more simply: radical community education projects are not just outgrowths of social movements; they represent forms of political mobilization in and of themselves. The Solidarity Academies are a perfect example of community education projects *as* political praxis. As Başdaş and Akbal put it in an interview regarding their work with Kampüssüzler Ders Ortakları: “We find a method as we go. It’s a kind of praxis, actually. We talk, we study, we read and discuss, we reconsider what we have done, and then we continue.... It’s like Hansel and Gretel’s breadcrumbs. We’re walking, dropping crumbs as we go....We’re working to create a collective, mutually beneficial living space. This is not nothing.”

November 1, 2021

CULTURE OF POVERTY POLITICS AND LATINX GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Deb Vargas

This seminar presentation begins with some introduction of the methodological and theoretical approaches supporting my manuscript in progress titled "Culture of Poverty Politics and Latinx Gender and Sexuality." I develop a multimodal methodology that includes oral histories, feminist ethnography, close readings of sonic and visual cultural texts, and archival research. The manuscript addresses the everyday tactics that create what I refer to as queer life forces of well-being, elder/child care, and kinship that Latinx people draw upon to survive and flourish despite displacement, insecurity, and dispossession. Moreover, a Latinx feminist analysis of culture of poverty and other social science discourses of pathology and degeneracy examine the enduring implications for racist policies addressing immigration, health care, and citizenship. The focal point of the manuscript addresses how Latinx people have not simply been the subjects of social science studies of structural racism and economic disenfranchisement but have also been the subjects of our own world-making. By centering queer Latinx genders and sexualities, I invert the top-down model of ethnography that scrutinizes difference vis-à-vis domestic cultures to offer instead a bottom-up analysis of the quotidian tactics of the non-powerful. I highlight improvised acts of resilience developed in the face of everyday challenges caused by the lack of access to food, health care, elder care, and stable housing. My research and analysis pay particular attention to the social power of everyday *doing* that is readily evident in art, queer aesthetics, and non-conforming gender performance that defy state-sanctioned models of heteronormative citizenship.

After an overview of the manuscript this talk will turn attention to one chapter in my manuscript titled "Refuse," where I explore the ways in which neoliberal discourses of "health," "well-being," and "safety" in urban policy have come to justify structural displacement, particularly gentrification, in working-class/immigrant Latinx neighborhoods. I exploit the interplay between the verb *to refuse* and the noun *refuse* to consider a mixed-media, photo-sonic series of discarded bed mattresses around Oakland photographed and curated by Chicana performance artist Xandra Ibarra. Ibarra uses her mobile phone to photograph discarded mattresses that she has "tagged" with spray painted lyrical "samplings" from Latinx boleros and baladas that were released during the 1980s and that she listened to in the 1990s as a child of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Ibarra describes her series as "addressing the continued crisis of uncertainty and the attendant expression of desire and loss that accompanies the unfolding social and economic insecurity in the Bay Area and abroad."

November 8, 2021

FASCIST UTOPIAS?

A HISTORY OF THE PRESENT IN TURKEY

Asli İğsiz

The unapologetic rise of ethnonationalism, white nationalism, and supremacist narratives has led scholars to revisit the histories of totalitarianism, fascism, and authoritarianism. Challenging the idea that these violent racialized histories have been confined to the past, critical scholars argue that their legacies are in fact prominent aspects of the history of the present.

While what fascism is exactly is hotly debated, it is arguably the malleability of fascist thought and hence the ambiguity attributed to it that has enabled its long lifespan, which cannot be confined to the period before 1945. Consider the survival of General Francisco Franco's fascist dictatorship in Spain until 1975. If one thread of fascism's afterlives is traceable today to the reincarnation of Nazi and Italian fascisms in the form of neo-Nazis, another thread can be traced in the cosmetic transformation of Francoist fascism and its reincarnations in the Global South. Examples include the military dictatorships in Argentina, Chile, and Turkey, all of which carried out anti-communist and capitalist agendas supported by the United States. Specifically, the Turkish military dictatorship of the early 1980s resonates with Francoism. Following an unacknowledged civil war in the 1970s between Marxist factions and a Turkish right chiefly composed of ultranationalists, the 1980 military coup established a regime that relied heavily on a newly minted Turkish-Islamic Synthesis ideology, a mixture of Sunni Islam and Turkish nationalism designed to mobilize national unity against communism. Reminiscent of Francoist National Catholicism, the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis also amalgamated a national religious identification of family, the mosque, education, and the military mobilized against communism, but with Turkish Sunni Islam taking the place of Spanish Catholicism. In the contemporary context of Turkey, President Erdoğan's current emphasis on Islam might be more strident than the military junta of the 1980s would have liked, but his authoritarian regime owes much to the military dictatorship they established some forty years ago.

My project examines the history of this present through the Turkish context, and attends to Erdoğan's neo-Ottomanism, anti-Orientalism, as well as his political party's vision for the "New Turkey." Generating a language and aesthetics of a "moral high ground," I argue, Erdoğan's regime seeks to implement an array of domestic and transnational policies to mobilize Muslims to join him as the righteous leader against the "cruel, fascist, and colonial West" and the "cruel oppressors" of the Middle East. Weaponizing history (both Turkish and Western European), he positions himself and his political regime as the propelling force to restore the "Islamic civilization" as a world power. Drawing from a wide array of sources (e.g., Erdoğan's political speeches, parliament records, visual and material culture, policy regulations, etc), I identify the structural components of the "New Turkey" as utopian promise, its underlying authoritarian threads, and examine their broader implications domestically and internationally.

November 9, 2020

BIOMETRICS AND THE PROMISE OF DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

Marielle Debos

The biometric identification market has been booming in Africa since the early 2000s, and biometrics is now a key element in elections on the continent. Exploring the historical and social construction of this market, this research closely examines the corporate interests as well as the postcolonial discourses and practices that have shaped it. Based on fieldwork conducted in Europe, the United States, and Africa, it explores the concrete ways in which neoliberalism, embedded in postcolonial structures, operates. It shows how private firms, democracy promotion institutions as well as African elites have promoted technologies as “solutions” to the supposed failures of the states and elections and how they have ultimately succeeded in framing democracy in narrow technological and procedural terms. At the crossroads of political science, science and technology studies (STS), as well as postcolonial studies, this research aims to contribute to our understanding of the circulation of a commodified and technologically-framed conception of politics, which, on the African continent as in other parts of the world, may have troubling implications for democracy.

November 22, 2021

#EndSARS
POLICE BRUTALITY AND THE VOICE OF THE UNPEOPLE

Daniel Agbiboa

The year 2020 ushered in a new era of pandemic world (dis)order. But it will also be remembered as a pivotal period that catalyzed police brutality and anti-police brutality protests across the globe. The murder of George Floyd by now-former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin in 2020 generated intense scrutiny and solidarity around the globe. And nowhere as critically as from the African continent, which shortly after experienced its own “Floyd moment” in the form of the #EndSARS movement against police brutality. (In #EndSARS, SARS stands for Special Anti-Robbery Squad, a unit that had become notorious for its abuses on the Nigerian population.) In this presentation, I want to question why, in a time of heightened subjugation of (Black) lives around the globe to the power of physical and social death, social scientists in the United States and Africa have devoted such little attention to coeval and similarly situated struggles, each preferring to “social distance.” This presentation is a preliminary effort to deprovincialize and defamiliarize our atomized thinking on the crisis of polic(e)ing, recognizing that police brutality is not episodic but is the context itself. Police brutality, I want to argue, is not so much spectacular as spectral. It is an arena of the familiar, yet strange—better still, the strangely familiar.

November 29, 2021

HAYWIRE LIBERALISM AND THE MARKET FOR FAR-RIGHT REBELLION

William Callison

Conventional accounts of the crisis of liberal democracy rehearse a familiar narrative about neoliberal capitalism, far-right parties, and the relationship between them: neoliberalism is equated with the triumph of free-market globalization and far-right parties are seen as reactions against it, as they assert the primacy of the ethno-nation over transnational capital and cosmopolitan culture. Such accounts, however, do not grasp the historical roots and discursive strategies of what appears oxymoronic in this frame: the “market populism” of neoliberal nationalism. In this talk, I offer an overview of select chapters from my current book project, which seeks to reframe current crises through an alternative account of these forces. In doing so, the talk advances three arguments. The first concerns the origins of neoliberalism. I argue that neoliberalism is best understood as a counterrevolutionary, anti-socialist project that began immediately after World War One. The early neoliberal project constructed a series of binary concepts and political critiques, which are often equated with yet long preceded the Cold War. It also emerged as an internally diverse project that evolved over time vis-à-vis hegemonic and subterranean currents of economics, politics, and culture. Second, and following from this, I argue that the ideas and discourses behind the neoliberal counterrevolution are not “dying” in the current crisis, but being radicalized by classical liberals and libertarians and appropriated by far-right forces. These include the far-right parties I focus on in the book: the AfD in Germany; the FPÖ in Austria, the Vox party in Spain, and the GOP in the United States. But they also include powerful think tanks, talking heads on television, YouTube influencers, and the darker corners of the internet. Through these parties and networks, currents of economic liberalism have shifted from a governmental consensus to an oppositional force—a “market populist” rebellion from below. Third, I argue that any revised diagnosis necessitates a critique of liberalism more generally. Here I offer some reflections on the relationship between economic liberalism and political liberalism. I suggest that inattention to the recent growth of libertarian radicalization, on the one hand, and its place within changing ideological configurations amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change, on the other, has not only left us scrambling amidst global crises. It has also obscured the role of this “haywire liberalism” in creating the material conditions and political visions of today’s far right, which, like liberalism itself, is poorly understood through ahistorical invocations of their interwar progenitors.

December 6, 2021

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE FUTURE OF THE GLOBAL ORDER

Zachariah Mampilly

Since Marx, many have debated a basic question about political change: Who is the revolutionary class? Marx famously cast his lot with the working class, who he believed were integral to the functioning of industrial capitalism and hence possessed the power to overthrow the bourgeoisie. Liberal thinkers, in contrast, placed their emphasis on the middle classes, those who possess a combination of liberal values, rising economic expectations and shared disappointment in government, to propel democratic change. In concrete terms, for Marxists, it is the urban industrial worker who has the potential to push for revolutionary change through their role in economic production, while for liberals, it is the urban middle class through their control over civil society.

Recent protests around the world provide an opportunity to assess the merit of each of these theories. Neither theory has been able to accurately describe the membership or trajectory of social movements, especially in the Global South. For Marxists, the decline of manufacturing and the shift towards commodity production has led to the prolonged diminishment of industrial unions. For liberals, civil society, at least in its current manifestation of foreign funded non-governmental organizations, is more commonly aligned to state power than a threat to it.

Global South movements have instead been populated by recent migrants from rural areas who eke out a living in informal urban economies as well as (former) agricultural workers in rural areas who bear the brunt of neoliberal capitalism's extractive logic. In this presentation, I argue that these groups combined constitute a new revolutionary class. In contrast to both Marxist and Liberal theories, my focus is on the shifting global economic order that is producing distinct subjectivities among the groups most impacted by global capitalism. By taking seriously the impact of global capitalism on the political economy of countries in the Global South, I trace the emergence of a more radical political subjectivity among these populations. This has produced a distinct form of political activism, one that does not eschew violence, that lacks the discipline of Marxist and Liberal movements, and that is susceptible to appeals from both the left and the right. In addition, without a theory of political change driving their actions, their often contradictory impact on political life can be difficult to discern. Drawing on recent protests across Africa, I show why despite the difficulty of delineating their politics, any theory of political change must wrestle with the increasing role they play in popular movements.

December 13, 2021

WHAT IS LEFT OF FREEDOM?

Wendy Brown

Our current global conjuncture features three major crises. There is the crisis of the “Great Acceleration” -- rapidly increasing climate change and declining biodiversity, along with a host of social, political and economic entailments. There is the crisis of constitutional democracy, identified above all with the ethnonationalist, authoritarian or neofascist political formations taking hold in many established as well as newer liberal democratic nations worldwide. And there is the crisis of equality, expressed in unprecedented extremes of wealth and poverty, and in pitched battles over the present and future of racial stratification and imperial right, within and between nations and hemispheres.

These crises in turn implicate orders and arrangements of power that have, in various iterations, governed the world through much of modernity: capitalism, Euro-Atlantic political and economic hegemony, a modernist humanism bound to normative white masculinity, and an orientation to the planet eschewing its fragile, interconnected life forms.

This project refracts these three crises through the problematic of *freedom*. It does not argue that freedom is either causal or the only lens through which these crises may be known and thought. Rather the aim is to discover whether close scrutiny of the play of freedom in each might reveal something important about the crises themselves and about the glaring predicaments of freedom in our time, especially the ways in which it has become an anti-social and anti-democratic instrument of the Right.

What are the nuances and implications of a Western tradition of freedom that signifies independence, sovereignty, autonomy, choice, and sometimes emancipation and democracy yet has also historically served to legitimate social and ecological subjugation and plunder? What of freedom’s historical identification with human mastery or domination of “nature,” both our own and that we imagine to be “external”? What of freedom’s long historical imbrication with, indeed legitimation of, slavery, colonialism and imperialism, and its ideological identification with unregulated capitalism? What are the costs of modern and especially liberal freedom’s identification with individual as opposed to collective social and political practices? This project presumes that study and theorization of these legacies, along with freedom’s current iterations in right wing politics, may help illuminate our contemporary condition-- its predicaments, perils and possibilities. It also examines whether or how freedom might be recuperated to mobilize passions and a framework for a sustainable, democratic and egalitarian future, and asks whether and where such recuperation might be immanent to existing relations of power.

January 24, 2022

“EVEN SO QUICKLY MAY ONE CATCH THE PLAGUE?”

UNIVERSITIES, BORDERS AND ILLEGAL MIGRANTS

Debaditya Bhattacharya

This paper takes off from a larger project, attempting to conceptually rethink the university. In effect, it proceeds by ‘resignifying’ the cardinal registers through which the contemporary neoliberal university is represented in progressive political discourse. Of the several polemical conjunctions assumed by such discourse – namely, the university’s relationship with ‘community’, ‘academic freedom’, ‘secularity’ and a ‘politics of solidarity’ – this paper lays out a basic theoretical scaffolding for understanding how the *universitas* has historically addressed the claims of the *communitas*. The groundwork for such theoretical reflections is provided by the current policy-conjuncture in Indian higher education – faced as it is with a ‘dangerous encounter’ with the anti-citizenship-law protests in 2019-20 and the subsequent impact of the pandemic.

I take as my starting point a reference to how the citizenship ‘protests’ – mentioned above and analyzed in detail – saw as their immediate origin a fatal assault on university students in the heart of the national capital of Delhi. This was the first time, in the recent political history of the nation, that a mass social movement articulated itself in response to the violence(s) inflicted on the ‘idea’ of a university, alongside the attack on Muslim citizenship-rights. In the process, participants from the many protest sites used the metaphor of a ‘death-in-life’ that made the Indian Muslim subject find resonances with life within the Indian university. That the most minoritized of Indian political subjectivities – the Muslim immigrant – will find an analogue in the figure of the university-student was the most incredible effect produced by this moment of popular churning.

It is in this space of the ‘unthought’ that I situate my present inquiry: insofar as the fear of death is what brought the ‘illegal migrant’ and the university student together, what is the relationship between death and the university?

Can death be the predicament of the *universitas*, when through its entire history the latter has struggled to appropriate (whether in the study of scriptures or in literature, medicine and the arts) the right and the authority to pronounce over death? Laying bare this same history, a phenomenological approach shows the mirror to an *other* destiny of the university in the moment of the plague. It is through periods of pestilence that the university has been forced to live death in body and being. The plague is the university’s death-in-being, and insofar as it confronted its scholars with a radical otherness of/to life – the plague was also the only chance of the *universitas* to finally transgress the ascetic quarantine of ‘academic freedom’ and become one with the *communitas*.

I will take this threat of ‘touch’ (understood in an Indian historical context as pollution/infection) by the *communitas* as the university’s most proximate anxiety, and the means for its self-preservation thus resorted to through what Roberto Esposito calls “immunitary” mechanisms. That the current pandemic – again, a modern epidemiological parallel to the erstwhile plague – must reincarnate the neoliberal university either in dematerialized digital contexts or through a disaggregate of distrustful, dis-aligned, ‘socially distant’ citizen-subjects is only a culmination of the immunitary dystopia. It is by tracing the current trajectories of Indian higher education and against the chronicle(s) of such a death foretold that this chapter hopes to open its argument indefinitely for future manifestos.

January 31, 2022

SALVAGING LABOR

GROWING UP AT A BEIRUT SCRAPYARD

Elizabeth Saleh

This paper tells the story of underage Syrian waste pickers growing up at a small scrapyard located in a run-down building in Beirut. It is an account of their lives framed by a tale of Lebanon's scrap metal. Scrap copper and iron have long been two of Lebanon's leading exports. The industry relies on migrants -- and typically, forced migrants -- some are based at small scrapyards, where the scrapyard master sells to large scrapyard, with the volatile prices of the *bourse*.

The small scrapyard community comes from a rural village near Raqqa, Syria. Described with the term *yinksh*, which was used also to refer to weeding and gathering practices carried out by women and children, their salvaging labor not only bore trace of peasantry and gendered sentiments, ideals, and values but also those concerned with generational positioning. As such, waste picking has long been associated with that of young boys. It was following the intensification of fighting in 2011, that waste picking became a central activity for young boys. This was when families began to send their boys to work as waste pickers at the scrapyard. Throughout my fieldwork between 2015 and 2021, boys ranging from the ages of 8 to 16 years old, some brothers and others, cousins, remained under the care and supervision of the scrapyard *muallim* (master), a young man in his twenties, who is also from the same community.

Due to the relative stability of their work, these young waste pickers seemingly took on the patriarchal role as the main monetary providers for their families. The scrapyard's modelling of economic activities sought to limit the cascading effects of the volatile market of scrap metal. Thus, even if a young boy of 9 years of age became an important breadwinner, he could never really fill the patriarchal position of his deceased father. A young waste picker's efforts were *less* applauded and commended in terms of the specific amounts of cash he provided for his family. He was obliged to sell to the *muallim* who, in turn, was obliged to send adequate amounts of money to the boy's family.

The boys were caught in a situation of protracted displacement, in a country that presented limited opportunity for Syrian forced migrants. Tensions arose when boys entered into new life stages but continued to carry out waste picking activities.

I show that there are kinds of markets operating from within the scrapyard. Pushing carts made from makeshift baskets, the boys rummaged through the garbage -- and, not just in search of black gold. For there was another price logic operating inside the scrapyard. This was the *suq* where used goods such as clothes, toys, books, and chopped up wooden furniture was sold by another kin member to the *suq al sha'bi* (people's market) -- these are travelling flea markets in the Bekaa Valley.

The stakes may have been higher in the *bourse* and the profit returns far greater, but those of the *suq* were even more enmeshed within the community's own notion of a just price. One, influenced not only by specific peasantry and tribal legacies that travelled with them from Syria into Lebanon but also those concerned with certain socialist ideals and values once promoted by the Syrian Arab Republic.

By sorting through the kinds of recycling economies operating inside the small scrapyard, I demonstrate the analytical importance of examining the social and political dimensions of markets, how they are formed and maintained. By examining the way underage labor conjoins with diverse sentiments, values, and morals that stretch from inside the small scrapyard, to broader recycling chains, state and supra-state legislation and practice, I bring to the forefront the complexities and contradictions of wageless life located at a specific interface of formal and informal economies, in a country, and, more broadly, a region constantly enduring conflict, crisis and, most recently, financial collapse.

February 7, 2022

THE SHOOTING
HOW AMERICANS LIVE AND DIE BY THE GUN

Harel Shapira

An increasingly large number of Americans carry guns wherever they go. They carry them to work, to the grocery store, and to pick up their kids from school. What are they afraid of? And how, if at all, does carrying a gun alleviate their fears? Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at firearms training schools and interviews with people who carry guns on a regular basis, I examine the ways that gun owners think about and experience fear, safety, and violence.

February 14, 2022

TRUMP 2020

FEAR, LOSS AND HOPE AMONG RUST BELT TRUMP ACTIVISTS

Biko Koenig

How do anxieties over status loss translate into support for the right-wing populism of the Trump era? Drawing on ethnographic and interview research of the 2020 presidential election, I argue that the motivations of Trump supporters are not only about surface level concerns regarding immigration and the economy. What I found, and what I describe in this talk, were people deeply connected to a pitched battle over the future of the country. While this battle included disagreements around policy, ideology, or partisanship, the conflict might be best captured as a disagreement over what Cecelia Ridgeway refers to as shared status beliefs (2019). Who does society think is competent? Who is ultimately worthy of status? For most Trump supporters in Northeastern Pennsylvania, status concerns were not simply about the loss of economic opportunity, but about the perceived injustice of status loss relative to competing notions of status worthiness offered by political opponents. Attention to this status conflict helps explain how status concerns led to political mobilization rather than withdrawal and the dominance of right-wing over left-wing populism in its content.

To unpack my findings, I draw on a multi-level process of collective identity politicization framework developed by Marjoka van Doorn, Jacomijne Prins, and Saskia Welshen to explain the role of status in the political motivations of Trump supporters (2013). In this framework, meso-level political actors leverage preexisting macro-social imbalances of power and status in society to develop frames designed to coalesce and politicize collective identities on the micro level of individual meaning making and interpersonal interactions.

Let me begin with a brief overview of how this multi-level process unfolded this in the 2020 election. Drawing on broad social cleavages of race, class, and partisanship, the “identity entrepreneurs” of party elites and staffers transformed this raw material into compelling frames that sought to shape how individuals made sense of themselves within the world and acted within it. Candidates and organizers offered narratives that cast hard-working Americans as unjustly hurt by corrupt, elite politicians from both parties who not only saw no value in the working people of America, but were actively seeking to destroy them and their country. These frames constructed a populist notion of the righteous “American people” who are called to fight against the domination and oppression of those in power. In doing so, these frames combine the status concerns of the working class with a sense of righteous injustice about their loss of status alongside a normative vision of how the country’s problems could be solved by re-centering conservative working class status beliefs. On the interpersonal level, individual Trump supporters become politicized when they become aware of and involved with “their shared group membership, their common enemy or opponent, and especially the wider societal struggle that is affected by and affects” the struggle of the election (Simon and Klandermans 2001, 324). The political action of Trump supporters was spurred through emotionally laden rejections of status beliefs that did not center working class values of hard work, manual occupations, and small-town family-centric culture. For many, the Democratic Party coalition represented a set of status beliefs that celebrated “bullshit” service and professional work, overvalued “liberal” college education, and exalted out-groups such as “illegal immigrants” and the “lazy unemployed” over “hard-working Americans.” Further, beliefs about cultural elitism, electoral fraud, and conspiracism framed the Democratic party as one defined by corruption, authoritarianism, and moral decay. Taken together, most Trump supporters not only saw these status beliefs as incorrect and deeply unfair, but also as *dominant and oppressive*, legitimating resistance to these beliefs as righteous opposition to an oppressive status regime.

February 22, 2022

AFTER DEBT
LATIN AMERICAN TRANSNATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS
IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT TO HOUSING IN SPAIN

Maka Suarez

At the turn of the 21st century, large numbers of Latin American migrants, particularly of Ecuadorian origin, moved to Spain due to the economic collapse in the region. There, they literally built the housing bubble, as many worked in the flourishing construction industry, but they also bought into it. Between 2003 and 2007 my interlocutors took out mortgage debts in the hundreds of thousands of euros for acquiring a house in Spain. They bought rundown properties, grossly overpriced, in the poorest neighborhoods on the outskirts of Barcelona. Their hopes for becoming proprietors, however, were short-lived. The housing boom came to a screeching halt in 2008, unemployment —particularly in the construction sector— grew exponentially, and most of my interlocutors fell in arrears, defaulted, were foreclosed, faced home eviction and homelessness, and had to face new migratory decisions. In their efforts to face dispossession, they became activists in Spain's largest social movement for the right to housing: the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages or La PAH for its Spanish acronym.

This talk introduces the concept of *transnational household infrastructure* as a creative analytic for understanding the current moment in financial capitalism. It does so from a little studied vantage point: the perspective of Latin American migrants. My ethnographic material shows that the intersection of international migration and the financialization of housing in Spain is not a zero-sum game, whereby banks repossess a house and migrant debtors lose their home. Rather, I claim, if we pay attention to the architecture of household relations and the financial arrangements that enable ownership and the sustenance of family obligations, we obtain a different picture. This approach reveals a distinct entanglement with transnational forms of speculation, and provides a space for thinking with both remittances and mortgages as a reconfiguration of the political. Through their participation in La PAH, Ecuadorian activists developed resistance strategies for safeguarding their families and future livelihoods. At the same time, their actions represent novel counter-speculative transformative possibilities.

February 28, 2022

DEMOCRACY'S DIALECTIC MOVEMENTS, "BACKSLIDING", AND "DEEPENING" DEMOCRACY

Kenneth Roberts

Democracy's retreat on the global stage in the early 21st century is a sobering reminder that history does not follow any predefined script. Following a generation of steady democratic advances across much of the world between the 1970s and 1990s, an accelerating wave of autocratization has affected several dozen countries since the turn of the century. This democratic erosion or "backsliding" has occurred in a number of countries once seen as democratic leaders in their respective world regions, arguably including the global liberal hegemon itself, the United States.

This global retreat poses formidable challenges to conventional modes of theorizing about democracy—in particular, conceptualizations that rely on linear or teleological assumptions about democratic endpoints; static notions of democratic consolidation; the self-enacting resiliency of institutional checks and balances; and endogenous processes of democratic norm construction and behavioral conformism. It has also forced scholars to reassess the nature and sources of threats to democracy, recognizing that the central challenge is not always to induce the compliance of those who *lose* elections, but rather those who emerge victorious and try to turn the transitory institutional prerogatives of incumbency into a source of permanent competitive advantage. The latter, "winners' dilemma" illuminates the potential for the subversion of democracy from within, by actors internal to the democratic process itself—in short, an endogenous process of democratic backsliding. If the third wave of democratization in the late 20th century demonstrated the fallacy of believing that democracy has rigid structural or cultural preconditions, recent patterns of backsliding have revealed the contingent and contested underpinnings of democratic institutions in *any* political order, given the presence (whether latent or active) of markedly authoritarian political and cultural currents.

Contemporary political conflicts thus call for a different set of analytical cornerstones for the study of democratic struggles. These cornerstones include: (1) the contingency of the political pacts or compromises, the behavioral norms, and the competitive equilibria that undergird democratic institutional arrangements; (2) the countervailing roles of individual and collective actors who challenge or defend these institutional arrangements, typically by seeking to expand or restrict democratic inclusion and contestation; and (3) the dynamic processes that make democracy a perpetual work-in-progress. So conceived, democracy is best understood not as a standardized regime template or a static endpoint of political development, but rather as a dialectical frontier that advances—and sometimes recedes—by fits and starts, according to the dynamic interplay of these countervailing forces.

The comparative analysis of countries like Chile and the United States illustrates how democratic regimes are often the institutional crystallization of political compromises that become the fault lines of ongoing regime contestation. Social movements play a central role in this contestation, often advancing the dialectical frontier—that is, "deepening" democracy, as in contemporary Chile or the U.S. during the Civil Rights movement. Counter-movements, however, can also activate political backlashes against democratic advances, becoming integral to backsliding processes that reverse democratic inclusion and force the frontier to retreat.

March 7, 2022

RETHINKING EQUALITY (AGAIN)

Jill Frank

In the 1896 US Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Justice Harlan claimed, in dissent, that: “Our constitution is colorblind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law.” “Colorblind” constitutionalism was anti-segregationist in Justice Harlan’s usage, as it was in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which overturned *Plessy*’s “separate but equal” doctrine, and as it was, too, in later Supreme Court cases, which invoked “colorblind” equality in the service of expanding the reach of the 14th amendment against racial discrimination. More recently, however, the Supreme Court has been using “colorblind” equality to dismantle anti-racist judicial precedents and legislation and to justify its refusal to address legacies and ongoing practices of systemic institutional and structural racism.

Drawing on American jurisprudence, feminist, ancient, and contemporary political and legal theory, the research explores the historical, political, and philosophical limitations of colorblind equality and theorizes an alternative understanding of equality that weaves through the dissenting Supreme Court opinions, beginning in 1978, with Justice Thurgood Marshall’s dissent in *The Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* on the topic of affirmative action, continuing up through more recent dissents in cases concerning voting rights, employment, and education. Two key terms of this analysis are what the texts of Plato and Aristotle call “arithmetic equality” and “geometric equality.” Arithmetic equality, a precursor to “colorblind” equality, treats persons as numerically different individuals who are abstractly the same and, as such, commensurable with one another. “Geometric equality,” by contrast, fundamentally depends on differences, both between people, and among people and things, while offering patterns for relating across those differences. As the distributive principle of “giving due measure to each and assigning in proportion what is fitting to each,” geometric equality looks like what today is called equity.

In the ancient world, geometric or proportional equality was the principle of justice of aristocracies and oligarchies, and was used to inscribe exclusions, create hierarchy, and to oppress. This has been the case across the history of political thought and practice, and there is always this risk when equality is bound with difference. When, however, sameness is treated as a requirement for equality, as the current Supreme Court makes plain in its jurisprudence of colorblind equality, differences are left to operate anyway, immune from public accountability, while being covered over by the banner of givenness.

March 14, 2022

THE REAL POSSIBILITY OF PHYSICAL KILLING
A FEMINIST READING OF *THE CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL*

Robyn Marasco

In this talk, I present a feminist interpretation of the major political works of Carl Schmitt, focused on his 1932 book, *The Concept of the Political*. I argue for a pathos of masculinity that pervades Schmitt's rhetoric and helps to explain the hold that his ideas have on so many thinkers across the political spectrum. More than a feminist critique of Schmitt, however, I argue for the inadvertent contributions to feminism found in his otherwise abstract political concepts. Decentering the infamous friend-enemy distinction for which he is better known, I argue that the "existentialist" position that Schmitt develops in *The Concept of the Political*, which revolves around the "real possibility of physical killing," opens to an account of the family as a political institution, a political theory of femicide, and a feminist concept of the political. I argue that this concept of the political allows us to see elements of everyday life as properly political in that they raise the real possibility of extreme violence. I conclude my talk with reference to Andrea Dworkin, in some ways more Schmittian than Schmitt himself, who pursues this argument about the real possibility of physical killing in a radically feminist direction.

March 21, 2022

ENGELS AFTER FRANKFURT

CRITICAL THEORY BETWEEN “ANTHROPOCENE” AND “INFORMATION AGE”

Matt Shafer

Our time is Anthropocene and Information Age at once: the ecological and technological dimensions of the contemporary crises of global capitalism are not just deeply intertwined but mutually constitutive. Marxian critical theory, however, has struggled to make sense of this interconnection, in large part because of how the founders of the Frankfurt School abandoned their early hopes of bringing together the natural and social sciences within an overarching, emancipatory materialism.

In the work of Max Horkheimer and his colleagues at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, critical theory first took shape as a program for the unification of conceptual and empirical research—a methodological and epistemological project in which the status of technological practice and of natural-scientific knowledge remained an open question. Across the 1930s and early 1940s, Horkheimer sharpened his vision of critical theory through a sustained confrontation with positivism, which in his view falsely took a particular account of the natural sciences as normative for all forms of human inquiry. In the effort to preserve the autonomy of the critical theory of *society* from the reductionism of the positivists, however, Horkheimer ended up ceding to the latter their own claim to represent truly the scientific study of *nature*. Social theory and natural-scientific research were severed from each other in Horkheimer’s mature program. The equivocal result was a critical theory by which one could see deeply into the intertwining of freedom and domination in capitalist society, but for which it became almost unimaginable that technoscientific practice could play any significant role in achieving a post-capitalist future.

In a moment determined simultaneously by the digital mediation of all public life and by the ecological collapse of our planetary home, this pessimistic withdrawal from science and technology is fundamentally inadequate; they must be reclaimed by and for critique. A model for this task comes from the work of Friedrich Engels, particularly his unfinished *Dialectics of Nature* manuscripts and his neglected writings on the history of technology. Engels’s materialism rules out the sharp antithesis between natural and social science to which Horkheimer eventually retreated. It is characterized by complex attention to the historical character of nature itself, to the interrelation between technological systems and social structures, and to the interconnections between all areas of human knowledge; this attention in turn enables a non-reductionistic and anti-mechanistic account of the meaning of technoscientific practice for human society as a whole—its continuing significance for freedom and not only its complicity with domination. Yet as is today well known, a deliberate turn away from the philosophical legacy of Engels was widely constitutive of the broader “Western Marxist” tradition that the early Frankfurt School exemplified. In this lecture, I argue that the contemporary insufficiency of the Frankfurt critique of technoscience is the price paid by this retreat from Engels’s own work in the lifelong collaboration with Marx. By rereading Engels and the Frankfurt School together, I outline a direction for critical theory today that would move beyond the pessimism about technoscientific practice that characterized the School’s most influential early work—without forfeiting the historical insight such pessimism once animated.

March 28, 2022

MOLECULAR EUGENICS

THE LONG HISTORY OF SOCIOGENOMICS IN THE UNITED STATES

Emily Merchant

On April 1, 2012, National Public Radio (NPR) reported that a highly selective New York preschool had begun making admissions decisions on the basis of children's DNA. The story was totally fabricated, part of NPR's long tradition of airing joke stories on April Fools' Day. It nonetheless hit a note of truth to listeners: a *New York Times* article about the NPR hoax concluded that the only reason preschools weren't actually relying on DNA for admissions was that nobody knew how to use it to predict academic achievement. That would change a year later, when the Social Science Genetic Association Consortium (SSGAC) published its first genome-wide association study (GWAS) of educational attainment, heralding the birth of sociogenomics. Sociogenomicists and their supporters celebrated the field's novelty, complaining that social scientists had neglected the human genome for far too long. Critics argued that sociogenomics was all too familiar, bearing a strong resemblance to the eugenic projects of the early twentieth century and the scientific theories that had supported them. Indeed, by the end of 2019, a start-up called Genomic Prediction was offering to use GWAS results to screen the embryos of in-vitro fertilization (IVF) patients for a variety of complex disorders, including low predicted educational attainment. This talk contends that sociogenomics doesn't just look like eugenics. Rather, sociogenomics is a molecular iteration of behavior genetics, a subfield of psychology that grew directly out of eugenics in the mid-twentieth century.

Eugenics, a term coined in 1883 by English polymath Francis Galton, rests on the premise that socioeconomic status reflects individual intelligence and abilities, which are inherited biologically. Over the first three decades of the twentieth century, Galton's followers in the United States imported the Binet-Simon test from France, adapting it to measure an individual's intelligence quotient (IQ), a supposedly-stable metric of inborn intelligence. They also developed methods of estimating the "heritability" of intelligence, the amount of variance in a sample that is due to genetic variation rather than non-genetic variation. Intelligence testers, in turn, adapted IQ tests to increase heritability estimates to support the claim that what they were measuring was in fact an innate quality. In this way, measures of intelligence and its heritability were mutually constituted in order to validate eugenic theory. By the middle of the twentieth century, heritability research came to be known as behavior genetics and attracted the support of the nominally non-racist American Eugenics Society and the overtly racist Pioneer Fund. Behavior geneticists disagreed among themselves over whether differences in average IQ between Black and White Americans were genetic in origin, but agreed that intelligence was genetic in nature, presenting popular audiences with a consensus about genetic determinism. After the completion of the Human Genome Project at the beginning of the twenty-first century, behavior geneticists attempted to correlate intelligence and other psychological traits and behaviors with specific genes. The failure of this line of inquiry quickly gave way to GWAS, which have now been carried out on every imaginable behavior or social outcome.

Sociogenomicists and their supporters consider GWAS a wild success, drawing on their results to support a broad range of scientific and political claims. GWAS, however, have provided very little information about which genes influence which behaviors or social outcomes, or about how they might do so. As a result of this indeterminacy, GWAS have focused social scientists' attention on the nature-nurture debate, eliding the role of public policy and social institutions in producing and maintaining a deeply inequitable socioeconomic order.

April 4, 2022

انت - فاضة

THE IRAQI UPRISING AND THE POLITICAL IMAGINATION

Zahra Ali

Uprisings are often analyzed through theoretical frames that in many ways dictate what they should be. For some, uprisings in the regions are merely 'refolutions' because they supposedly lack a radical political agenda. In the case of Iraq, the scholarship refers to the October 2019 uprising as 'a shi'a uprising' or 'a youth uprising' or describes it as a movement denouncing corruption. For some scholars, the recent uprisings are not feminist enough, they do not have real agendas, they are not 'political' enough because they are not primarily concerned with capitalism, class struggle or imperialism. In many ways, the scholarship about recent uprisings seems to be trying to bring order to their messiness. It seems that in their inability to make sense of the poetic, many scholars fall back into predefined ideological or theoretical framing.

This lecture offers an analysis of the October 2019 uprising in Iraq that takes a different approach. I am letting the categories of analysis emerge from the protests and the protesters and their very discursive and material realities defined by space and time, and I am looking at how bodies and affects are mobilized. It is important to point out the abstractness of the ways in which terms such as 'democracy', 'civil society', 'women's rights' are often used and it is necessary to show that what is often considered as local is in reality the product of transnational dynamics of postcoloniality and empire and what is considered global can be white middle-class and neoliberal.

Some of the questions that are central for me in this lecture that situates Iraq in the discussion about uprisings are: what does the October 2019 uprising say about the meaning of the 'political'? What happens when we center the experiences and the subjectivities of Iraqi protesters in the understanding of 'emancipation'? What changes when Iraq and Iraqis are taken as a framework in the common understanding and theorizing about 'life' or living a dignified life in the age of the anthropocene?

April 11, 2022

WHAT GIVES?

MONEY AND THE BLACK FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Tanisha Ford

The mainstream media's coverage of American billionaires' exorbitant "guilt giving" to Black Lives Matter organizations in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in 2020 exposed the painful reality that we, as a nation, believe that it's the wealthiest 1 percent who saves American democracy in times of social and economic peril. In this myth of *noblesse oblige*, African Americans and other people of color are cast as the pathologically poor recipients of charity, never as institution (re)builders. These limitations of contemporary philanthropy journalism are the product of a bigger national blind spot: We don't talk about the hidden role of money in the story of racial justice movements. Our favorite stories about the Civil Rights movement grip us because they appeal to our learned belief that social movements are fueled on altruism, love, or rage, that they erupt organically from seismic shifts in social and political life. In this formulation, money is an afterthought. However, voter registration drives, freedom buses, art programs, and legal campaigns cost cash. Where does the money come from?

I center my talk on a glamorous Harlem social worker named Mollie Moon to tell this complex history in an engaging way. Initially, I was depicting Moon as a socialite and party planner. However, since drafting the initial book proposal, I've discovered that most of her parties were actually fundraisers. At the time of her death, in 1990, Moon was said to have raised more than \$3 million for the National Urban League. She financially spearheaded countless voting rights and equal housing campaigns. Through meticulous archival work, I've started piecing together Moon's political network, people such as: Langston Hughes, A. Philip Randolph, Jackie Robinson, Augusta Savage, Romare Bearden, and Mary McLeod Bethune.

This group of African American government aides, artists, entertainers, and crime bosses comprise what brilliant legal theorist Pauli Murray refers to as the "Depression Generation." These were people born in the first decade of the 20th century. Many of them had followed the mandate that a college education was the clearest way to Negro advancement—only to graduate just as the deepest depression in history decimated Black wealth and stranded Black communities already in economic flux.

These architects of change had to strategize ways to rebuild America in their own radical democratic vision. And doing so would require a strong, national fundraising plan that could push money across the country. The racial justice philanthropists of the Depression Generation melded the worldbuilding vision germane to foundation philanthropy with African-derived notions of mutual aid, volunteerism, and mass giving. What makes this *mélange* of historical actors so fascinating are the complex personalities, unexpected alliances, and rivalries that emerge as this group of African Americans attempted to create a new social and cultural infrastructure for America, working with key white partners including progressive white philanthropists like Winthrop Rockefeller and Jeanne Murray Vanderbilt who were breaking with their own family traditions to fund a new vision of democracy.

April 18, 2022

BLACK WOMEN, RADICAL POLITICS, AND GLOBAL VISIONS OF FREEDOM

Keisha Blain

On July 12, 2016, Nigerian-American activist Opal Tometi delivered a speech before the United Nations General Assembly. Only three years prior, Tometi had joined forces with queer activists Alicia Garza and Patrisse Cullors to launch Black Lives Matter (also known as BLM). Tometi's speech before the United Nations was part of this vital transnational work. And the occasion proved a historic moment for BLM—it was the first time one of their leaders had the opportunity to address the most powerful international body for human rights. Tometi used the opportunity to address state-sanctioned violence. Through her address, she emphasized the need to view police killings in the United States as part of an ongoing human rights crisis. Because state-sanctioned violence against Black people is a human rights issue, she argued, the response and solution required a global effort. By linking local and national concerns to global ones and calling for an expansive vision of rights and freedom, Tometi was, as she pointed out, walking “in the footsteps of many courageous civil and human rights defenders” who came before her.

My next book, tentatively entitled *A GLOBAL STRUGGLE: How Black Women Led the Fight for Human Rights*, offers an in-depth examination of how Black women in the United States have led the struggle for human rights from the end of the Civil War to the advent of Black Lives Matter. I demonstrate that Black women have been at the forefront of the struggle for human rights by framing their demands not only as civil or citizenship rights, but also as human rights problems of epic proportions that extend well beyond national borders. For Black women, the struggle for Black liberation in the United States has always been an expansive issue—one that is inextricable from the struggle of all people to attain the liberties and opportunities available to them, regardless of race, ethnicity, and nationality. My book project weaves together a tapestry of Black women leaders and activists from diverse backgrounds to demonstrate how these women—some eminent and notable, and others working in complete obscurity for all their lives—fought for and worked to redefine the rights and dignity of all people.

April 25, 2022

II

Theme Seminar

Political Mobilizations and Social Movements

There has been, in recent years, a revival and renewal of political mobilizations and social movements across the world in terms of claims as well as forms. From Hong Kong to Santiago, from Beirut to Algiers, from the Tahrir Square to the Gezi Park, from the indignados in Spain to the yellow vests in France, massive demonstrations have shaken state apparatuses, provoking democratic reforms or passive resistance, prompting the fall of governments or brutal repressions. In parallel, from gay rights to ecofeminism, from humanitarianism to veganism, from Black Lives Matter to #MeToo, from No Borders to Extinction Rebellion, numerous initiatives have raised awareness regarding issues related to various expressions of injustice and domination, and have sometimes generated major cultural transformations of contemporary societies. Whereas these progressive mobilizations and movements have received much attention, there has also been a resurgence of reactionary, conservative and anti-democratic responses grounded in traditionalist, fundamentalist, nationalist, xenophobic, racist, sexist and anti-feminist ideologies, which have been less studied and deserve more scrutiny. In light of this remarkable diversity, from left to far-right, we would like to revisit two related classical themes of the social sciences: contentious politics and collective action.

How are these manifestations of discontent about the current state of affairs to be apprehended? What do they signal about present moral, political and social crises? What do they reveal about people's capacity to rise up even under authoritarian regimes? Are novel modes of organization being tested? Are new repertoires of action being invented? Which place does violence or, conversely, civil disobedience occupy? Under which conditions can they succeed, or on the contrary, be crushed? What are the role and responsibility of the academia with regard to these protests? Which possible articulations can there be between critical theory and such mobilizations and movements? These are some of the questions that we attempted to address via a conversation across the disciplines of the social sciences and the humanities.

(Un)civil Society and the Question of Violence – October 13, 2021

(Curated by Zahra Ali, Zachariah Mampilly, and Judith Scheele)

Readings:

- Asef Bayat, “Plebeians of the Arab Spring,” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 56(S11), October 2015, pp. S33-S43
- Ruchi Chaturvedi, “Agentive Capacities, Democratic Possibilities, and the Urban Poor: Rethinking Recent Popular Protests in West Africa,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 29(3), 2016, pp. 307-325
- Vicky Osterweil, “Introduction,” pp. 1-19, in *In Defense of Looting: A Riotous History of Uncivil Action*, (New York: Bold Type Books, 2020)

Archive:

- Partha Chatterjee, “Sovereign Violence and the Domain of the Political,” pp. 82-100, in Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat (eds.), *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
- Islah Jad, “The NGO-isation of Arab Women’s Movements,” *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 35(4), October 2004, pp. 34-42
- Heist, “Steal Something!” *Journal of Workplace Reappropriation*, April 2010, pp. 1-35
- subMedia, “Steal something from Work Day,” Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33QwamMHVIA>
- The Real News Network, “How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible,” Interview with Charlie Cobb, Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZyWKW1vjBM>

Technology, Infrastructure, and Political Mobilization – October 27, 2021
(Curated by Marielle Debos, Jorge Núñez, and Sonja van Wichelen)

Readings:

- Antina von Schnitzler, “Introduction: Democracy’s Infrastructure, Apartheid’s Debris,” pp. 1-30, in *Democracy’s Infrastructure: Techno-Politics and Protest after Apartheid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016)
- Sheila Jasanoff, “Imagined Worlds: The Politics of Future-making in the Twenty-first Century,” pp. 27-44 in Andreas Wenger, Ursula Jasper, and Myriam Dunn Cavelty (eds.), *The Politics and Science of Prevision: Governing and Probing the Future*, (London: Routledge, 2020)
- Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa, “#Ferguson: Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United States,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 42(1), February 2015, pp. 4-17

Archive:

- Philip Mirowski, “Hell is Truth Seen Too Late,” *boundary 2*, Vol. 46(1), 2019, pp. 1-53
- Nanjala Nyabola, “In Kenya, Election Manipulation Is a Matter of Life and Death,” *The Nation*, March 28, 2018, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/in-kenya-election-manipulation-is-a-matter-of-life-and-death/>
- Timothy Mitchell, “Infrastructures Work on Time,” *New Silk Roads*, 2020, <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/new-silk-roads/312596/infrastructures-work-on-time/>

The Politics of Knowledge Production – November 10, 2021

(Curated by Anthony Alessandrini, Debaditya Bhattacharya, Asli İğsiz, and Joan W. Scott)

Readings:

- Debaditya Bhattacharya, “Between Disciplines and Interdisciplines,” pp. 183-208, in Debaditya Bhattacharya (ed.), *The University of Unthought: Notes for a Future*, (London: Routledge India, 2018)
- Joan W. Scott, “What Kind of Freedom is Academic Freedom?” *Critical Times*, Vol. 5(1), March 2022, pp. 1-19
- Roderick A. Ferguson, “Six: The Golden Era of Instructed Minorities,” pp. 180-208 in *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012)

Archive:

- Sylvia Wynter, “Long Read: No Humans Involved,” *New Frame*, April 29, 2019, <https://www.newframe.com/long-read-knowledge-must-mutate-be-fully-human/>
- Anthony Alessandrini, Excerpts from *Decolonize Multiculturalism*, Draft
- Debaditya Bhattacharya, “‘The Dangerous Ground’ for Democracy: Doing Interdisciplinary Social Sciences in the Public University,” Draft
- Silvia Federici, “The University: A Knowledge Common?” pp. 99-101 in *Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, (Oakland: PM Press, 2019)
- Zerrin Özlem Biner, “Precarious Solidarities: ‘Poisonous Knowledge’ and the Academics for Peace in Times of Authoritarianism,” *Social Anthropology*, Vol. 27(S2), December 2019, pp. 15-32
- Adam Sitze, “Academic Unfreedom, Unacademic Freedom: Part One of Two,” *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 58(4), Winter 2017, pp. 589-607
- Asli İğsiz, “Origins, Biopolitics, and Historicist Humanism,” pp. 131-169 in *Humanism in Ruins: Entangled Legacies of the Greek-Turkish Population Exchange*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018)
- UNESCO, *Courier*, Vol. 1(4), May 1948
- UNESCO, “Introduction,” pp. 7-10, in *Humanism and Education in East and West*, (Paris: UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1953)
- UNESCO, “Report of the Discussions, Followed by General Conclusions and Recommendations,” pp. 11-26, in *Humanism and Education in East and West*, (Paris: UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1953)
- Wendy Brown, “Educating Human Capital,” pp. 175-200 in *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)
- Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” pp. 109-133 in Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980)
- Scholars for Social Justice, *Thoughts on an Abolitionist University: Freeing Higher Education from Itself*, Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyVnGef9mhU>

Mobilizing the State, Negotiating the State – November 22, 2021
(curated by Daniel Agbibo, Anne-Claire Defossez, and Andrea Sempértegui)

Readings:

- Jake Alimahomed-Wilson and Dana Williams, “State Violence, Social Control, and Resistance,” *Journal of Social Justice*, Vol. 6, 2016, pp. 1-15
- Tobias Hagmann and Didier Péclard, “Negotiating Statehood: Dynamics of Power and Domination in Africa,” *Development and Change*, Vol. 41(4), 2010, pp. 539-562
- Sandro Mezzadra and Verónica Gago, “In the Wake of the Plebeian Revolt: Social Movements, ‘Progressive’ Governments, and the Politics of Autonomy in Latin America,” *Anthropological Theory*, Vol. 17(4), 2017, pp. 474-496

Archive:

- Timothy Mitchell, “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85(1), March 1991, pp. 77-96
- Rivke Jaffe, “The Hybrid State: Crime and Citizenship in Urban Jamaica,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol 40(4), November 2013, pp. 734-748
- Audra Simpson, “The State is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty,” *Theory & Event*, Vol. 19(4), 2016, pp. 1-19

The Actors in “Political Mobilizations and Social Movements” – December 8, 2021

(Curated by Kenneth Roberts, Elizabeth Saleh, and Maka Suarez)

Readings:

- Simon Tormey, “Democracy After Representation,” pp. 125-149, in *The End of Representative Politics*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2015)
- Sophie Day and Victoria Goddard, “New Beginnings between Public and Private: Arendt and Ethnographies of Activism,” *Cultural Dynamics*, Vol. 22(2), 2010, pp. 137-154
- Alpa Shah, “Preface,” pp. xi-xx in *Nightmarch: Among India’s Revolutionary Guerrillas*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019)
- Alpa Shah, “Meeting the Guerrillas,” pp. 49-56 in *Nightmarch: Among India’s Revolutionary Guerrillas*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019)

Archive:

- Nicolás M. Somma, Matías Bargsted, Rodolfo Disi Pavlic and Rodrigo M. Medel, “No Water in the Oasis: The Chilean Spring of 2019-2020,” *Social Movement Studies*, Vol. 20(4), 2021, pp. 495-502
- Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, Vol. (25/26), 1990, pp. 56-80
- David Graeber, “Army of Altruists,” pp. 67-78 in *Revolutions in Reverse: Essays on Politics, Violence, Art and Imagination*, (London: Minor Compositions, 2011)
- Sana Tannoury-Karam, “No Place for Neutrality: The Case for Democracy and the League Against Nazism and Fascism in Syria and Lebanon,” pp. 132-151, in Kasper Braskén, Nigel Copsey and David Featherstone (eds.), *Anti-Fascism in a Global Perspective: Transnational Networks, Exile Communities, and Radical Internationalism*, (London: Routledge, 2020)
- Rima Majed and Lana Salman, “Lebanon’s Thawra,” *Middle East Report* (292/293), Fall/Winter 2019, <https://merip.org/2019/12/lebanons-thawra/>

Rethinking the “Right” and the Politics of Mobilization – January 26, 2022

(Curated by William Callison, Asli İğsiz, and Biko Koenig)

Readings:

- Banu Bargu, “Neo-Ottomanism: An Alt-Right Formation from the South?” *Social Research*, Vol. 88(2), Summer 2021, pp. 299-333
- Stuart Hall, “Racism and Reaction, 1978,” pp. 142-157 in Sally Davidson, David Featherstone, Michael Rustin, and Bill Schwarz (eds.), *Selected Political Writings: The Great Moving Right Show and Other Essays*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017)
- Daniel Martinez HoSang and Joseph E. Lowndes, “Introduction: The Changing Labor of Race in the New Gilded Age,” pp. 1-18 in *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019)

Archive:

- Daniel Martinez HoSang and Joseph E. Lowndes, “The Incomprehensible Malice—of Poor White America: New Racializations of White Precarity,” pp. 47-71 in *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019)
- Justin Gest, “Peripheral Visions: The Politics of Displacement in East London” pp. 39-73 in *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Justin Gest, “After the Fall: The Politics of Insecurity in Youngstown, Ohio,” pp. 74-115 in *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Ezgi Güner, “Rethinking Whiteness in Turkey Through the AKP’s Foreign Policy in Africa South of the Sahara,” *Middle East Report* Vol. 299, Summer 2021, <https://merip.org/2021/08/rethinking-whiteness-in-turkey-through-the-akps-foreign-policy-in-africa-south-of-the-sahara/>
- Greg Johnson, “Three Pillars of White Identity Politics: Kinship, Culture, Love of One’s Own,” pp. 33-54 in *White Identity Politics*, (San Francisco: Counter-Currents Publishing Ltd., 2020)
- David Plotke, “The Success and Anger of the Modern American Right: A New Introduction to The Radical Right,” pp. xi-lxxvi in Daniel Bell (ed.), *The Radical Right: The New American Right Expanded and Updated*, 3rd edition, (New York: Routledge, 2001)
- Cristina Beltrán, “Opinion: To Understand Trump’s Support, We Must Think in Terms of Multiracial Whiteness,” *Washington Post*, January 15, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/01/15/understand-trumps-support-we-must-think-terms-multiracial-whiteness/>
- William Callison and Quinn Slobodian, “Coronapolitics from the Reichstag to the Capitol,” *Boston Review*, January 12, 2021, <https://bostonreview.net/articles/quinn-slobodian-toxic-politics-coronakspeticism/>
- Reed Berkowitz, “A Game Designer’s Analysis of QAnon: Playing with Reality,” *Curiouser Institute*, September 30, 2020, <https://medium.com/curiouser-institute/a-game-designers-analysis-of-qanon-580972548be5>
- Ezgi Güner, “NGOization of Islamic Education: The Post-Coup Turkish State and Sufi Orders in Africa South of the Sahara,” *Religions*, Vol. 12(24), 2021, pp. 1-22
- Hikmet Kocamaner, “The Politics of Family Values in Erdogan’s New Turkey,” *Middle East Report*, Vol. 288, Fall 2018, <https://merip.org/2018/12/the-politics-of-family-values-in-erdogans-new-turkey/>
- Hikmet Kocamaner, “Regulating the Family Through Religion: Secularism, Islam, and the Politics of the Family in Contemporary Turkey,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 46(4), November 2019, pp. 495-508

Financialization, Political Mobilizations and Social Movements – February 9, 2022

(Curated by Wendy Brown, William Callison, and Jorge Núñez)

Readings:

- Lisa Adkins, Melinda Cooper, and Martijn Konings, “Introduction,” pp. 1-11, in *The Asset Economy: Property Ownership and the New Logic of Inequality*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2020)
- Lisa Adkins, Melinda Cooper, and Martijn Konings, “New Class Realities,” pp. 54-79, in *The Asset Economy: Property Ownership and the New Logic of Inequality*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2020)
- Michel Feher, “The Stakes of Corporate Governance,” pp. 43-44, in *Rated Agency: Investee Politics in a Speculative Age*, (New York: Zone Books, 2018)
- Michel Feher, “The Bonds of Governmental Policy,” pp. 108-131, in *Rated Agency: Investee Politics in a Speculative Age*, (New York: Zone Books, 2018)

Archive:

- Sudha Narayanan, “TIF- The Three Farm Bills,” *The India Forum*, September 28, 2020, <https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/three-farm-bills>
- Caroline Schuster and Sohini Kar, “Subprime Empire: On the In-Betweenness of Finance,” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 62(4), August 2021, pp. 389-411
- Jorge Núñez, “A Financial Frontier for Independence: The Household and the Market in Catalonia,” Draft

March 8, Transnational Feminisms on the Move – March 9, 2022
(Curated by Anne-Claire Defossez, Andrea Sempértegui and Cecilia Palmerio)

Readings:

- Liam Campling and Alejandro Colás, “Capitalism and the Sea: Sovereignty, Territory and Appropriation in the Global Ocean,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 36(4), 2018, pp. 776-794
- Charmaine Chua, Martin Danyluk, Deborah Cowen and Laleh Khalili, “Introduction: Turbulent Circulation: Building a Critical Engagement with Logistics,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 36(4), 2018, pp. 617-629
- Mazen Labban, “Deterritorializing Extraction: Bioaccumulation and the Planetary Mine,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 104(3), 2014, pp. 560-576

Archive:

- Cecilia Palmeiro, “The Strike as Our Revolutionary Time,” *Verso*, Blog, March 7, 2018, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3670-the-strike-as-our-revolutionary-time>
- Cecilia Palmeiro, “Ni Una Menos and the Politics of Translation,” *Spheres*, (6), March 12, 2020, <https://spheres-journal.org/contribution/ni-una-menos-and-the-politics-of-translation/>
- Andrea Sempértegui, “Sustaining the Struggle, Taking Over the Space: Amazonian Women and the Indigenous Movement in Ecuador,” pp. 651–657 in Shirley Anne Tate, Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Race and Gender*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022)
- Andrea Sempértegui, “Indigenous Women’s Activism, Ecofeminism, and Extractivism: Partial Connections in the Ecuadorian Amazon,” *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 17(1), 2019, pp. 197-224
- Verónica Gago, “Los vientos de huelga soplan en el mundo: Un mapa de cómo se prepara el 8M,” *Página 12*, February 25, 2022, <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/403497-los-vientos-de-huelga-soplan-en-el-mundo-un-mapa-de-como-se->
- Daniel Denvir, “Feminist International w/ Verónica Gago,” *The Dig*, Podcast, February 12, 2022, <https://thedigradio.com/podcast/feminist-international-w-veronica-gago/>
- Sonia E. Alvarez, Elisabeth Jay Friedman, Ericka Beckman, Maylei Blackwell, Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, Nathalie Lebon, Marysa Navarro, and Marcela Ríos Tobar, “Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms,” *Signs*, Vol. 28(2), Winter 2003, pp. 537-579
- Olivier Fillieule and Christophe Broqua, “Sexual and Reproductive Rights Movements and Counter Movements From an Interactionist Perspective,” *Social Movement Studies*, Vol. 19(1), 2020, pp. 1-20
- Coline Cardi and Geneviève Pruvost, “Thinking Women’s Violence,” *History of the Present*, Vol. 5(2), Fall 2015, pp. 200-216
- Susana Draper, “Strike as Process: Building the Poetics of a New Feminism,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 117(3), July 2018, pp. 682-691
- Elizabeth Downer, Susana Draper, Alejandra Estigarribia, Silvia Federici, Anna Fox, Lewanne Jones, Jesal Kapadia, Belén Marco-Crespo, Alice Markham-Cantor, and Begonia Santa-Cecilia, *Criminalization of Pregnancy: A War on Reproduction*, Feminist Research on Violence Platform, <http://laboratoria.red/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CriminalizationOfPregnancy.pdf>
- Gladys Tzul Tzul, “Mujeres indígenas: Historias de la reproducción de la vida en guatemala: Una reflexión a partir de la vista de Silvia Federici,” *Bajo el Volcán*, Vol. 15(22), March-August 2015, pp. 91-99

Ethnography, Social Movements and Political Mobilizations – March 23, 2022

(Curated by Didier Fassin, Biko Koenig, Judith Scheele and Maka Suarez)

Readings:

- Dina Makram-Ebeid, “Precarious Revolution: Labour and Neoliberal Securitisation in Egypt,” *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 43, 2019, pp. 139-154
- Amira Mittermaier, “Bread, Freedom, Social Justice: The Egyptian Uprising and a Sufi Khidma,” *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 29(1), 2014, pp. 54-79
- Jessica Winegar, “A Civilized Revolution: Aesthetics and Political Action in Egypt,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 43(4), 2016, pp. 609-622

Archive:

- Sherine F. Hamdy, “Strength and Vulnerability after Egypt’s Arab Spring Uprisings,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 39(1), 2012, pp. 43-48
- Hannah Appel, “Occupy Wall Street and the Economic Imagination,” *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 29(4), 2014, pp. 602-625
- Rick Fantasia, “The Internal Dynamics of Wildcat Strikes: Routinization and Its Discontents,” pp. 75-120 in *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989)
- Lorraine Bayard de Volo, “Participant Observation, Politics, and Power Relations: Nicaraguan Mothers and U.S. Casino Waitresses,” pp. 217-236 in Edward Schatts (ed.), *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009)
- Maka Suarez and Jorge Núñez, “Social Mobilizations in Ecuador: From October 19 to Covid-19,” Member Voices, *Fieldsights*, November 24, 2020, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/social-mobilizations-in-ecuador-from-october-19-to-covid-19-1>

Solidarity and Community – April 20, 2022

(Curated by Anthony Alessandrini, Debaditya Bhattacharya, and Matthew Shafer)

Readings:

- Darryl Li, “Shades of Solidarity: Notes on Race-talk, Intervention, and Revolution,” *Jadaliyya*, March 12, 2011, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/23788>
- Nazan Üstündağ, “Antigone as Kurdish Politician: Gendered Dwellings in the Limit Between Freedom and Peace,” *History of the Present*, Vol. 9(2), Fall 2019, pp. 113-141
- Jessica Stites Mor, “Introduction: How We Think about Solidarity,” pp. 3-24 in *South-South Solidarity and the Latin American Left*, (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022)

Archive:

- Alaa Abd El Fattah, “Palestine on My Mind,” *Mada Masr*, September 16, 2021, <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2021/09/16/opinion/u/palestine-on-my-mind/>
- Anthony C. Alessandrini, “The Egyptian Revolution and the Problem of International Solidarity,” in Reem Abou-El-Fadl (ed.), *Revolutionary Egypt: Connecting Domestic and International Struggles*, (New York: Routledge, 2015)
- Leila Al Shami, “The ‘Anti-Imperialism’ of Idiots,” *Leila’s Blog*, April 14, 2018, <https://leilashami.wordpress.com/2018/04/14/the-anti-imperialism-of-idiots/>
- Moishe Postone, “History and Helplessness: Mass Mobilization and Contemporary Forms of Anticapitalism,” *Public Culture*, Vol. 18(1), 2006, pp. 93-110
- Matthew TC Shafer, “Between Mediation and Critique: Quaker Nonviolence in Apartheid Cape Town, 1976-1990,” *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 19(4), 2020, pp. 593-613

IV

Film Series

Political Mobilizations and Social Movements Film Series

In parallel with the seminar, and in collaboration with Librarian Marcia Tucker and the School of Historical Studies, we organized a Film Series, screening fictional films and documentaries from around the world to continue our discussion with a broader public through cinema.

October 13, 2021

The October 2019 Uprising in Iraq

Two short films: *Iraq's Joker* produced by Al Jazeera for *Talk to Al Jazeera in the Field* and *Iraq Youth Take to the Streets*, produced by What's Up Productions for *Arte Reportage*

* Post-screening discussion led by Assistant Professor Zahra Ali, Rutgers University

November 10, 2021

NO, directed by Pablo Larraín

* Post-screening discussion led by Assistant Professor Cecilia Palmeiro, Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, and Professor Kenneth Roberts, Cornell University

December 8, 2021

Ram Ke Naam, directed by Anand Patwardhan

* Post-screening discussion led by Assistant Professor Debaditya Bhattacharya, Kazi Nazrul University

March 9, 2022

Little Palestine: Diary of a Siege, directed by Abdallah Al-Khatib

* Post-screening discussion led by Professor Wendy Brown, Institute for Advanced Study, and Professor Didier Fassin, Institute for Advanced Study

April 20, 2022

A Place in the Sun, directed by François Ruffin and Gilles Perret

* Post-screening discussion led by Researcher Julien Brachet, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and Visitor Anne-Claire Defossez, Institute for Advanced Study



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