

# Abstracts

## Keynote Addresses

Saskia Sassen, Columbia University

“When Complexities Produce Simple Brutalities”

Lisa Guenther, Vanderbilt University

“The Creaturely Politics of Prisoner Resistance”

## Panel Participants

John Abromeit, Buffalo State College

“From Marx Back to Fourier?: Herbert Marcuse’s Reconsideration of Utopian Socialism and Its Contemporary Relevance”

In his *Essay on Liberation*, which was written during the global student and worker revolts in 1968, Herbert Marcuse made it clear that he was particularly impressed by the strong aesthetic moment in these revolts, which was captured by the slogan “all power to the imagination.” In view of such new forms of protest, Marcuse argued that Marx and Engels’ efforts to transform socialism from a utopia into a science, may need to be reconsidered. But why exactly did Marcuse believe that the most advanced forms of protest against the changed social and historical conditions of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century capitalism made necessary a “passing from Marx to Fourier”? In this paper I would like to explore this question in three ways. First, I will return to Marx’s original discussion and critique of Fourier in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and the *Communist Manifesto*, to recall the positive aspects of utopian socialism, in general, and Fourier’s writings, in particular, highlighted by Marx. Second, I would like to take a closer look at main arguments Marcuse presents in *Essay and Liberation* and other unpublished writings from this time, in defense of a reconsideration of utopian socialism. Finally, I would like to briefly discuss some of the main arguments of Andre Gorz and Moishe Postone, as two other critical Marxist theorists who agree in one or more ways with Marcuse’s “utopian” critique of traditional “scientific socialism” and whose work also highlights the ongoing relevance of Marcuse’s arguments.

Brandon Absher, D’Youville College

“Speaking Authentically: Communication in an Age of Information Overload”

It is a cliché by this point to say that we live in an “information age.” Human activity in the “developed world,” as we know perhaps all too well, is now more than ever a matter of producing, storing, and sharing information. As economies in the “developed world” have increasingly de-industrialized, they have at the same time relied increasingly on information technologies. Just as these technologies have come more and more to define work-life; so too they now pervade leisure time. For a significant number of people, everyday life is organized around such technologies. If in times gone by ignorance could be attributed to a lack of information, this is certainly no longer a plausible explanation. If in previous eras labor was alienating due to boredom and painful repetition, we may confidently say that such an age has passed – at least for many of us in the “developed world.” Indeed, if we speak of ignorance or alienation in our own time and place, we must accept that a strange reversal has taken place. It is not a lack of information that now produces ignorance, but perhaps a *glut* of information. It is not pain or boredom that leaves us

alienated, but likely *constant* mental stimulation and distraction. As “Bifo” Berardi writes, “The present emerging uneasiness originates from a sense of communication overload, since we the assembly line [sic], once linking workers through the movements of mechanical apparatus, have been replaced by the digital telecommunications network, which links people through symbols.” In this essay, I want to discuss a feature of the situation I have just outlined. Namely, I want to discuss the thesis that information technologies have made possible a qualitative transformation in the ways we communicate such that communication has been degraded or rendered in some sense inauthentic. Although for many, perhaps, this point will seem obvious, it is important to discern as clearly as possible *how* such technologies have changed the ways we communicate and the *consequences* of such a transformation.

Patrick Anderson, Texas A&M University

### “The Law of the Sovereign: Rethinking the State of Exception in Agamben’s Homo Sacer Project”

Giorgio Agamben's ongoing *homo sacer* project has popularized the notion of the "state of exception," which he defines as the instance when the law is suspended and sovereignty is exercised directly and immediately onto subjects. While this notion of a “state of exception” has become popular among scholars doing work on immigrant rights, indigenous rights, the war on terror, neoliberal capitalism, and various other areas of radical political theory, Agamben points to, but does not explore, another way in which individuals are subjected to the sovereign decision within a liberal legal order. In *State of Exception*, Agamben explains how various U.S. presidents have exercised sovereign power outside the law: Lincoln during the Civil War, Roosevelt during WWII. But he points out that Woodrow Wilson, rather than ignore Congress, preferred to have Congress delegate powers to him so that he could create “*exceptional laws*” rather than suspend the law. While Agamben recognizes that this form of the state of exception is closer to what we experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he moves on without fully explaining this claim.

In the spirit of the conference theme – locating and resisting covert and overt measures of social control – I argue that by limiting ourselves to the popular notion that the “state of exception” is a condition defined by the absence of law and the immediate exercise of sovereign power on the subject, we miss the ways in which sovereign power is exercised *under the guise of the law* in a liberal juridical order. We should look for sovereign power not only in places where the law is suspended but also in the places where “*exceptional laws*” are made. I rely on two examples: first, the liberal vs. neoconservative debates over torture after 9/11 (getting court approval vs. promoting national security); second, and most importantly, the government response to the Black Panther Party as described by Huey P. Newton, in which the government abandoned the policy of targeting perceived threats as ideological dissent and began targeting perceived threats as *crime*. Thus, several unprecedented state programs, such as ODALE and COINTELPRO, were made to eliminate the Panthers “legally” rather than extra-legally.

If we only look for *suspensions* of the law, we risk making the liberal argument against sovereignty, namely, that the law must be applied fairly and consistently and that sovereignty should be mitigated as much as possible, which in turn promotes an identification with the law, the same law that hides the sovereignty that is ostensibly opposed. I believe my analysis is important because it provides a novel way of thinking about Agamben’s state of exception (one that he himself suggests) and provides new paradigm for taking a critical approach to legal theory.

Melvin Armstrong, Jr., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

### “Hip Hop as an Emancipatory Project and the U.R. Movement”

This panel will explore the possibility of critically informed self-performance theory, a key component to educational contexts that serve as a precursor to the transmogrification of the present social order. The importance of this corpus is to converge the tremendous explanatory insights of Critical Race Theory with the cultural artifact of Hip Hop in an effort to provoke questions on the extent to which the performance of ‘race’, ‘racism’, and white supremacy operate as an obstacle to interpretation. We argue that these ideologies have an inexorable connection as to why the perceived value of hip-hop performances has been

such a greatly contested form of aesthetic expression. By tracing both its historical origins and its sociological roots, we will explore the aesthetically informed milieu of hip-hop as a culturally specific product, of the African American community. In addition, to using a critical race theory framework, we will explore the aesthetically informed milieu of hip-hop as a culturally specific product.

Ronald Aronson, Wayne State University

“*One-Dimensional Man at Fifty*”

One Dimensional Man was a major influence on the New Left with the concept of a "society without opposition" and a "one-dimensional society." In describing---as a Marxist philosopher steeped in Hegel---the suffocation of living in America in the early 1960s, Marcuse came to be regarded as a kind of "farther of the New Left" by the media. Like Ginsburg's Howl a few years earlier, Marcuse voiced what many of us felt at the time. I was Marcuse's student, became a community organizer in a black ghetto in the North and then an editor of *Studies on the Left*. I did a tribute to and critique of him as a letter, "Dear Herbert," at one of the early Socialist Scholars Conferences and have written about him several times since.

I'm in the process of completing a piece for *Jacobin* on One-Dimensional Man and how it did and didn't prophesy today's world. I'd like to present that at the RPA. Marcuse sought to identify the main trends of advanced industrial society, and supplied many of us with intellectual tools as well as emotional validation for our radicalism. I'm asking how the book stacks up today, exploring the shape of our situation now compared with fifty years ago.

In a decisive respect, the world has become politically and economically more one-dimensional since the book was published. I'm referring to the victory of capitalism and the collapse of Communism as an alternative, the decline of social democracy, as well as the triumph of neoliberal globalization. But on the other hand---and in part because of Marcuse's writings and the inspiration they gave to the New Left---American society has become a far less repressive and more diverse and liveable place than we ever expected. Of course, the political, social, and cultural changes since the 1960s have been happily and profitably absorbed by the capitalist system. The "totalitarian" consensus that Marcuse described has been ended, as battles with the Tea Party and the one percent reflect. But in specific ways the society has become even more totalitarian than he thought: the economy and its logic have seeped into and permeate people's lives, attitudes, and values. Today the "bottom line" increasingly subjects all corners of existence to a kind of free-market totalitarianism

Dennis Badeen, Trent University

“Fusing the Atoms – Marx’s Ontological Critique of the Asocial and Ahistorical Character of Orthodox Economics”

The critique of orthodox economics’ asocial and ahistorical character is the most prevalent and continuous critique, coming from heterodox economists and Marxists alike. Tony Lawson and others have variously argued that it is the ontological assumptions of orthodox economics that render orthodox economics inadequate to objects of sociohistorical analysis. This paper adds to this line of criticism by arguing that organically based atomism, Marx’s ontology for specifying social relations and conditions under capitalism, explains the apparent fact of social atomism as a result of capitalism’s organic interdependencies. I do so by utilizing Marx’s critique of the horizon of bourgeois political economy, which is also applicable to orthodox economics’ vision of the economists, and developing the notions of original accumulation and alienation, abstract-alienated labour and the expositional nexus of the value forms, and Marx’s critique of commodity fetishism and showing how these notions contribute to the critique of asocial and ahistorical character of orthodox economics.

Michael Baur, Fordham University

“Disrupting Our Own Space: The Modern American University as the Site of Production, Consumption and Alienation”

In Chapter 25 of *Anti-Duhring* (first published in 1878), Friedrich Engels expresses some especially critical thoughts regarding those who belong to the so-called educated classes. Of particular interest is Engels’s observation that members of the educated class, just like members of any other class, have to a large extent

become the instruments or tools of their own means of production. As a result, they have become the narrow-minded, unwitting accomplices to a series of pernicious social divisions and alienations. Just as the bourgeoisie have fallen victim to their own “insane craving for profit,” and lawyers have fallen victim to their own “fossilized legal conceptions,” so too the educated classes have fallen victim to their own “manifold species of local narrow-mindedness and one-sidedness, to their own physical and mental shortsightedness, to their stunted growth due to their narrow specialized education and their being chained for life to this specialized activity.” And this specialized activity, says Engels acerbically, “is merely to do nothing....”

The purpose of this paper is to extend the thought of Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, and other radical thinkers in order to shine a critical spotlight on the modern American university, which not surprisingly has recently come under fire from a number of different quarters (e.g., from federal regulators calling for greater accountability, from loan-burdened students calling for more debt-relief, from adjunct instructors calling for more pay-equity, and from champions of online learning calling for the more extensive decentralization of higher education).

My critical analysis of the modern American university will be developed through a series of inter-related steps:

- 1) first, I shall argue that the modern American university ought to be understood – just as any other modern institution ought to be understood – primarily as an instrument of social production and consumption;
- 2) second, I shall aim to show how thinking and theorizing within the modern American university does not determine, but rather is determined by, the university’s and by society’s (often unacknowledged) institutional structures;
- 3) third, I shall seek to explain how various pernicious divisions continue to govern not only relations between the university and society, but also relations within the university itself (these intramural divisions include the division between the various academic disciplines, the division between the managers and the managed, the division between the tenured and the untenured, the division between instructors and students, etc.);
- 4) fourth and finally, I shall suggest – perhaps provocatively – that the educated classes who work within the modern American university ought to be understood not as belonging to a “vanguard” of the proletariat (or a “vanguard” of revolutionary praxis), but rather as belonging to a privileged class which is itself in need of a “cultural revolution.”

Karl Beitel, Independent Scholar

### “Rethinking Value in the Age of Derivatives and Non-Convertible Credit: An Investigation into the Nature of World Money and the World Market”

This paper extends Marx’s analysis of money and the value form as a basis for thinking about the nature of modern credit and the role of derivatives that have become central to the current organization of the world capitalist market. The investigation begins from an attempt to rethink how the relation of abstract equivalence (the value form) is constituted in a monetary regime based on a purely nominal form of credit. Drawing upon the work of Marx and theorists of the monetary circuit, I show how the transformation of the particular, concrete labor that is actually commanded by capital into value-producing labor takes place through the totality of the processes involved in the issue, circulation, and destruction of monetized debt. Significant attention is given in the analysis to understanding the centrality of the money wage as the de facto unit of measure in a monetary regime based on non-convertible sign-money and bank credit. I show how the money wage (as numeraire) mediates the relation between the value of money and the monetary value of labor power through which productivity norms are transformed into a determinate division of the total value product between wages and profits. Managing this relationship is thus revealed as the modus operandi of the world’s leading central banks.

The final section of the paper explores tensions inherent in the formation of a world market composed of a plurality of differentiated national money-spaces; and how we might begin to understand the articulations between national (and plural-national) monetary zones and the world market in the absence of any commodity money (gold) serving as the world general equivalent (measure of value, international means of payment, and most critically, as store of abstract wealth). The result is a framework for understanding the

world market as a differentiated abstract-topological space through which the “law of value” presently operates.

Jared Bly, Villanova University

“Bataille and Nietzsche: Convalescent Politics against Liberal Hegemony”

Eva Boodman, Stony Brook University

“Marx, Richie, and Gilmore: A Race- and Gender- Centered Immanent Critique of Mass Incarceration”

This paper is interested in the ways that the gender and race dimensions of mass incarceration in the United States, as described by Beth E. Richie and Ruth W. Gilmore, can allow us to broaden, deepen and question the Marxian notion of immanent critique. In the German Ideology, Marx shows that ideas are the product of our material circumstances and emerge out of historical formations that structure the relations of production. The method of immanent critique is motivated by the idea that the tools we use to criticize our circumstances are themselves a product of those circumstances. The first part of this paper will outline the concept of immanent critique, and will ask, through Marx’s German Ideology and Alienated Labour, what knowledge position these texts presuppose for revealing systemic injustices and their connection to capital. The second part of this paper will look for affinities between the presupposed knowledge position in Marxian immanent critique and the standpoints of race and gender in Richie’s Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence and America’s Prison Nation and Gilmore’s Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California. How do these accounts of the role of gender and race reveal structural factors that complicate the Marxian definition of immanent critique? Does the role of “standpoint” – used by both Richie and Gilmore – resonate with the notion that the tools we use to challenge systemic injustices emerge out of the very circumstances of that injustice? How do the standpoints of race and gender challenge or broaden the Marxian notion of immanent critique, especially the immanent critique of the current political economy of mass incarceration? Those who attend this talk will be encouraged to contribute to a discussion about the ways that the Marxian definition of immanent critique might itself require immanent critique, as well as the epistemological and political problems and tools it presents in light of Richie and Gilmore’s work.

Kelsey Borrowman, Villanova University

“Curative Temporalities and Controlling Crip Futures: Nietzsche on Disability”

When one reads Nietzsche, one is struck by his diagnoses of cultural illnesses, but rarely is he thought of as a thinker of disability. Beginning with a focus on the narrative of the super-crip and examples within the media, I show how disabling metaphors and substandard tropes are damaging to disability activism and the lives of persons with disabilities (PWDs). Ultimately, this trope affirms a future without disabled bodies, where overcoming means to become a normal and acceptable body. Nietzsche offers overcoming as a task of a different kind. In turning to his works *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Twilight of the Idols*, I argue that his notion of overcoming is incompatible with the logic of the super-crip. Following the work of Mitchell and Snyder in *Narrative Prosthesis*, in which they argue that a contemporary disability activist position of affirming devalued difference already resides in Nietzsche, I argue that Zarathustra’s resistance to the curative model amounts to a critique of ableism, locating disability as an active force. To do this, we must confront Nietzsche’s seemingly contradictory and condemning uses of sickness. In positing Nietzsche as a thinker simultaneously on disability and temporality, we are able to ask what does Nietzsche’s future, and the bodies that compose it, look like? Can Nietzsche offer a future that not only refuses to deny disabled bodies their place within it, but one that desires disability? This rethinking points toward possible affirmation of disability against the schema of curative temporality.

Stephen Bourque, Temple University

“The Mundane Repression of Modernity”

This presentation primarily seeks to explore the lines between, art, architecture, philosophy and politics. Its targeted question is: what are the spaces of repression that exist as mundane everyday, banal objects? In order to explore this question more fully, an artistic and philosophical project will be pursued in the form of the collage and prose in order to demonstrate spaces of everyday repression in order to rethink the way in which oppression occurs throughout our daily lives. In juxtaposition to this, this project will also incorporate an additional section on the transformation of these spaces. Primarily the objective is to seek ways in which one can transform their everyday spaces as to resist these oppressing banal structures. Banality is at the center of the modern form of repression and it is only through the expression of new forms of living our daily lives that we may hope to transform ourselves for the future. Amidst these structures, how are we to resist? This project seeks to answer these questions and to address some practical, real life structures and objects that may help in the transformation of our daily lives. Central to this thesis is the acknowledgement that the way we shape our dwelling has in a larger implication in the structures of oppression and subjectification. Given the macro-structures of repression, how is our minute, banal daily life to be reorganized, reshaped, and reutilized in order to head towards a micro-politics of where we may dwell. Further, this presentation will seek to radicalize those that are not given any stable sense of ‘home’: the incarcerated, the wanderers, and the outsiders.

Joan Braune, Mount Mary University

“Apocalyptic Shock: The Judge Rotenberg Center and Catastrophic Messianism”

The Judge Rotenberg Educational Center, just outside Boston, has faced much condemnation for its use of pain-inducing electric skin shock “aversives” on its psychiatric patients (including juveniles). The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture has condemned the Center’s use of skin shock as torture, but as of early April 2014, the Center remains in operation. Trained by B.F. Skinner yet disagreeing with Skinner’s rejection of punishment, the Center’s founder advocates a treatment model whose underlying assumptions resemble those of the “shock doctrine” (critiqued by Naomi Klein) and “catastrophic messianism” (critiqued by Erich Fromm). Fromm’s critique of “catastrophic messianism” was a response to cultural forces in Weimar Germany that envisioned a dramatic razing of established structures to create blank slates for the construction of new social realities. Although Weimar enthusiasm for a politics of the end times might seem remote from the calm, routine application of punitive electric shocks in a psychiatric setting, catastrophic messianism and the Center’s instrumental rationality share similar assumptions about human beings and social change. Those assumptions are challenged by Fromm’s Marxist humanism.

Nick Braune, South Texas University

“Police Interrogation and False Confessions: A Frommian Critique”

According to the Innocence Project, almost one in four people who have been falsely convicted for very serious crimes but who were later proven innocent (often through DNA testing), confessed to the crime they had not done. After Miranda, consultants made considerable money training police in supposedly non-coercive interrogation techniques which could work within Miranda guidelines. These “scientific” practices work so well that not only many guilty people confessed during interrogation but also many innocent people. This issue is immensely important since over 90% of the huge incarcerated population of this country either confessed or plea-bargained. This presentation will theorize the problem by borrowing from early essays by Erich Fromm, in the period when he was joining the Frankfurt School and trying to stop fascism. Fromm believes “the state as educator” is the secret of the elaborate criminal justice apparatus, and part of the educational process is that the fascist (or Stalinist) state has the ability to force confessions. (A side theme: From a Frommian philosophical perspective, there is a link between currently “acceptable” police interrogation and the “enhanced interrogation” of the CIA.)

Bailey Brotherton, Mississippi State University

“Dwelling in Another: The Restorative Power of Myth in Heidegger and Marcuse”

In this paper, I will argue that a lack of myth in modernity perpetuates man's unhealthy obsession with productivity, instant gratification, and material wealth, resulting in a restless, uninspired society that struggles due to man's detachment from his fellows. I will begin by exploring Martin Heidegger's notion of dwelling and why it is vital to the preservation of the environment and man's moral integrity. The paper illustrates how the inability to dwell results in anxiety about appearances, particularly in regard to material goods, thus perpetuating rampant fears of scarcity. Following this, I will re-examine dwelling in light of Herbert Marcuse's notion of Eros as a means to repair society. I will then point out how little Heidegger speaks of love in his essays on dwelling. However, Marcuse's extensive writings on Eros reveal that it may indeed be possible to dwell in another person, rather than only in an environment, as Heidegger seems to imply. Drawing on this notion, I will contend that dwelling in another person via Eros is one of the most effective means of combating a deadened humanity. I will argue that mythopoiesis acts as a crucial way in which man can imagine a happier existence for himself and others, and also grants him a paradigmatic model of both dwelling and Eros through which he may create that existence. By appreciating myth, man re-discovers the vitality of his hopes and dreams, and the significance of living peacefully with the people and the world that he loves. I will argue that a valid interpretation of myth fosters acuity of ourselves and of one another, and thus creates a more flexible and open-minded community. By looking at certain myths as examples for dwelling, man learns what dwelling is not, which inspires him to incite change in his environment: that is, a departure from the manufactured, somatic world of “modernity” to the dream-like, playful realm of creative cooperation. Finally, the paper discusses why dwelling, be it in an environment, in another person, or both, is an excellent way to surmount all-consuming modern technocracy, as it fosters tranquility of the mind and appreciation of the present. The paper will end by explaining how fulfillment in dwelling can replace man's obsession with materialism and allow him to transcend into the infinite and inexhaustible realms of love and thoughtfulness.

Ed Casey, Stony Brook University

“Border Wall as Monumental Symbolic: Incongruities and Inequities at La Frontera”

Maria Erbia Cassia, Federal University of Campinas, Brazil

“Utopia in the Genesis of Critical Theory”

The objective of this paper is to show the contradictions of utopia in Critical Theory. I argue that a new conception of utopia, previously marginalized, arises in their writings. The authors of the first generation of the Frankfurt School had to deal with the disenchanting experiences of socialism in the Soviet Union, European fascism and the destruction of the Jewish communities of Europe, which undermined their hope for a revolutionary transformation of capitalism. Yet they still believed that Critical Theory was faced with the task of thinking the "radically other." This meant, for Horkheimer, to have a clear distinction between philosophical truth and scientific truth. The first generation of the Frankfurt School strengthened the hope of another world and the second considered that this utopia was unattainable. Marcuse agrees with Horkheimer and Adorno's diagnosis of blocked praxis, but at the same time, they all agree that Critical Theory cannot regress to the "utopian socialism," advocated by authors such as Fourier, because they expounded the principles of an ideal society without specifying the means to achieve it. Fourier believed that the establishment of a socialist system would occur slowly and gradually, without violence, and with the goodwill of the bourgeoisie itself. His and other utopian socialists' ideas were still heavily based on Enlightenment thought insofar as they believed in the possibility of rationalist progress without a radical critique of capitalist social relations. In this regard Marx did indeed move beyond utopian socialism. On the one hand, the first generation of Critical Theory agreed with most aspects of Marx's critique of "utopian socialism". On the other hand, Marcuse explored a different conception, influenced by Ernst Bloch, which I call a “critical concept of utopia.” After establishing the basic parameters of the problem in this way, I will, in the last part of the paper, develop the “critical concept of utopia” by distinguishing from what I will call a “traditional concept of utopia.” The latter distinction will be made clear primarily through a discussion of Marx's critique of utopian socialism, but also Marcuse's and Bloch's revisions of Marx's critique.

W. Mark Cobb, Bucks County Community College  
“Herbert Marcuse and the Utopian Imagination”

In 1937 Herbert Marcuse’s important essay “Philosophy and Critical Theory” was published. In the essay Marcuse wrote that the utopian element had long been considered the only progressive element in philosophy. The utopian tradition in western philosophy began with Plato’s Republic and the attempt to imagine what would be needed to achieve a just state since no just state existed. Marcuse’s consistent insistence that “one must read Plato” points to the importance of the origins of the utopian imagination. This paper will address that origin and its relevance for both Marcuse, and more importantly, our contemporary predicament in which there are powerful and largely effective efforts to affirm austerity and dystopian social existence. The paper will then focus attention on Marcuse’s own imaginative utopian project, the provocative *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955). As the subtitle of Marcuse’s text suggests, the inquiry explores the philosophical tradition and Freud’s psychoanalytic theory for insights and progressive moments at odds with the dominant ideological aspects of both discourses. Marcuse also draws on literature for potentially emancipatory insights not found in philosophy and invokes the image of Orpheus as potentially emancipatory. The paper will offer an example of the importance of Orpheus and the aesthetic utopian dimension by focusing on a particular imaginative masterpiece in modal jazz that might serve as an example of democratic, erotic human flourishing. Finally, the paper argues that imagination and the Great Refusal, articulated by Andre Breton and championed by Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* and throughout the rest of his life, should both play a much more significant role in the daily lives of individuals desirous of an erotic civilization and existence.

Richard Daniels, Oregon State University  
“Science, Technology, Political Delusion”

W.G. Sebald’s prose work *The Rings of Saturn* (1995, 1998) is in large part a critique of what he calls “Cartesian rigidity” and its material effects in the time of the capitalist mode of production as it configures science and technology to serve the increasingly destructive needs of capital accumulation. Sebald is concerned with the effects of the domination of both Nature and Human Nature in the era of capitalism by means of instrumental reason and the mythologizing track of Enlightenment science. His critique is similar to that posed by Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; but in this paper I focus as well on the critiques of Descartes’ “false clarity” and its effects, in Adorno’s *Three Studies on Hegel*, Pierre Macherey’s “Lacan as Reader of Hegel”, and Derek Gregory’s recent “Drone Geographies.” As does Sebald, I’ll use Rembrandt’s painting “The Anatomy Lesson” to show the socially dangerous blind spots of the scientific gaze, in part because Descartes—who lived in Holland and was an enthusiastic amateur anatomist to study what he called “the machine within”—was probably in the audience for the actual anatomy lesson, along with Rembrandt, whose painting is a subtle aesthetic critique of what the artist sees—the machine-like, abstracting process of cutting and charting the lifeless human body while ignoring what had made the man a human and social being. I’ll then focus (as time allows) on three exemplary events. First, Roger Casement’s execution (for revealing the colonial horrors visited on indigenous peoples in the Congo and the Amazon Basin to augment capital accumulation, and for being Irish and homosexual). Second, 1977 spacecraft Voyager II’s trajectory toward the outer reaches of the solar system carrying in its nose cone recorded greetings of peace from all mankind, by invitation of science hero Carl Sagan, via the voice of then UN Secretary General and former SS officer Kurt Waldheim, complicit with the Croatian Ustashi in the murders of hundreds of thousands in World War II. Third, uses of drone technology globally to spy on people for commercial ends, and to execute perceived terrorist threats wherever they might be, with whatever “collateral damage.” In each case, there are contradictions between the state systems involved and the interests of their elites, and beyond those the requirements of global capital accumulation. Similar conflicts arise in the practices of “coal trains” in Canada and the northern plains states, among others. The goal here is not to be dismissive of science and technology but rather to emphasize how they are entangled with and serve the needs of capital accumulation far more than the truly human needs they should serve, and to indicate, as well, how philosophy can be complicit in this system.

Andrew Dobbyn, Stony Brook University

“Welcome to the Terrordome: Fictitious Capital, Automation, and the Predator State”

Given the theme of repression and austerity I would like to talk about the rise of fictitious capital and automated labor. I want to talk about how these two factors are giving rise to a form of social control, which I call the “Predator State”. The Predator State is a manifestation of late capitalism. Under late capitalism traditional production and service provisioning are de-emphasized, in favor of automation and financialization. Automation pushes more and more workers out of the labor market, creating an ever larger pool of the unemployed. Financialization ensures that more and more profits flow from speculation, rent extraction and short term value maximization. As a result, the prerogatives of elite political economy shift. This Predator State exists to serve the needs of rent extractors, speculators and their ilk. Thus it has less interest in ideological legitimation and more in control and enforced docility. It seeks to spy, stupefy and control a population comprised largely of unemployed and disenfranchised “rabble”. This subject population is incarcerated, monitored and given make work jobs, from which they can pay for said rent extraction. Aspects of the Predator State exist at various levels of development, distributed unevenly across society. These aspects are most evident in working class, black and brown communities. Many of the techniques of surveillance, control and make-work were pioneered in these hyper exploited sectors. Such phenomena as “school reform”, the prison industrial complex and “stop and frisk” are manifestations of the growing Predator State.

To contextualize this new political economy, I will draw from economists Bryan and Rafferty’s book *Capitalism with Derivatives* and geographer David Harvey’s *Enigma of Capital*. These works chart the rise of automation and fictitious capital, how these phenomena function and how they relate to classical Marx. Then I will move to the philosophers Zizek and Balibar, more specifically Zizek’s *Less than Nothing* and Balibar’s *Philosophy of Marx*. I will present an outline of the possible philosophical consequences of the Predator State, more specifically, what it means for notions of value, subjectivity and democracy. This is a work in progress so I plan to speak from an outline, and to emphasize audience discussion.

Rochelle Duford, Binghamton University

“Tyranny, Illegitimacy, and Global Government”

In this paper, I argue against claims that a world government is likely to be very bad, unjust, or tyrannical. These claims, at bottom, amount to the claim that a global government will be illegitimate. There are three senses in which we may claim a government as illegitimate: first, it is not rights respecting, second, it is dominative, and third, there is a lack of popular sovereignty. In this paper, I argue that the standard objection to global government—that it is likely to be, or is necessarily going to be, ‘very bad’—is in need of more specificity. I articulate that specificity through contemporary theory on political legitimacy. Once the claim that a global government is likely to be tyrannical is put into terms of political legitimacy, it is clear that the argument concerning the necessary illegitimacy of global government can be addressed more pointedly.

In the first section of this paper, I survey the literature concerning global government and tyranny. In this section I develop a rough characterization of what is meant by tyranny, and then argue that in contemporary philosophical language, a more fitting term is illegitimacy. Perhaps we are worried about tyranny, but we are worried precisely because of the illegitimizing effects tyranny has on government institutions and law. In the second section of this paper, I argue that there are three main senses in which we can understand the claim that a global government will be illegitimate: it may lack respect for rights (specifically exit-options), it may lack popular sovereignty (by virtue of a lack of global demos), and it may be dominative (in the sense that Bohmann describes “democratic domination,” or a world order that undermines local and municipal achievements of democratic justice, while at the same time, providing gains for global democratic justice). However, while these conditions may present themselves in a global government, it is not the case that they necessarily will manifest. There is nothing about the concept of global government that would contain one of these conditions. Because of that, I argue that we ought to dismiss the claim that a global government would become a tyrannical monster, in favor of determining what institutions and procedures would be necessary to achieve legitimate government on a global scale.

In the final section of this paper, I note that by illegitimacy, one may also mean not sufficiently just, or simply unjust—as described by Buchanan, and Hampton. This last sense in which one may mean that a government is illegitimate is of the most interest. This is because there is nothing necessary about a global

government being unjust—the justice or injustice of a state is a matter of building appropriate institutions and procedures. On this reading, then, we may have reason to worry that global government would be illegitimate, but this merely provides us with good reason to develop institutions, procedures, and distributions such that the world is sufficiently just.

Cliff Durand, Center for Global Justice

#### “Contradictions of Neo-Liberalism”

With the globalization of capital transnational corporations are secretly constructing, bit by bit, a global governance structure in which corporations are the citizens and globalized states are the local administrative structures that enforce corporate dictates and maintain order. This is a world without popular sovereignty and without democracy. It is a world ruled by an insulated technocratic elite serving the interests of global capital.

Patrick Durkin, Stony Brook University

#### “Gestell at Work in Capitalism and the Production of Infinite Ends”

The understanding of today's society as a machine, or a system is owed to advanced development of modern technologies in the post- World War II era that have their origin mid-eighteenth century. The basis for thinking about society as a machine, or a computer for that matter can be found in the work of Talcott Parsons and Norbert Weiner. On the other hand, the work of Martin Heidegger offers a very different parallel. The treatment of society, or human beings as a computer is a type of thinking that participates in the enframing (Gestell). Simply put, the enframing itself as a way of revealing and a type of aletheia, or unconcealment participates in the 'forgetfulness of being' when it turns to this mechanistic interpretation of reality. Capitalism as an economic system receives the same critique. Its focus on efficiency and self-regulation place its practices in the type of presentation seen in the enframing. The self-regulating role of Capitalism as a self-regulating system is able to find instabilities within the system and smooth them out. Thus, political insurrections against the system are only a minor hiccup from which the system must readjust and re-evaluate in order to prevent the insurrection from happening again.

The point of this paper is to address how Heidegger's re-thinking of society not as a machine, but as a way of revealing offers another way for resistance that cannot be sucked back into the system in a maneuver that makes the system more efficient and better equipped to handle the dissension.

Fred Evans, Duquesne University

#### “Citizenship and Public Art: The Political Aesthetics of New York's 9/11/01 Memorial”

In the United States, we frequently assume that government supported public art is an act of citizenship, that is, one supportive of values associated with democracy. Even the inaugural years of this country were marked by a contentious debate over whether George Washington would be more appropriately remembered by a stone monument or by "a plain tablet, on which every man could write what his heart dictated." The terms of this debate have been repeated throughout the history of the U.S and most recently in the context of New York's National September 11 Memorial (Michael Arad's "Reflecting Absence") and the "Memorial Museum" accompanying it. I will address the political aesthetics of the 9/11/01 memorial in order to derive a criterion for judging it and other public art as "acts of citizenship." This address will be aided by also considering the dissident alternative 9/11 memorial proposed by Krzysztof Wodiczko, "City of Refuge." At the core of this project are the issues of the meaning of democracy, artistic resistance to the three "oracles" of aesthetic spectacle, capitalism, and American exceptionalism, and the degree to which the official 9/11 memorial ("Reflecting Absence") and Wodiczko's dissident alternative enhance our understanding of democratic polity and resistance in the context of death, mourning, and international politics. The presentation involves ten power-point images (screen and projector compatible with a PC computer needed). I can give it as a full paper presentation (one hour) or a briefer talk.

John Exdell, Kansas State University

“Materialist Theory and Racial Reparations”

Charles Mills has urged philosophers to turn their attention away from issues of class injustice and towards the deep inequalities in life prospects that divide racial groups in the United States and throughout the global order. Mills’s position is that philosophers should make racial justice their higher priority. From this standpoint he concludes that a reparations-oriented redistribution of wealth from white to black Americans is for radicals our most pressing moral and political imperative.

Mills develops his view within a Marxian framework, affirming the need to distinguish between empirically objective material forces at work in the creation of modernity and the ideal forms of consciousness to which they give rise. In this respect he explicitly rejects post-modernist theory focusing on narratives, discourses, and culture.

Race, he contends, is identifiable as an objective material reality of greater historical power than the peculiar moral and political consciousness to which it gives rise. My paper incorporates some key points in my essay, "Charles Mills, Materialist Theory, and Racial Justice", published in the last issue of *Radical Philosophy Review*. My main focus, however, will be on Mill’s new essay, “Materializing Race”, in *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race* (SUNY, 2014). There Mills attempts to avoid two theoretical positions that threaten his defense of racial materialism. One, it may seem, reduces race to class by focusing on unequal wealth distribution as the foundation of racial injustice. In the other “race” is an erroneous classification of human beings founded on the fictional idea that there are several kinds of human beings, revealed by distinguishable somatic features, and unequal in their moral and intellectual characteristics. The problem with this option is that it seems to abandon the distinction between the “material” and the “ideal” – and the causal priority of the former – that Mills has consistently relied upon in his work on racial justice.

I will argue that in “Materializing Race” Mills’s treatment of the dilemma takes a wrong turn. My paper offers an alternative and reasonably straightforward resolution in way that has two merits. First, it more clearly resolves the above troubling antinomy that Mills confronts in a way that strengthens racial materialism. Secondly it refocuses our attention on the striking racial wealth gap as the fundamental cause of racial injustice in the U.S.A. In showing the way past the theoretical and conceptual problems that Mills aims to untangle, I also offer qualified support for joining racial reparations and class redistribution as the basis for a radical social and political movement in the U.S.A.

Norm Fischer, Kent State University

“A Revitalized Marxist Politics Linked to Classical Republicanism”

As a member of RPA, and presenter of recent paper on liberal civil liberties in 2010 on Marxist economic theory in 2012, I want to take a very different approach.. My paper, based on a section of my forthcoming book from Palgrave Macmillan, *Marxist Ethics within Western Political Theory*, will show how a lost tradition of Marxism can protest class power austerity schemes from the standpoint of its link with classical republican democracy.

The minimal necessary conditions for republican ethics are (1) self-rule by some or all, (2) under law, (3) for the common good. However, a more than minimal republicanism would also add (4) public spiritedness as a necessary condition.

A republican Marxist democratic ethics in all four senses emerges in three stages that I excavate through a new intellectual history. The first is Marx's early writings on the state in 1843-44, interpreted in the light of his never translated and almost unknown notes on republicans Machiavelli, Montesquieu and Rousseau. These notes establish that in his early writings on the state, far from disassociating himself from western style democracy, Marx imagined a state based on strong participation that required the concepts of solidarity found in the republican writers that he was excerpting.

The second stage is Marx's 1871 writings on the Paris Commune, interpreted in the light of Rousseau’s parallel theory of democratic representation in his *Constitution of Poland*. Following anti-republican writers such as Lenin this work has been interpreted as standing outside western democratic theory. The very opposite is the case. Both Rousseau and Marx adopted a theory of democratic representation where the will of the people was tied much closer to the acts of the representative than usual. This is a different version of democratic liberalism than found in representation theorists such as Edmund Burke, James Madison and

John Stuart Mill, who wanted more separation between the will of electors and representatives. Nevertheless, contra Lenin, Marx's theory is rooted in Western liberal republicanism.

The third stage is a retrieval of ancient republicanism based on Lewis Henry Morgan's Ancient Society, which interpreted the League of the Iroquois in the light of ancient republicanism. This theory is expressed in Marx's little known and untranslated notes on Morgan, and later in English classicist George Thomson's Aeschylus and Athens. One reason this third tradition has been lost is because it has been overshadowed by Engels' anti-republican interpretation of Morgan.

This new intellectual history completely disassociates itself from the anti-democratic Marxism that prevailed in twentieth century communist states. It keeps its strong ideal of protesting class power, but insists that the bloated theory of the state that led to such travesties as Stalinism is only one interpretation and the worst possible interpretation of a class politics.

Milton Fisk, Indiana University

“Unions and Socialism”

My issue is whether unionism within the working class tends to encourage socialist convictions and tendencies among its members. The relevant union context for discussing this issue will not be that of an idealized union but rather that of a reasonably honest and dedicated union with few of its warts removed. To aspire to such a realism calls for keeping in mind trends in the history of socialism inside the unions. When socialists had a greater weight in societies, their members in unions were more able to recruit fellow workers to socialism. As the weight of socialism in society declined, socialist recruiters in the unions found it more difficult to recruit. This does not undermine the idea that unions are a favorable context for promoting socialism. For, the union is willing to expose the biases of the corporation – biases that a socialist perspective shows are not a matter of chance.

Nonetheless, the burden of what follows is to show that there is a condition missing for making a useful connection between unions and socialism. That condition calls for satisfying a need for fairness. The bargain made between unions and corporations is unfair, and to make it fair would require – strange as it sounds – that corporations refuse to bargain with unions. In place of the corporations, there would be democratic bodies deciding how to use the product of work.

George Furlas, University of Oregon

“Austerity as Neo-Orientalist Domination”

In this presentation I offer a historically situated and critical account of austerity as it emerged in response to the crisis in the contemporary Greek state. I argue that the austerity measures that were recently applied in Greece are a means of indirect rule and parasitic territorial domination are a continuation of a long-standing colonial relation with Germany, and thus the United States and the United Kingdom. I first describe the history of the German influence in the creation of modern Greece as a colonial practice. Here, I focus on the relationship between European nationalism and the myth of the Greeks, which, in its German form, has been maintained through the works of thinkers like Nietzsche and Heidegger, and recently challenged by the work of Martin Bernal. Then, through the work of Neni Panourgia and Nicos Poulantzas, I discuss the 20th contemporary political landscape in Greece, effectively crushing all non-submissive, non-nationalist citizens (e.g. the left), thus affording the conditions for the re-appropriation of the Greek-state through the formation of the European Union. Through this critical historical discussion, I then turn to the present crisis and situate EU austerity, as well as the Greek protests, in relation to this history of colonial and dictatorial oppression, illuminating the current Hellenic context as a deeply rooted conflict that is about maintaining a submissive or nationalist political body, in order to maintain the imagined boundary between East and West.

Obed Frausto, Universidad Nacional, Autonoma de Mexico

“Ricardo Flores Magón: A Mexican Critic and Anarchy Theorist in Exile”

Ricardo Flores Magón lived in the middle of an intricate social environment in Mexico in the last decades of the nineteenth century during the political dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. He was a student in the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria (National High School) and later, he was a student of law at Escuela de Altos Estudios (School of Higher Studies). During that time, he participated in student movements demanding the fall of the dictatorship and promoting social and political rights for Mexican citizens. His critical thought was inspired in his early experience living among the indigenous communities in Oaxaca, Mexico. He idealized the communitarian way of life in the country where, according to him: “It is where the land is free property for everyone who wants to harvest its fruits, where everyone in the community goes together to take its fruits and then they divide them equally.” Ricardo Flores Magón was one of the forerunners of the Mexican revolution which removed Porfirio Díaz from the power which he had possessed for 30 years. Nonetheless, Flores Magón was exiled from Mexico and fled to the USA in 1904. While there, he continued to write and publish his famous magazine, *Regeneración*, which had its beginnings in Mexico. He associated with anarchists in the USA, such as Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. Without a doubt, the critical thought of Flores Magón represented the radical voices of the beginning of the twentieth century which proclaimed freedom and dignity in the process of industrialization at that time. I will explore his philosophical and political ideas and explain his experiment in living in a rural community in the USA.

Skramz Geist, Binghamton University

“The Impossibility of Confrontation”

From the perspective that the state has increasingly developed security measures in order to maintain a docile population via both brute repression (Policing) and “compromise” (increasingly represented as reformed capitalism, such as Green Capitalism or a rights based framework offered by Liberal parties such as the Democratic party within the United States, most recently the offering of institutional rights to GLBT persons). However, the attempt to broker peace with the status quo (or fear of the brute oppression that will be unleashed by a challenged status quo) is underwritten by a refusal to address the possibility of actual (that is material) resistance. Most often this is accomplished by a falsified history of radical resistance that actively fetishizes symbolic and passive forms of resistance (such as boycotts or individualist solutions such as changing buying habits) and ignores that historically almost any real gains held by the oppressed have been won by either actual or implied violence and a willingness to consider the possibility of direct action. The aim of this presentation is to both discuss the (largely erased) radical history of effective violent direct action and to discuss the ways in which a nihilistic hopelessness underlies many projects which fail to actively seek actual substantial changes in quality of life issues and in the structures which maintain the violent status quo of capitalism. This will also substantively engage with common critiques of direct action, especially violent direct action thought both the talk and (hopefully) a question and answer period. Practically, this will focus extensively on GLBTQ+ organizing and history and anti-fascist activism which are both the areas of my research interests and practical activism.

Osiris Gonzalez, Universidad Nacional, Autonoma de Mexico

“Free Trade, Multiculturalism, and Indigenous Rights”

The aim of this paper is to analyze recognition requirements of indigenous rights in Mexican society. This requirement increased with the emergence of social movements with a critical view of free trade, especially NAFTA. In order to do so, the study of this topic responds to the need for justice for the Native American people. This need is a consequence of the economic and cultural colonization process that was carried out against the will of the Native American people. I maintain that the development of a «multicultural rationale» is useful in solving a number of conflicts related to the life of Native American people in North and Central America.

In this paper, I first focus on the study of the relationship between International Law and the building of a «multicultural rationale». Second, I do a brief study of the political meaning of the “indigenous people”

category. Finally, I highlight some arguments about juridical pluralism and the status of the indigenous people in Mexico, especially the Mayan communities. I do this in order to develop a theoretical framework that answers some philosophical questions related to the building of a heterogenic law system within a multicultural State.

I focus my efforts on a critical analysis of the juridical concept known as “Right of People”. Academic studies about this juridical concept started with the rise of awareness of the grievances endured by non-Western people in the colonization period. This juridical concept is closely related to a need for justice caused by the process of economic and cultural colonization carried out against the will of communities and native people of America. However, despite colonization, it is true that a variety of native languages, social institutions, and political organizations still survive. Currently, a variety of cultural features, customs and social institutions regulate the ordinary life of indigenous peoples, like Mayas, Mapuches, Aimas, Guámbianos or Guaraníes

Margret Grebowicz, Goucher College

### “When Wilderness Restoration Creates Social Margins: The Case of Boquillas Crossing”

What exactly is the sense of “the national” that our parks construct and what kind of citizen is produced by this process? Who is the visitor in these spaces? Who is the national and who is the foreigner? To whose children is the ostensibly unpeopled wilderness of the future owed, and at what cost (to whom)? These questions come into relief with the 2013 reopening of the International Border Crossing at Boquillas, closed since 2002. It is the only crossing into Mexico on the grounds of a US national park. In this era of homeland security, the port of entry is “virtually staffed,” with a passport scanner and a camera that transmits the image to a staffed border crossing in El Paso, over 300 miles away. The village of Boquillas del Carmen, where literacy is at a low rate and passport applications difficult to come by, much less to fill out, is just on the other side of the Rio Grande. Without passports, the Boquillas residents may not enter the US. Once a two-way street, the crossing has reopened as a one-way street for the first time in the history of this region.

The benefits of the reopening have been enormous from the perspective of binational conservation efforts and much easier collaborative wilderness restoration work, in particular on the shared space that is the river. The National Park Service also benefits from advertising the cultural experience of visiting a real, honest-to-goodness Mexican village. The reopening is framed in terms of cultural preservation: since this region has historically always been binational and freely mobile across the river, the reopening gives visitors the “authentic experience” that was not available while the border was closed. In one sense, today’s Boquillas del Carmen residents obviously do not live inside the park. But in another sense, when crossing the river/border is articulated as part of the visitor’s experience, the park – and its accompanying imaginary of universal, transcendent human experience – effectively extends into the village of Boquillas. The village itself would not exist were it not for the park, because it is completely isolated from the rest of Mexico by the protected land which surrounds it, three distinct Mexican wilderness areas under protection, together comprising the “sister park” to Big Bend.

The interpretive sign at the river, titled “An Open Door: Boquillas, a village on the edge of two countries,” traces the history of the village back to the 1800s and integrating it in the idea of an international park which arose in the 1930s. “As frontier border town, Boquillas reflects the durable character of the region and its resident welcoming visitors to experience the culture and its history on the end of two countries.” With interpretive signage like this and the new port of entry functioning unidirectionally in practice, it could almost be argued that the village has become a 3.7 million dollar interpretive exhibit inside Big Bend. The injustice of this situation is immediately obscured by two things: (1) the idea that wilderness is uninhabited and therefore apolitical and (2) the positive reception of the reopening of the border, which limits us to thinking that it can only be open under these conditions of constraint and silencing, thus creating a false antinomy between cooperative restoration and justice for the people of the village.

Jean Gregorek, Canisius College

“Representing Austerity Ireland: Ireland’s Ghost Estates in Fact and Fiction”

Much popular Irish crime drama has taken up the challenge of representing the precariousness of life in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland. The examples I discuss here rely on the evocative spaces of ‘ghost estates’--the unfinished and/or abandoned suburban housing developments that still litter the landscape in the wake of Ireland’s 2008 banking collapse and the ensuing program of austerity imposed by European financial institutions. In some contemporary thrillers, these ghost estates--the ‘new ruins’ of global capitalist crisis--become crime scenes signifying the misdeeds of global finance capital as well as the ravages of financialization upon communities and individual subjects. In this paper, I call upon Maurizio Lazzarato’s and Randy Martin’s recent writings on financialization to consider the construction of the neoliberal subject increasingly imbedded in discourses of risk and self-management, and to explore the ways that the image of the ghost estate hypostatizes these discourses and their devastating human consequences.

Juan Guerrero, Stony Brook University

“On Aesthetics of Resistance Against Terror: Exvotos in Puerto Rico and Knitted Stories from Mampuján”

Jonathan L. Hamilton, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

“Hip Hop as an Emancipatory Project and the U.R. Movement”

This panel will explore the possibility of critically informed self-performance theory, a key component to educational contexts that serve as a precursor to the transmogrification of the present social order. The importance of this corpus is to converge the tremendous explanatory insights of Critical Race Theory with the cultural artifact of Hip Hop in an effort to provoke questions on the extent to which the performance of ‘race’, ‘racism, and white supremacy operate as an obstacle to interpretation. We argue that these ideologies have an inexorable connection as to why the perceived value of hip-hop performances has been such a greatly contested form of aesthetic expression. By tracing both its historical origins and its sociological roots, we will explore the aesthetically informed milieu of hip-hop as a culturally specific product, of the African American community. In addition, to using a critical race theory framework, we will explore the aesthetically informed milieu of hip-hop as a culturally specific product.

Alberto Hernandez-Lemus, Colorado College

“Pensiero Debole in Latin American Territories Outside State Structures”

Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala speak of hermeneutic communism as a contrast and a corrective to the official program of truth-oriented science and political philosophy, which are hegemonic in our globalized world. Claiming accuracy in the description of the world, practitioners of truth-oriented science and philosophy, supported by a network of institutionalized power structures have been able to impose their instrumental logic on what V. and Z. call “the weak,” those inhabitants of the world who do not partake of the unevenly distributed riches extracted as resources from labor and nature. Whereas V. and Z. see hopeful alternatives to this logic and its ramification in what they term “communist” projects currently underway in Bolivia and Venezuela, I highlight the more radical anti-statist and anti-systemic spirit contained in the term “anarchy,” which they seem to overlook in their enthusiastic embracing of the modestly “communist” policies of those South American States.

I contend that there are much more clear-minded expressions of *pensiero debole* to be found in those social organizations working *outside* the structures of the nation-state. Among these communities one can count Las Abejas of Acteal, as well as the Zapatista Caracoles, both in Chiapas, Mexico, the Landless Peasants’ Movement (MST) in Brazil, and the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in Colombia. By breaking the clientelist links with which state governments and the groups which control them so often interfere in the life of the poor, these communities have taken an important step in securing a space for horizontal democracy, which is at the heart of what is traditionally known as an anarchist project. V. and Z. use Reiner Schürmann’s argument that the hermeneutic project, conceived as a form of *anarché*, does not go

against any and all principles but is diffident of those hegemonic principles which claim absolute supremacy and exclusivity. *Pace V. and Z.*, I argue that the logic of the State, even in the progressive examples they praise (Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba) is precisely *the* logic of exclusivity, which leaves little room for substantive dissent. Ultimately, the State's monopoly on the use of force becomes the litmus test against which visions of other possible worlds must be measured.

Egbert Higinio, San Jose State University

### “Phenomenology of a Guatemalan Territorial Claim”

At issue for the presentation is the phenomenon of a “territorial claim,” specifically the Guatemalan territorial claim of Belize. The paper attempts to depart from legal references and focuses on a phenomenological approach. Legal scholars have accounted for many deposits of treaties and historical events. This philosophical approach deconstructs “the thing itself – the claim itself.” It concentrates on legitimacy and points to the absurdity of “the thing - claim.”

Phenomenology as a tool is used primarily to engage us with a scientific methodology to disclose the truth of social and political event. The entity of “a territorial claim,” which is “the thing itself,” is under investigation. It is called “the anglo-Guatemalan claim” in some quarters. But for the purposes of this paper we shall examine its significance as a forced sign. The presentation can serve to show indifference to “other” approaches and offers itself as a platform for communicating liberation for the indigenous of the Caribbean and Meso-America. I critique this colonial legacy through the purview of forced legitimization and crisis invention.

My focus does not draw extensively on historical parallels. Yet historicity will eventually unfold a genealogy which will disclose the spirit of “claims” such as this phenomena.

Christa Hodapp, University of Massachusetts at Lowell

### “She Hates Me: Men’s Rights Activism as Social and Political Discipline”

The claim that feminism and gender activism “harms men” by means of emasculation, blame and alienation is not new one. However, these complaints have recently been channeled into the creation of “Men’s Rights Activism,” which has changed the rhetoric from mere complaints to an issue of rights, exclusion, oppression and inequality. This presentation will explore the ways in which the MRA movement often functions primarily as a disciplinary and normalizing mechanism within western culture as opposed to a liberatory movement acting in the interest of equal rights. To support this claim, I will argue that the MRA movement generally works as a patriarchal corrective to feminism, as well as serving a normalizing disciplinary function for masculine identity based upon heterosexual, white and class-privileged standpoints.

As a corrective means to feminism, the MRA movement effectively alters the focus of gender activism from an analysis of structural and complex oppression to one of individual harms based upon an assertion of rights. Many MRA outlets have leveled various criticisms of feminism, including but not limited to exclusion, misrepresenting men and creating unethical or unjust conditions for men in current society. Because these complaints are based upon notions of individual harm, this rhetoric places men in the position of victims who have been cast out or harmed by feminism. This goes far beyond the familiar complaints of feminism hindering male privilege and introduces troubling notions of justice and rights into the debates concerning gender identity, etc. In this presentation, I want to analyze the ways in which individual rights based models of gender activism based upon equality both help and hinder feminist efforts, particularly based upon the use of these terms in a sort of “tu quoque” fallacy leveled at feminism by the MRA contingency.

Furthermore, men identifying as MRAs are overwhelmingly under 35, white, heterosexual and at least middle class. By creating a movement about “men” based upon this privileged standpoint and introducing broad concepts of equity and rights into the spirit of the movement, MRAs work to create a normalizing regime concerning masculinity based upon deeply exclusionary identities. However, the presentation of harm and injustice helps to erase this disciplinary and normalizing function through the often-feminized identity of “victim.” I want to look at the ways in which masculine agendas have often “borrowed” strategies from oppressed or less privileged groups as a guise for furthering male privilege. From metrosexuality to the MRA movement, the usurping of various behaviors and concepts of identity from the

Other has often been an effective tool for maintaining monolithic notions of western masculine identity without responsibility.

To conclude, I want to make a very clear distinction between genuinely liberatory projects that analyze masculine concepts and identity within patriarchy from problematic approaches offered by many MRA outlets. There is certainly a conversation to be had concerning concepts of masculinity and gender revolution, but it must be one that resists the normalizing discipline of gender oppression.

Travis Holloway, The Pratt Institute

### “Occupying with Rousseau: On the Inevitable Crisis of Representation and Revocation of Sovereign Power”

It is well known that Books 1 and 2 of Rousseau’s *Social Contract* hand over democracy to distinguished legislators and political representatives who are said to enact the general will of the people for them. While this understanding of “democracy” was foundational for the creation of modern democratic republics, what often remains unconsidered are the closing passages of Book 3 of the *Social Contract* in which Rousseau warns of a government that no longer represents the interests of the people. In such a case, Rousseau calls for all representation to be suspended and for the people to form new, horizontal assemblies—that is, assemblies that abolish all distinctions between the rulers and the ruled. As Rousseau writes, “[T]he instant the People is legitimately assembled as a Sovereign body, all jurisdiction of the Government ceases, the executive power is suspended, and the person of the humblest Citizen is as sacred and inviolable as that of the first Magistrate; because where the Represented person is, there is no longer any Representative.” Whether one considers that the social contract or political representation ever had legitimacy or not, today anarchic interventions of this kind continue to crop up and contest the legitimacy of representative power. Unfortunately, as many predicted, State repressive forces such as the police make Rousseau’s necessary and democratic interruptions of power nearly impossible. This paper will conclude, then, by discussing the need for continued democratic contestations alongside Rancière. Despite the repression of the police, which suppresses democracy by forming a barrier of protection around sovereign power, we consider that such contestations still make it possible for new spaces of political appearance: for people to be heard who have no reason to be heard.

Fulden Ibrahimhakkioğlu, University of Oregon

### “The Ethics of Taking Up Space: Bodily Entitlement and ‘Creating Space’ for the Other”

A couple of months ago, the Istanbul Feminist Collective started a campaign against harassment on public transportation using the slogans, ‘Bacaklarını topla (Put your legs together)’ and ‘Yerimi işgal etme (Don’t invade my space)’. As various images began circulating in the social (and to a lesser extent, mainstream) media, often displaying a man sitting with his legs wide open next to a woman whose discomfort is inferred, the difficulty of navigating public spaces as feminine bodies became a hot topic. The prevalence of harassment (whether intended or not) on public transportation, while all too familiar for many women, was brought to the awareness of some men for the first time as it became a subject for public discussion.

My talk will take as its point of departure this uneven gendered distribution of space on public transportation for pondering the ethicopolitical status of space. There is an important link (yet to be explicated) between the “birthright” to take up space (in the form of an entitlement to the Other’s space) and the right to exist (and being welcome) in the public realm. In social contexts where women consistently find themselves as the ones having to create space for the Other by giving up their own space, the bus, the train, the ferry all become disciplinary sites for training feminine bodies to take up space timidly (if at all), to always create space for the Other, and to compromise. It is this repressive effect that the Istanbul Feminist Collective’s campaign aims to combat by encouraging women to reclaim space, while rendering masculine modes of embodiment (which often go unnoticed due to their naturalized status) visible and problematic. Bringing together Iris Marion Young’s and Sandra Lee Bartky’s works on gendered modes of embodiment to bear on this question of space, this talk will interrogate the ethical and political stakes in gendered distribution of space and our spatial arrangements of the public realm from a phenomenological perspective.

Mladjo Ivanovic, Michigan State University

“Holding Hands with Death: The Limits of Our Humanitarian Present”

The proliferation of humanitarian discourse in Western societies during the 1980s and 1990s ranks as one of the more astonishing developments of an often tragically astonishing century. Adorno’s often cited claim, that ‘to lend a voice to suffering is a condition for all truth,’ offers terms for representing and understanding this tendency to reflect ethically on the persistence of unnecessary human deprivation. One can approach this process in a number of ways. Since most discussions of the moral and legal aspects of humanitarianism emphasize the complexities of power relations, one may critically reconstruct this intertwining of contemporary humanitarianism with political power and, on that basis, make a moral evaluation of the present state of our humanitarian situation and its failures. In order to assess the basic implications of such a conviction this paper focuses on the international humanitarian pendulum shift during the last decade. Its analysis starts from the change of focus in international humanitarian law, and highlights how the issue of political violence bears on different aspects of international law and morality. The recent history of humanitarian interventions (Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.) or the lack of them (Rwanda, Syria, Gaza, etc.) demonstrates how such questions of violence and power dominate humanitarian efforts. Since both violence and power figure in a wide range of phenomena, the question of how to understand their specificity becomes important. Theoreticians often interpret violence through the analysis of concrete historical events, but limiting the discussion of violence in this way avoids its complexity, and minimizes the role played by economic, political, and cultural institutions. To avoid these difficulties, this paper treats violence as a relational process embedded in the structures and regulative powers of international law, humanitarian management, and global institutions. By disclosing the ways in which embedded political violence and militarism shape our humanitarian present, my final aim is to pose a profound challenge to contemporary discussions of humanitarianism and human rights.

In order to achieve this goal, I critically reflect on the problematic collusion between humanitarianism, militarism and political power that plagues the relation between international law and ethics. Despite the fact humanitarian relief sometimes legitimately respond to public pressure over human rights abuses, it often results too in the oppressive treatment of displaced and marginalized persons. Thus, what do we do when political power defines humanitarian standards and structures the conditions for conceptualizing and organizing humanitarian discourse? What do we do when the ‘humanitarianism’ becomes lethal to those it ought to protect? How do we even make sense of, or even reconcile, the connection between humanitarian law and loss of innocent human life? A better understanding of these complex connections/questions will help not only to uncover the network of intentions that guides western humanitarianism and clarify the unevenly shared responsibilities of those who cause these events (as well as those who witness or benefit from them), but also may contribute to their understanding of how interconnected and morally sensitive our world actually is.

Tom Jeannot, Gonzaga University

“Social Control and the Dictatorship of the Factory Clock”

In a previous paper, “Philosophical Implications of Temporal Single-System Interpretation,” I attempted to demonstrate that Marx could not have been a physicalist. I relied on the work of Andrew Kliman to demonstrate that the theory of value cannot be explained by “economist’s physicalism.” I then extended the reasoning to “analytic metaphysician’s physicalism,” relying on the work of Daniel Stoljar. From this point of departure, my purpose is to develop the further philosophical implications of temporal single-system interpretation. If Marx could not have been a physicalist, then neither could he have accepted a physicalist construal of the human experience of the passage of time.

Marx writes that a commodity “is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.” Among the “metaphysical subtleties” of the commodity-form is the physicalist conception of time physically instantiated in commodity production. Moishe Postone theorizes this “time” as “abstract time.” Abstract time is the time of “abstract labor.” Abstract labor is “human labor-power expended, without regard to the mode of its expenditure.” Concretely considered, however, there is no such thing. Yet abstract labor “is value producing. Hence, the “phantom-like objectivity” (*gerspenstige Gegenständlichkeit*) of value. Values exist as pure quantities: they do not contain an atom of use-value”; again, “[not] an atom of matter enters into the objectivity of commodities as values.” Since pure quantities as such cannot be physically instantiated, values must be nonphysical or symbolic. Yet even spectrally,

they are real enough; therefore Marx resolves their reality (in their substance and magnitude as well as their form of appearance) into the social relation determined by the law of value. In their form of appearance as exchange-values, "all commodities are merely definite quantities of congealed labor-time."<sup>8</sup> Specifically, this labor-time is the "[socially] necessary labor-time...required to produce any use-value under the conditions of production normal for a given society and with the average degree of skill and intensity of labor prevalent in that society." Specifically, this labor-time is the "[socially]The law of value, then, is enforced at the point of production by socially necessary labor-time (SNLT). In a word, this is the time of the factory clock. Like value itself, such a time is divisible into uniform aliquot parts, also as a pure quantity. It is abstract time, and everyone knows that time is money. Such a time is what Henri Bergson called "spatialized time." Marx's argument converges on Bergson's, and for that matter on Josiah Royce's and others', not only in treating the spatialized time of the factory clock as an abstraction but also as a falsification of the human experience of temporal passage as *durée*. If such times are to be distinguished as (mere) "psychological time" and (presumptively real) "Newtonian physicist's time," then one symbolic form of time will wind up charading as "real" and "objective," while other real and objective symbolic forms of time will be dismissed as chimerical and illusory: in the limit, the only time that counts is the time of the factory clock. But this is just what one would expect from the topsy-turvy world and the upside-down social relations of capitalist production, tantamount to a denial of the humanity, subjectivity, and lived experience of working people; not simply a denial in thought but the real denial of humanity that is necessary to the accumulation of capital.

To the extent that clock time is "analytic metaphysician's physicalist" time, the summary just given implies once again that Marx could not have been a physicalist. This result is a further philosophical implication of temporal single-system interpretation. It is a philosophical implication that saturates the lived experience of everyone who works for a living.

Kevin Jobe, Stony Brook University

#### “Potestas Publicum: Towards a Critical Theory of ‘Democratic’ Police Powers”

The forceful eviction of protestors from Zucotti Plaza in late 2011 has been morally condemned as yet another excessive use of force by the NYPD, and a subversion of democratic and constitutional values. However, by most standard definitions of 'liberal-democratic' police action, the eviction of Occupy protesters fell well within the procedural criteria of what has been normatively defined as a legitimate exercise of 'liberal-democratic' police. This paradox raises a fundamental tension within liberal governmentality between democracy and the 'public power' charged with the maintenance of law and order. Thus, in the case of the Occupy protests, we are faced with the question of how a procedural exercise of 'democratic' police power turns out to be anti-democratic. In order to make sense of this fundamental paradox, I claim, we must develop a truly critical theory of the police power of government - one which goes beyond the standard liberal-democratic 'accountability' model of police that seeks to regulate and limit the exercise and conduct of police by making 'the police' subject to the rule of law, legislative and judicial limitation, and public accountability.

Distinguishing 'the police' from the police power of government, a critical theory of police powers would begin by first showing, with Foucault, how the liberal-democratic model of 'police' rests upon a juridical conception of power, where the legitimate power of government to impose rules and restrictions on liberty resides in and emanates from the coercive power of the state and its 'police' apparatus. This juridical conception of power, which relies on the liberal bifurcation of 'the state' and society, effectively masks the ways in which 'state power' is dispersed and distributed through the capillaries and spaces of society. Alternatively, approaching 'police' power through the lens of governmentality opens up the possibility for a critical theory of police powers that questions the fundamental bases of liberal-democratic conceptions of state power. Such an approach will therefore interrogate how state police power is integrated, dispersed and coded within state and city law, administration, judicial and legislative regulation, and in the governance of public space. In this way, such a critical theory will expand and enrich our conception and critique of 'police' to include the much broader apparatus of state 'police power' as it has developed in Western liberal-democratic societies. By tracing through genealogical analysis the normative, procedural principles of 'democratic' police powers to their historical and political context of emergence, a critical theory of police powers will seek to uncover the ways in which these very principles have been used in anti-democratic ways. Indeed, as I attempt to show in the last part of the paper, the very normative criteria used to qualify police actions such as the Occupy eviction as 'democratic' -

adherence to rule of law, judicial and legislative regulation, and public accountability - are precisely the principles used and appealed to in the public justification of the eviction, sequestration and lifting of the restraining order on the city in the historic legal ruling of *Waller v City of New York*.

Shelly Johnson, University of Kentucky

### “Subversive Play in Totalitarian Spaces: Disrupting the One-Dimensional Classroom”

In this paper, I argue that United States schools are becoming marked by scarcity of subversive play, a scarcity which is dehumanizing to students and is also dangerous for society as a whole. I argue that increasingly the primary kind of classroom work legitimized by educational establishments and government educational directives is work which can be measured, quantified and aligned with market values and the goals dictated by the status quo. Drawing on Herbert Marcuse's notion of one dimensionality, I argue that classrooms are becoming one dimensional spaces. These are spaces marked by a scarcity of daydreaming, dialogue, and sensuous education—activities which I term “subversive play”. These activities are viewed as wasteful, irrelevant, and even threatening. Drawing jointly on the social critical insights of Herbert Marcuse and Paolo Freire, I first explain what I mean by the notion of subversive play. I then argue that subversive play is an essential component of students' ability to become autonomous, free agents and to move towards a society that honors the autonomy and freedom of all its members. Lastly, I will explain why I believe that subversive play is diminished in the classroom and suggest ways that it can be recovered by subversive teachers.

Nathan Jun, Midwestern State University

### “Contemporary Anarchist Philosophy: A Brief Critical Survey”

In this essay, I critically examine two of the dominant tendencies in recent and contemporary political-theoretical discussions of anarchism which fail to engage sufficiently with its history—viz., postanarchism and philosophical anarchism. Through a brief examination of late nineteenth-century anarchist political culture, I will demonstrate the extent to which both tendencies oversimplify and misrepresent anarchism. Lastly, I will argue that all political-theoretical discussions of anarchism going forward should begin with a fresh appraisal of the actual content of anarchist political thought based on a careful and rigorous analysis of its political, social, and cultural history.

Nikolay Karkov, State University of New York at Cortland

### “Autonomist Marxism in Post-Socialist Europe: Some Problems of Translation”

Throughout 2013, I was co-editor and translator of an anthology project entitled *Autonomism and Marxism: From the Paris Commune to the World Social Forum*. The project was commissioned and supported by *New Left Perspectives*, a radical collective of scholars and activists in Bulgaria, Eastern Europe, of which I am a member. Published in December 2013 and including texts from 37 radical theorists from diverse theoretical and political traditions, the anthology not only met with significant critical acclaim, but also exposed a number of tensions around the problem of translation. In this presentation, I focus on several such distinct if interrelated problems of translating autonomist Marxism into Bulgarian, including the translation of ideas into a context where they run the significant risk of distortion and misappropriation.

I start my presentation with a brief discussion of the history and motivation of our project, including the purposefully broad operative definition of autonomist Marxism which informed our selection of readings. I then move to a detailed discussion of the problems of translation, from the most immediate one – those of rendering context-specific terms into a language where they bear no equivalent – to the most politically salient one – that of the recent appropriation of the idea and practice of “autonomy” among anarchist circles, which severs any possible (historical) intersections between autonomism and Marxism and reads autonomist politics in an explicitly post-ideological and even post-leftist vein. Along the way, I explore the continued hostility to any Marxist/leftist theorizing, including that coming from an open-ended tradition such as autonomist Marxism, under the current neoliberal “common sense” in Bulgaria (and Eastern Europe more generally), along with the significant tensions within our own collective around the inclusion of texts that challenged the Eurocentric bias of much of autonomist Marxism itself.

My presentation addresses the theme of “Spaces of Control: Confronting Austerity and Repression” of the conference, as I argue that the problems of translating autonomist Marxist theory into a Bulgarian context offer significant insights into the perils and promises of the post-socialist condition in Eastern Europe today. It also speaks to RPA's interest in doing radical philosophical work outside traditional academic settings.

Ryan Knight, University of Hawaii at Manoa

“The Politics of Prefiguration: Theorization, Strategy, Potential”

Ongoing debate has been had surrounding autonomous social movements and the employment of prefiguration as a tactic—that is the embodiment of the society sought after in the actions of the movements themselves. This paper will explore the dynamics of the debate, situating this tactic within the larger Marxist, Anarchist, and Indigenous traditions from which it most commonly emerges. I want to point out some of the inadequacies of contemporary analysis to truly grasp prefiguration as a tactic, as well as the potential I find in movements that are engaging in prefiguration and self-management. Twisting the conference theme a bit then, I want to look at the way in which liberated space—liberated both from capitalism and the state—characterized by self-management and prefiguration, can serve both as a healthy reminder that other worlds are possible, and that the building of these other worlds might simultaneously serve to destroy the authoritarian, exploitative, and domineering ones that currently exist.

Michael Kryluk, Stony Brook University

“Species-Being in the ‘Mature’ Marx”

In the so-called ‘early’ works of 1843-4, species-being (*Gattungswesen*) and derivative *Gattung* compounds serve as the foundation of Marx’s criticisms of contemporary society. Despite its prevalence in his early writings, however, Marx seemingly abandons his notion of the speciesbeing in his later analyses of material history and the capitalist mode of production. Dismissed by Louis Althusser as inconsistent with Marx’s ‘mature’ critique of political economy, species-being has been defended by many commentators seeking to unify Marx’s early notion of the human essence with his later focus on history and economics. My contention is that the largely unexamined return of the *Gattungswesen* and other *Gattung*-terminology in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital Vol. I* provides the foundation for a re-evaluation of the Marxian conception of the human essence. Far from extraneous to his developed analysis of capitalism, I argue that the use of *Gattung* language in these later writings illustrates the unique role of species-being in Marx’s historical material dialectic. Instead of belonging to a discarded humanist framework, my claim is that species-being consistently functions as the central anthropological and ontological concept undergirding Marx’s critique of present society.

Claudia Leeb, Washington State University

“Adorno, Arendt, and Totalitarian Power”

Global capitalism today contributes to a scenario where the threat of physical and psychic extinction becomes a daily lived reality for numerous vulnerable peoples. To get a better understanding of what we can do to counter such a violent scenario I turn in this paper to Theodor W. Adorno’s (in *Guilt and Defense*) and Hannah Arendt’s (in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*) discussions of the Nazi genocide. Although Arendt at times eschews an engagement with a Marxist critique on capitalism, a combinatory reading with Adorno brings the necessity of such a critique in understanding the Nazi genocide to the forefront. In particular, I am concerned with three questions. First, what are the mechanisms that contribute to a scenario where people commit crimes ordered from above? I discuss Arendt in combination with Adorno to further understand how totalitarian power destroys the faculty of thinking. Second, what allowed those few individuals, even in the face of terror, to not follow orders from above? Here I turn to those examples in Adorno’s and Arendt’s writings on fascism where the destruction of the faculty of thinking was not complete, and the possibility of challenging totalitarian power emerged. Third, what can we learn from this discussion for countering the threat of present-day punitive measures of control? Here I suggest that we need to deal with the unconscious guilt, or what Adorno calls a “working-through the past,” as a

precondition to be able to have solidarity with the victims of crimes, or those that are in danger to become new victims and to counter the immense suffering capitalism has inflicted upon the world.

Christian Lotz, Michigan State University

### “Society Does Not Exist?: A Critique of Recent Post-Marxism”

Almost all contemporary “post-Marxist” philosophers reject the primacy of the relations of production, and the “standpoint of reproduction” (Althusser). These political philosophers argue that there are principles that are independent from social reproduction, such as the “constituent passion of the multitude,” “agonistic action,” “direct action,” the “people,” or other speculative roots of social reality. This problem is most visible in Negri’s speculations about constituent power, as he claims that constituent power is ultimately an ontological principle of life itself. As a consequence, these speculations about the political make the social a secondary principle, and it is precisely this thesis that is in conflict with the standpoint of reproduction. In my paper I will present a critique of the “Post Marxist” tendency to render the political absolute by arguing that we need to go back to Marx’s thesis that political possibilities depend upon the historical level of productive forces and the social relations. This critique can be expanded to virtually all contemporary political philosophers, as almost all of them no longer analyze capitalism dialectically. It is the concept of capital, accordingly, that is lacking from current political philosophy, which leads to an idealization of the political itself by pushing either power, discourse, or identity into the center of Marxist theory. The dividing line, accordingly, is the question of whether we can philosophically defend dialectics over ontology and ethics. This dividing line also applies to Badiou’s attempt to present a militant politics beyond capital. As Badiou argues, the question of the political is not a question about classes, movements and other agents; rather, as he argues against Negri, it is a question of how to organize a mass under the heading of an idea to which each militant political individual subjects herself. This idea, according to Badiou, is the communist idea. This position, however, falls back onto an empty and abstract determination of a political subject (and capitalism) that is stripped of her social position, and, we might say, is the sad expression of what might be called left Thatcherism.

Tanya Loughead, Canisius College

### “What is Critical Thinking?”

Critical thinking has become a buzzword in higher education: everybody uses it, but there is very little reflection or dialogue about what it means. Democracy is said to depend upon it, business and industry leaders claim to want more of it, almost every discipline and field within higher education maintains that they encompass it, standardized tests claim that they can gauge it, and certainly many responses to global crises depend upon our understanding of it. In this essay, I aim for theoretical precision about what critical thinking is and does. I argue that the thriving or failure of not only higher education but of the Earth and its many inhabitants now depends upon whether we can think critically and in fact differently than we now do. This essay is part of a book that I am finishing on higher education. This book traverses fields in critical theory (Marcuse, Althusser), psychoanalysis (Kristeva, Freud), some phenomenology (Husserl), and the philosophy of education (predominately: Giroux, hooks) while analyzing the direction forward for the contemporary university. This particular essay composes the penultimate chapter of the book wherein I argue that critical thinking is the primary task of higher education. This statement in and of itself is not controversial; however, the manner in which one defines critical thinking is key. My definition has three necessary aspects and builds off of Althusser’s conception of “reading against ideology.”

Chris Manno, Stony Brook University

### “Capital’s Telos and Eudaimonia”

In volume I of *Capital*, Karl Marx claims “the production of surplus value, or the extraction of surplus labor, forms the specific content and purpose of capitalist production” (*Capital* 298). Indeed, he describes capital as a ceaseless process in which money is advanced in exchange for commodities for the primary

purpose of attaining an even greater sum of money, i.e. surplus-value. In short, the production and private appropriation of surplus-value is the telos of capitalist production for Marx. The creation of surplus-value organizes this entire mode of production which, in turn, forms the basis of all super structural relations and institutions within society. This is to say that all socio-political institutions and relations must, in some fashion, be organized around the end of creating surplus-value. Institutions and relations that directly counter this end are either systematically co-opted or abolished altogether. Due to the fact that the telos of surplus-value exists in the system of material production itself, I argue that this teleological understanding of capitalism is a way in which we can make sense of Marx's account of the base-super structure relation. The foundational role played by the instrumental telos of perpetually increasing the production of surplus-value means that capitalism is a system which essentially deviates from the telos of eudaimonia, or human flourishing. Using this Aristotelian notion, I contend that capitalism perniciously alienates individuals from true human needs, since it is a system which necessitates treating human beings as merely means/commodities that can create surplus value. This critique also overlaps with Aristotle's discussion of wealth as a degenerative end for human action and political community. Aristotle argues that a society that subordinates all ends to the mere creation of wealth is necessarily incompatible with a society devoted to human flourishing. This normative understanding of there being an objective telos to human community/society that is at odds with the mere creation of wealth (i.e. eudaimonia) is what lies at the base of Marx's critique of capitalism.

Moreover, this indicates that the overcoming of capitalism requires an alteration of the fundamental telos of capitalist production. However, this can only occur by challenging capitalism as a system. Radical theory and praxis can only be efficacious if it is systematic in scope. As such, any emancipatory critical theory of society must be engaged in a type of Utopian thinking that envisions an entirely different global system, one that is directed towards the end of human flourishing. Following the lead of Herbert Marcuse, I argue that it is only by reviving a notion of global Utopian thinking that we can adequately challenge the totalizing nature of contemporary capitalism.

Margaret McLaren, Rollins College

#### “Microfinance Institutions and Cooperatives: Exploitation or Empowerment?”

Recently, microfinance projects have come under scrutiny. Critics argue that such projects rather than helping the poor as intended, instead create a sense of dependency. In some cases microfinance projects even leave poor people worse off than before by charging excessive interest, and punishing those who do not re-pay the loan. Alongside microfinance projects, women's co-operatives have also proliferated in an attempt to improve women's and thus their families', quality of life. While there is some overlap between microfinance projects and co-operatives, I argue that there are fundamental practical and theoretical differences. Microfinance is part and parcel of a neo-liberal, capitalist framework that seeks to instrumentalize human relationships and perpetuate a materialist consumer mentality. Cooperatives, on the other hand, arise from an alternative vision of the world based on cooperation and respect for human relationships. From the beginning microcredit favored women as loan recipients for two main reasons: women are more impoverished than men, and they are more likely to pay back the loans. I examine this gendered dimension of microfinance, and explore whether the focus on women in development achieves its expressed positive outcome of empowerment, or if instead poor women who are already vulnerable are further victimized through microfinance. Microfinance first emerged as part of a broader development strategy that was implemented primarily through NGOs. However, since 2000 MFIs have also been backed by private capital, which is increasing this strategy as it proves to be profitable. I demonstrate that the common criticisms of micro-finance projects, for example, that they are individualistic, entrepreneurial, and undermine community and family relations do not apply to co-operatives. I situate co-operatives in their socialist history and demonstrate the ways they foster values of community and solidarity as opposed to the aforementioned problems associated with micro-finance and its historical context in capitalist neo-liberalism.

Eduardo Mendieta, Stony Brook University

“Spaces of Torture and Brutality: The Aesthetics of Humanizing Victims”

José Mendoza, Worcester State University

“Enforcement Matters: Reframing the Debate Over Immigration”

In debating the ethics of immigration philosophers have tended to put aside questions of enforcement. In bypassing these sorts of questions philosophers have not necessarily done anything out of the ordinary. Philosophy typically brackets questions of enforcement, at least initially, when attempting to determine who is entitled to certain rights and who is bound by certain duties. The reason for this bracketing rests on the not-so-outlandish assumption that the question of what a right or duty *ought to be* is distinct from the question of *how to guarantee* that right or duty. The ethics of immigration, in this sense, does not appear to be an exception to the rule: whether a political community *ought* to have the right to control immigration is assumed to be distinct from the question that asks *how* a political community goes about enforcing this right. This paper, however, seeks to challenge the conventional framing of the immigration debate by arguing that when immigration enforcement is taken into consideration—which admittedly few philosophers have done—a commitment to universal equality becomes irreconcilable with a state having a presumptive right to control immigration. Instead, we find that a commitment to universal equality entails that non-citizens, including undocumented immigrants, be entitled to certain presumptive protections that prevail over a state’s right to control immigration.

David Miller, University of Western Ontario

“Liberating Spaces or Liberating Subjectivities?: A Question for Radical Politics”

Much contemporary radical theory seems to advocate moving beyond the question of space. For example, Deleuze’s *Postscript on the Societies of Control* argues that we have already largely passed from a disciplinary society, marked by discrete enclosed spaces of domination and hierarchy, to a society of control, defined by “ultra-rapid forms of free floating control” (4) dispersed throughout the entire social environment, unbound to any specific location. If this assessment is accurate, a number of questions emerge. What is the purpose of creating liberated spaces? Is it a question of creating new spaces of autonomy, or reclaiming old spaces of repression, like the factory or the classroom? Should carving out space free from control and domination be taken as the ends of radical politics, or merely a means? Is it even possible to speak of spaces as stably “liberating” or “dominating” outside the context of a particular moment or situation?

In the final section of their *Introduction to Civil War*, Tiqqun makes the claim that “Liberating spaces liberates us a hundred times more than any ‘liberated space’ can” (207). The liberation of certain spaces, even certain types of spaces, no longer seems to be the point of resistant politics, so much as freedom from the coherent identities imposed by such spaces – “our need for communism. Our need for nocturnal spaces, where we can find each other beyond our predicates” (Tiqqun 205). This may alternately be conceived as ontological anarchism – the creation of new subjectivities, new forms of life, that resist and disrupt domination through their very existence. But to what extent (if at all) does this free play of subjectivities require the prior creation of spaces where individuals can experiment and explore beyond the confines of their labels?

Rather than providing a topographical analysis of any particular space of domination or control, and without attempting to provide any definitive answers, this presentation will use contemporary theory to raise and explore some questions about the purpose and nature of liberated/liberating spaces for radical politics.

Joshua Mills-Knutsen, Bellarmine University

## “Can Higher Education Be Revolutionary?: Marx, Foucault, and the Institution of Higher Learning”

The operative assumption in American political discourse is that education is the key to class levelling. Through education, students from poor or middle class families can erase the social divisions that prevent them from full participation in society. Marx seems to recognize this when he included “free public education” as one of the conditions that will allow for the transition from a capitalist to communist system. Yet recent studies have shown that education does little to compensate for class differences. Education, in other words, is less of a factor than birth in where one ends up in society. What, then, is the point of education?

This paper will argue that despite all appearances to the contrary, higher education is not in crisis. Instead, higher education is mutating in response to changing demographics in order to fulfill the function it has always fulfilled: the reproduction of class and race based hierarchy. In order to accomplish this task I will first challenge a prevailing notion that the primary problem in higher education is a corporate takeover of a non-profit social good. Next I will discuss the role of class and education by means of analyzing the history of SUNY Albany from its beginning as a “normal school” to its controversial decision to cut liberal arts programs as a cost saving measure. Finally I will make use of Foucault to address the difference between the formalities of institutional assessment and class content, arguing that however revolutionary our class content, our formal procedures of evaluation undermine any revolutionary potential.

All of this analysis will culminate in a better understanding of our own (as educators) complicity in undermining our revolutionary desires. Far from being a vanguard of a coming revolution or advocates of class levelling, systems of higher education (and those they employ) are the best defense of a stratified status quo. In the words of Pogo, “We have met the enemy and he is us.”

Patrick Murray, Creighton University

## “Capital’s Reach – How Capital Subsumes and Shapes

The mass unemployment and the ever more precarious state of workers, the still expanding inequality of wealth, the austerity measures taken by firms and governments during the Global Slump, along with public protest movements such as Occupy, have nudged capital and its crisis-laden tendencies out of the shadows. As David McNally put it, in the financial meltdown of 2008, confidence in capitalism was shaken such that “a small but important space opened up for real discussion and debate about our economic and social system” (14). However, as he adds, this has not “led to a fundamental rethinking within the mainstream itself” (15). That is no wonder since the ossified mainstream concept of capital as produced goods that can serve in the production of new goods is a generally applicable notion that tells us nothing in particular about capitalist society. This mainstream concept of capital, since it lacks any social, moral, or political content blocks any real discussion about our economic and social system; it falsely severs “economic” discourse from moral, social, and political theory. In particular, the mainstream concept excludes the critical ideas that capital is an impersonal form of domination that imposes its boundless goal of capital accumulation and that capital is inherently crisis-prone.

By contrast, the Marxian concepts recognize value and capital, that is, value that increases its value, as specific social forms fraught with moral, sociological, and geo-political significance. While, like anything that we tend to take for granted, capital becomes obtrusive when it goes into crisis mode, capital’s power to structure our lives is constant, massive, and pervasive, as well as contested in countless ways. I. I. Rubin observed: “The basic error of the majority of Marx’s critics consists of ... their complete failure to grasp the qualitative sociological side of Marx’s theory of value.” In order to counteract the conventional notion of capital, this presentation will sketch the shape and scope of this “qualitative sociological side” of Marx’s theory of value and all the specifically capitalist social forms, the value-forms that go with it, for example, the commodity, money, capital, and wage labor.

The exposition of capital's reach will indicate the basic ways that capital shapes sociality, which includes "negative spaces" not under capital's direct control such as the domestic sphere and the state; discuss the idea of subsumption under capital's value forms and identify a different forms of subsumption; distinguish between capital's constitutive social forms and its "shadow forms" and, finally, consider how capital shapes the public and scientific discourse about the society that it subsumes drawing on the notion of "the illusion of the economic," the idea that there is an economy in general.

Mecke Nagel, State University of New York Cortland

"Ubuntu and Criminal Justice Ethics: A Path Towards Transformative Justice"

This paper presents an alternative to the logic of mass incarceration by drawing on specific indigenous justice practices. They seem to adhere or overlap with Southern Africa's notion of Ubuntu, which refers to common, compassionate intersubjective humanity. Ubuntu ethics promises a transformative approach to justice which is life-affirming rather than revenge- or death-yearning. It will be beneficial for communities, who wish to reintegrate an individual who has committed an error or offense. The goal is to move away from a desert-and rights-based economy towards a needs-based economy.

Jeffery Nicholas, Providence College

"Where I and We Come Together: Confronting Austerity and Repression through the Common Good"

Most contemporary understandings of the common good identify it as a set of conditions lacking any content. It identifies a set of roads and bridges and financial institutions that allow individuals to pursue their goods. On this distorted understanding, the common good becomes a space in which individuals fight over access to various, scarce goods. As such, austerity becomes a means by which those goods are limited to the "worthy" or "contributors" and denied to those in need. Further, repression becomes one means through which individuals are divided from their common interests and directed to fight over scarce resources. A more radical understanding of the common good contrasts with this distorted notion. On my account, the common good comes about through dialogue of members in society, a dialogue that, not only develops a rank ordering of the goods in society, but also in which human beings develop individuality. They do so because, through dialogue, human persons come to understand more clearly what they want by understanding what we want together. Just as I cannot understand my good as a father in a family without understanding what each person in the family desires, I cannot understand my good as a citizen without also understanding the good of others who are citizens with me. This conception of the common good undermines both austerity and repression. It undermines austerity because it points, not to conflict over scarce resources, but to collaboration on how we will achieve the good of each person in society. It undermines repression because I cannot be divided from others if my individuality is conditioned by dialogue with others.

Anne O'Byrne, Stony Brook University

"'A Living Man Declared Dead': Taryn Simon and Lines of Blood"

Old Furnace Artist Residency, Harrisonburg, VA

A panel performance with the 'curator' and past/future residents of the Old Furnace Artist Residency that focuses on the role of institutional/university in patronage, credentialization, and support for the arts and modes of subversion, parasitism, and solidarity. The presentation will be from an outline & not a formal paper. Ends with open discussion about expectations for residencies programs and their place in activism. The Old Furnace Artist Residency is an ongoing project that provides free creative and residency space to artists in Harrisonburg, VA. It is based in Jon Henry's home and has received funding and programming support from local colleges, community groups, commercial galleries, and non-profits. It was initiated by Henry's frustration with artist residencies that charge money for participation. OFAR produces a free quarterly publication, SLAG Mag around various themes. Also, OFAR is in the final stages of adopting two local roads as part of its commitment to environmental stewardship. Other community programs that occur

within the space are monthly game nights, potlucks, fundraiser dinners, and salons. The project fosters intimate conversations, exchanges, and relationships in public and private spheres between participating artists and the community.

OFAR operates in a curious nexus point within James Madison University, Henry's college, because the university commits itself to encourage, protecting, and fostering student research projects. Yet, Henry's research and practice entangles this connection in local politics like obscenity laws and national debates like deportations. This has complicated discussions, evaluation, and support for OFAR and led to deeper conversations about the university's mission, diversity, and vision statements.

Many of OFAR's residents come from marginalized communities, especially queer and people of color. Their work and community engagements focus on issues of diversity, inclusion, and oppression. Residents have connected with the local community through exhibitions, lectures, performances, workshops, etc. OFAR creates an inversion and perplexity of education, social, and art world hierarchies as Henry curates, publishes, teaches, and promotes artistic mentors, teachers, and critics, even though he is still a student. His academic institution lends support to this practice as they fund and support various performances, lectures, and publications. Henry will talk about this double game and how it allows him to develop his own creative space and community.

The other panelists have (or will) resided and participated in OFAR. Discussion will focus on connecting urban artists to a rural community and the tensions or synergy this experience provides.

John Kaiser Ortiz, Millersville University

“Sophocles and Soldier Suicide”

This paper examines the philosophical import of Sophocles' *Ajax* as a prophetic dramatization of the contemporary problem of soldier suicide and in terms of raising questions about the ongoing nature and psychological costs of warfare. In 2012, the total number of casualties among US armed services personnel totaled 295. However, it has been estimated that 349 active-duty soldiers took their own lives by suicide during the same year. Recent reports have estimated that among veterans, the daily average number of ex-soldiers who commit suicide ranges between 18-24 suicide victims daily.

In *Ajax*, the audience (whether as reader or viewer) becomes a forced witness to the plight of the title character's demise after his humiliation by military leaders, his attempted slaughter of fellow-soldiers in retaliation, and his eventual suicide. Beyond the context of having been betrayed by his superiors, the historical context of the fatigued, battle-worn Greek Army's decade-long assault on the city of Troy must also be considered if the Trojan war as given to us by Sophocles is to be seen in terms of offering critical parallels to the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Three particular issues help to contextualize this ancient as well as contemporary analysis of the human costs and moral sacrifices of warfare: 1) the mental health of veterans who have served under extenuating conditions of warfare; 2) the stress faced by family members whose head of household has braved repeat deployments; 3) the general psychological health of soldiers in particular and the military in general whose basic integrity has been undermined by being abandoned to their own fate without the resources promised them at the beginning of their decision to commit to military service.

Seen along these lines, my argument is that *Ajax* provides a disturbingly relevant model for raising public awareness about the mental health needs of soldiers and their families in the contemporary period of what are commonly known as stop-loss programs (or forced retention-indefinite contract renewal policy mandates) in the US armed services.

Forrest Perry, St. Xavier University

“The Educative Potential of Workplace Democracy: A Critical Reading of Jane Addams on Educational Methods”

In her chapter on “Educational Methods” in *Democracy and Social Ethics*, Jane Addams criticizes the industrial division of labor for depriving people of meaningful work and rendering them machine-like. I observe that one of the chief causes behind so many workers experiencing their work as machinelike is the division of the labor process into professional and nonprofessional work, where the work of nonprofessionals is in large part dictated to them by professionals. The remedy, I argue, is to be found in democratic workplaces (something Addams gestures at but does not take up in any sustained way), where

we see if not the abolition, then a blurring of the division between professionals and nonprofessionals, between those who conceive tasks and those who execute them, thus reducing the likelihood that one class of workers (nonprofessionals) function like machines, merely carrying out the orders of others (professionals). I will discuss workplace democracy after examining and criticizing some of Addams' proposals to make work less machine-like and more meaningful. My argument will be that control over the production process—not merely, as Addams calls for, knowledge of one's place in it—is what's most important for workers to achieve if they are to make their work meaningful, and this is something they do achieve to a significant extent in democratic workplaces. I'll conclude by noting that although overcoming the kind of alienation that results from engaging in insufficiently meaningful work cannot be achieved through workplace democracy alone—that something more thoroughgoing, namely, overcoming capitalism, is required—democratic workplaces can play a significant role in overcoming capitalism insofar as they operate as spaces within which people overcome the social divisions (divisions based on differences in gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, etc.) that have long accompanied the division of labor.

Richard Peterson, Michigan State University  
“Nonviolence, Epistemology, and Media”

This paper develops some conceptual underpinnings of critical theory as they bear on the post-industrial aspects of contemporary capitalism. The paper draws on my previous RPA presentations on nonviolence construed as social learning. Nonviolence in this sense has to do with politics that can expand ethical relations. Here I connect this to a normative idea that early critical theorists took over from Marx, namely the emancipatory overcoming of exploitation. I argue that we need to rethink the idea of exploitation in post-industrial terms and that doing so requires attention to the dynamics of violence and nonviolence, not least in their epistemological aspects. If exploitation remains an informative critical idea, we should be able to locate it in contemporary knowledge practices (e.g., technological change, institutional knowledge, education, the Internet) and do so in ways that draw on, but go beyond, Marx's ideas about the division of labor. My claim is that we can do so in part by making the role of violence in knowledge relations more explicit. The link to exploitation becomes evident when we see how violence operates in those respects in which knowledge (in a broad sense of the term) can be seen as figuring in the material formation of society. This in turn requires a notion of the mediums of knowledge, which allows us to connect themes of nonviolence, the critique of exploitation, and contemporary debates over media. The general theoretical cast of my argument reflects its being a summary of themes developed in a book I am writing about epistemological aspects of contemporary violence and media.

Anne Pomeroy, Richard Stockton College  
“On Lives: Precarious and Degraded”

Butler maintains that the universality of the precarity of life confirms the interdependence of lives. We each provide the conditions for one another's survival, recognition, and valuation. This, she claims, makes us fundamentally responsible for the lives of Others. It grounds a moral stance. “There is not life without the conditions of life that variably sustain life,... reproducible and sustaining social relations, and relations to the environment and non-human forms of life, broadly considered” [Butler (2010), p. 19]. What happens though when the very conditions that sustain life and make lives survivable (e.g., through the payment of a wage) devalue the lives they sustain? What if the ability to have work necessarily dehumanizes? What if the price for the conditions of survival is to make flourishing and selfdetermination impossible? What if the free human social project is the trade-off for mere survival? Is then the apprehension of someone having or being a “life” enough?

This paper applies a Marxian analysis to the notion of human life as a general category and demonstrates that one can live a life that is not precarious (in terms of being directly physically endangered) and still live a dehumanized life. One can live an affluent and privileged life that is substantially dehumanized. Surely there are widely divergent degrees of precarity, and surely lives become framed as more or less important, more or less “lives”, but it is the generalized and reproduced condition of ontological degradation necessarily engendered by capitalism that creates the conditions within which such lives are framed, understood, seen as meaningful or not. There is, so to speak, a frame of frames from which the later garner their functionality and meaning.

Therefore, we ask whether the notion of a life and of lives as Butler outlines them in her recent works, *Precarious Life* and *Frames of War*, are adequate to ground moral understanding and practice or whether the manner in which human lives produce and reproduce themselves within the capitalist context (now being globalized) problematizes the call. We therefore expand from her claim that "...moral theory has to become social critique if it is to know its object and act upon it" (Butler, 2004).

Gertrude Postl, Suffolk County Community College

### "Control as Self-Control: From Foucault's Panopticon to Social Media"

This paper attempts to explore the (self) controlling function of contemporary forms of social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr) by comparing their operating mechanisms with Michel Foucault's use of Bentham's Panopticon as a historically established icon for an immediate, spatially structured, bodily form of control. (This is not to deny social media's potential for political liberation; however, this will not be the focus of the present investigation.)

As Foucault explains in *Discipline and Punish*, the control exercised within the Panopticon rests on directed visibility, bodily confinement, and individuation of those to be controlled. "They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible" (p. 200). The "panoptic schema" is centralized, requiring an actual human being. The guard or overseer at the center of the spectacle – through the use of architectural design and gaze – assures the production of docile bodies (separated from each other through physical barriers) and docile behavior. The means of control of this set-up are obvious; they are physical, spatial, and visible.

This panoptic scene seems to be in direct opposition to various social media platforms which are commonly perceived as the ultimate exercise of freedom in that they allow for a free and unrestricted flow of communication. Participation is voluntary and the exchange of content (be it texts or images) – although regulated by respective site requirements and legal restrictions for internet use – is minimally interfered with. Everybody is connected to everybody else, any expression is freely "shared," the exchange is not bound to a particular location or moment in time. The forms of interactions typical for social media are decentralized, dispersed, flexible, and they transcend the limitations of the body as a physical entity located in a space and time.

But as Dave Eggers' novel *The Circle* demonstrates, the step from this seeming liberty to a totalitarian form of control is a small one; the dangers inherent in social media are real and not just dystopian fiction. It will be the focus of this paper to explore these very dangers by comparing social media to the "panoptic schema" as a historically older form of control. Using Foucault's analysis of power, the emphasis of my argument will be on the opposition between visibility vs. invisibility, centralized vs. decentralized, individualized vs. connected, and bodily presence vs. absence (substituted through forms of expression).

It shall be demonstrated that the seeming freedom of communication, typical for social media, is made possible through self-regulation and self-restriction (knowingly or unknowingly) on the part of the users. The contemporary scenario does not require a guard at the center. There is no center. And the controlling function is woven through the entire structure and exercised by the users themselves. Postings are filtered so as to present to the world a coherent, self-identical position or persona, an allegedly exciting life-style, an amazing purchase, or a beautiful body. Who is willing to "share" and put on public display their doubts, their despair, their confusion, their anxieties, their distraught, unappealing face, or their aging body? If the goal of communication is to get as many "likes" as possible and to have hundreds of "friends," what other than docile bodies (and minds) can be the originators of this newly found bliss?

Gail Presbey, University of Detroit Mercy

### "Crisis, Dispossession, and Activism to Reclaim Detroit"

In their recent book, Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou discuss the concept of dispossession in all its complexity, in the context of enforced austerity measures in Europe and a global Occupy movement. Such reflections on dispossession are relevant to understanding the immigration crisis in the U.S., Israeli takeover of Palestinian lands and Palestinian acts of resistance, the landless peasant movements in Brazil and other parts of Latin America (*El Movimiento Sin Tierra*), and many other movements throughout the world. In this paper I will use their reflections as a springboard for analysis of the imposition of an emergency manager on the City of Detroit and the subsequent bankruptcy hearings for the city, which

along with the mortgage and foreclosure crisis and now recent water shut-offs have resulted in dispossessing the poorest of the poor from their modest possessions. The concept of “crisis” is sometimes used and abused by capitalist opportunists and political manipulators, who see in peoples’ temporary paralysis and confusion during a crisis an opportunity for quick gains. “Crisis” can therefore be problematic. Yes, it can be an “opportunity” as the popular saying goes, but for who? However Detroit is also the scene of a robust response, as people take to the streets in acts of solidarity to demand their city back, fighting against their dispossession. As Athena and Butler caution, activists should not fall into reinforcing the disastrous concept of personhood reinforced by possession. There are other ways of engaging with each other politically to forge a common cause that escape the negative aspects of “possession.”

Sebastian Purcell, State University of New York at Cortland

### “Liberal or Liberated Spaces: Dussel and Rawls on Global Justice”

Two aims animate the present essay. Its broader aim is to begin a discussion between the most broadly recognized form of political theory in the Anglophone world, Rawlsian liberalism, and the most broadly recognized political theory from Latin America, Dussel’s liberation politics. Because this task is so broad, its more specific aim is to compare critically their senses of global justice. Would those who inhabit the oppressed spaces of the globe be better served by a liberal conception of human social institutions, or the process of liberation by which specific groups are progressively liberated from specific forms of oppression? While it is often thought that Rawls’ thought is not yet radical enough to address the specific needs of oppressed groups, a patient reading of his thought shows that he is in fact sensitive to many of the basic concerns of global oppression. Nevertheless, it is argued that Dussel’s account fares better in articulating the relation of globalization and modernity, and the prospects for cosmopolitan cooperation, and that it does so on immanent grounds for Rawls. The essay ends with the consequences for contemporary research on cosmopolitan justice.

Joel Reynolds, Emory University

### “The Ableist Conflation: Disability, Phenomenology, and the Control of the ‘I Can’”

Phenomenologies that focus on the body fare poorly when read from a critical disability studies perspective. As with Merleau-Ponty’s famous discussion of the white-cane, disability, rather than being investigated in its own right, disability is often used as a mere example on the way to exploring some other philosophical problem like embodiment. Alternately, when it isn’t being lumped together with a litany of identity categories (race, class, sex, gender, etc.), “disability” often functions as an umbrella term for anything that falls outside the bounds of ableist norms. However, the most politically troubling issue is what I call “the ableist conflation”—the conflation of lives lived outside ableist norms with lives one inevitably and obviously suffers. This conflation allows ableism to control the normative domain of “lives worth living,” which is always to say, lives worth political labor—lives worth heeding and even fighting for. Through a phenomenology of multiple sclerosis (MS) informed by disability studies, I argue to the contrary that disability is profoundly constructive and meaning-making. The richness of disability disputes the ableist conflation, decoupling pain from disability and contesting the “dis-” in “disability.”

I begin in section one with S. Kay Toombs’ phenomenology of MS. With respect to the non-congenital, highly specific diagnosis of MS, the entire field of one’s corporeal possibilities is altered. Yet, amidst the perceived loss of possibilities (e.g., “I cannot walk up stairs”), new possibilities are also afforded (e.g., “I can move faster with less fatigue in this motorized wheelchair”). Alteration does not entail degradation. Through this phenomenology of MS, disability is shown to be neither a loss, nor a detriment, nor a problem, but a rich and abundant form of life. The central misstep of phenomenological accounts that only find restriction or negation in disability is in flatly comparing changes in possibilities without attending to the normatively arrayed form of life out of which those possibilities unfold in the first place.

Because disability studies is well positioned to critique the ableism implicit in studies of “embodiment” and in uncritical linkages of possibility with ability, I contend in section two that phenomenological research is enriched by a perspective afforded by disability studies. The most pernicious effect of the ableist conflation is not its ability to turn certain variations into suffered deformations and possibilities into suffered

debilities; it is that this understanding feigns epistemic obviousness. Even phenomenological uses of categories like possibility are a potential hidden breeding ground for implicit normative assumptions, and I thus call for critical phenomenologies of disabilities.

I conclude by noting the immense stakes of the ableist conflation. The trenchant coupling of disability with pain and of flourishing with possibility thought as ability is central to eugenicist logic. This includes the most recent form of eugenics aimed at those with disabilities: pre-natal selection against disabled lives. So long as one operates with a common sense, uncritical understanding of ability, the ableist conflation remains securely in control.

Suzanne Risley, Independent Scholar

“If We Were Really Being Deceived: Bad Faith and the Spaces of Animal Oppression in the U.S.”

One of the existentialists’ most fruitful political contributions was their analysis of human oppression in terms of bad faith. Moving beyond the consideration of bad faith in interpersonal relationships, Sartre and others addressed the physical and psychological mechanisms through which it’s collectively produced and maintained in oppressive systems. In doing so, they refused to ignore or minimize individual freedom and choice. In his analyses of anti-Semitism, colonialism, and torture, Sartre insisted on recognizing bad faith as fundamentally grounded in individual agency, exploring why and how people actively evade recognition of their own complicity with and personal responsibility for oppressive regimes and the suffering they cause. As he wrote of the French public’s role in war crimes in Algeria in 1957, “We are not naïve, we are dirty.” Like others, he believed that art and literature were important means of showing people their own bad faith and its oppressive consequences and of revealing possibilities for resistance and change.

While originally intended to further human liberation, insights drawn from these existentialist analyses are useful in understanding the oppression and exploitation of nonhuman animals in contemporary capitalism. In this talk I’ll describe the mechanisms through which collective bad faith is promoted by the animal-exploitation industries and their government allies in the US. I’ll discuss specifically the CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation) system and the recent attempts to protect and conceal these spaces by legal means, including the criminalization of investigation and protest via the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act and the passage or attempted passage of state “ag gag” laws. I’ll then examine the public’s active role in perpetuating bad faith concerning factory farming. I’ll conclude with a brief discussion of how the arts of photography and film can be used to breach these spaces and reveal public practices of bad faith, focusing on the 2013 film *The Ghosts in Our Machine*.

Scott Ritner, The New School for Social Research

“The Afflicted Class: Simone Weil and Walter Benjamin on the History of the Oppressed (Toward a Prolegomena to Thinking Precarity)”

This paper situates the concepts of suffering and affliction in the thought of Walter Benjamin, and Simone Weil within the Marxist discourse of class and class struggle various forms. That is, the struggle of the class within itself, the inner struggle of each member individually, the struggle of each member individually against the other class, and the collective struggle between the classes. To pursue this ends, the dialectical relationships of theory and practice, materialism and theology, and empirical and philosophical study will be mobilized as this paper considers Weil’s experiences of physical and psychical pain during her [ethnographic] year of factory work in 1934 and Benjamin’s “history of the oppressed”, and the remarkably complimentary ideas of revolutionary thought and practice generated by each. This primary placement of suffering and affliction in the concept of class alters the Marxian understanding of class conflict and its historical import by integrating into it a deep historical pessimism indicative of what, contemporary cultural theorist, Sami Khatib has called a “teleology without end.”

Alberto Bejarano Romo, University of Memphis

“Are We There Yet?: Medicalization and the Mechanisms of Inclusion and Exclusion in U.S. Immigration”

In recent years the issue of national security has dominated the mainstream discourse on immigration in the United States. The question of terrorism has been the focus of this discourse. The fear of terrorism has been accompanied by a heightened awareness of the country's borders and the constant arrival of immigrants. Although the desire to protect the national borders increased with the terrorist attacks of 2001, U.S. American fears of immigration extend beyond traditional understandings of terrorism and terrorist attacks. The so-called national security has also constituted an issue of medicine and health—the health of a national population. At this level, a whole set of phenomena and mechanisms have led to the internalization and institutionalization of the fear of “foreigners” introducing diseases, viruses, and epidemics into the nation, putting the national population at risk. Clear examples of this have been the discourses operating around the bird flu, and the H1N1 virus, which, as one may recall, was initially known as the Mexican flu. In his 15 January 1975 lecture at the Collège de France, included in the lecture series entitled *Abnormal*, Foucault describes some of the differences between the mechanism of exclusion of leprosy—the banishment, marginalization, and rejection of individuals—and the mechanisms of inclusion of the spatial management of the plague—the close monitoring of individuals and spaces in order to protect and control a population. Foucault returns to these mechanisms of inclusion in his 1977 to 1978 lectures, *Security, Territory, Population*. In the lectures, Foucault argues that there is a moment in the history of the West when security becomes what he calls an apparatus (*dispositif*)—a set of phenomena employed to protect, monitor, and regulate individuals. For Foucault, these protection, monitoring and regulation of people happens at the level of the population, through statistics, probability and normalization. Drawing from Foucault's discussions of the apparatus of security and its unfolding at the level of the population, this paper examines different ways in which medical discourse can be said to function as a way to monitor and regulate immigration, and thus, as a way to monitor and regulate groups of subjects who are categorized as immigrants. In doing so, this paper shows how the field of immigration can be said to be one of inclusion and exclusion from the dominant spaces of U.S. American societies. The essay seeks to show ways in which inclusion and exclusion operate together and inform one another to the extent that they cannot be analyzed in absolute isolation

Jose Rosales, Stony Brook University

“Tragic Community: Nietzsche and Philosophy as a Political Practice”

“Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to ‘accelerate the process’, as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet.” This line, taken from Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, alludes to the influence of Nietzsche on what is now called ‘accelerationism.’ It is the aim of this paper to provide a return to Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche in order to get a better sense as to the stakes and merits of Nietzsche's own work in regards to accelerationism, as well as provide an analytical method to differentiate between a conservative and potentially leftist accelerationist politics. By focusing on Deleuze's distinction between the will to power and the will to nothingness we will be able to see the errors in conflating the idea of an infinitely productive process with an emancipatory politics, and thereby respond to criticisms and misreadings of Deleuze and Guattari and the left accelerationists as being merely symptomatic of, and complicit with, capitalism itself.

Mario Saenz, Le Moyne College

“The Revolutionary Subject: Marx, Menchú, and Payeras”

The relevance and vitality of Marx's thought rest on its opening towards alterity and alterity's revolutionary possibilities. Marx's work on corporeality, estrangement, and living labor are points of departure for a conception of a transformative and revolutionary subject under conditions of crisis throughout “Empire”—conditions that close off more and more paths and tend to leave us with two possibilities: Revolution or fascism.

In this presentation I examine three significant concepts of the revolutionary subject: First, the subject of living labor placing emphasis on Marx. Second, the subject that struggles for the reindication of the human rights of marginalized communities; I elaborate here on some of the ideas of Rigoberta Menchú. Third, the class-based revolutionary subject; I point here to on the analysis made by Mario Payeras, in the midst of civil war, of the relation between ethnicity and class in the Guatemalan Revolution.

The first subject arises concretely from the conditions of capitalist production and it explains other forms of oppression. One is “subject”—according to the economic relations opened up by bourgeois society—when one is source of value and surplus value for capital. Therefore, what is “nothing to capital” is, on the one hand, a historical and social construction in capitalism to maintain its hegemony and domination. Other categories of oppression—for example, the biological concept of race or the myth of the maternal spirit forced into the heart of the woman of the bourgeois family as the West industrialized (“the cult of motherhood” that legitimated the corralling of bourgeois women in the home, a phenomenon evidently not experienced as such by poor or enslaved women)—find their function within the capitalist class structure. On the other hand, what is nothing to capital is a concrete nothingness that exists as possibility embodied in critical, communitarian, and emancipatory interests.

The second and third permutations of the subject, to wit, life in community on the plane of resistance and struggle, and the revolutionary war to refound the nation-state, represent for each other a creative contradiction or co-existing juxtaposition (not a unifying synthesis of opposing differences) of the autonomy of communities, and participatory and protagonic democracy, with the nation-state of the oppressed and exploited who fight and will have to fight against empire and “the rebellion of the rich” in, for example, Venezuela now and El Salvador in the near future.

In the last two sections of this work I will show how the concept of living labor is useful for the articulation of a fruitful relationship between communitarianism and class struggle. It points the way towards a fluid articulation of the subject (the first section of this work), but also (in the last two sections) the autonomist state.

Richard Schmitt, Worcester State College

#### “Solidarity – What it Is and Is Not”

In our meetings we declare solidarity with people we believe to be oppressed, often in faraway places. And when the meeting comes to an end we raise our voices to sing "Solidarity Forever" in order to raise our spirits. But what solidarity is remains pretty unclear. I will try to make some contributions to clarifying this important concept.

There are three major explications of solidarity. There are the conceptions according to which solidarity is primarily a passive state, it consists of commonly held attributes which we have from birth or inherit from previous generations. According to a second variant, solidarity is actively chosen by individuals or members of groups. The most interesting theorists of solidarity point out that in many cases solidarity is hard won in the face of serious disagreements and differences.

At the end of my presentation I will add a fourth version of solidarity which stresses not so much the common properties or beliefs of people in solidarity but the very specific human relations that unite them.

Jean Schuler, Creighton University

#### “Capitalist Crisis and the Terms of Discourse”

In his essay “What is Enlightenment?” Kant deems a rational society to be the goal of history. For Kant, the means to that goal include global commerce and conflicts, but the outcomes are laws and institutions that prove agreeable with morality. After Kant, enlightenment gets more critical scrutiny. In Hegel’s Phenomenology the outcome of the French Enlightenment is terror. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the legacy of the European Enlightenment includes the Second World War and the Holocaust. For these critics of enlightenment, it is its skeptical and shrunken rationality that ends in violence. This presentation will contrast the accounts of deadly reason that Hegel calls pure insight and Horkheimer calls instrumental reason. Utility is the residue of pure insight’s drive to know things in themselves that volatilizes their inherent content into one layer after another of what they are for us. I will explore the differences between instrumental reason and utility. Both caricature thinking, but utility, not instrumental or technical reason, captures the decimating rationality that conceals the capitalist dynamics that produce it. Utility provides a pseudo-response to a real question: what allows all commodities to be commensurable? The constant employment of instrumental reason and utility constrain possibilities for understanding the current crisis and moving beyond it. Being less skeptical about reason is a condition for resisting capitalism. The critique of enlightenment endeavors to recover the promise of a rational society.

Gino Signoracci, University of New Mexico

“The Microrepressions of Everyday Life”

Important social and moral debates of the day may still be taking place in major print, radio, TV, and electronic news media, and they are undoubtedly being conducted online more than ever before. In fact, interactions in the virtual public space of the internet seem to have gained priority in our society, arguably at the expense of the amount and the quality of interpersonal exchanges in actual public spaces. And it doesn't take much web browsing to see that the caliber, civility, and inclusivity of online exchanges leave a lot to be desired. Somehow, the perceived differences and conflicts that structure social and political “discussions” online and in other media seem to make it easier for strike after strike of dispossession, oppression, and injustice to be suffered in relative silence or else met with only scattered protest. As a way of addressing and discussing some of these problems, I would like to propose an activity for the RPA conference that falls somewhere between an outline presentation, a guided discussion, and a workshop on social discomfort and self-repression. My idea is to introduce a quotation or excerpt from a text, read the passage, add a remark or two of my own to prompt discussion, and then have RPA participants voice their responses and thoughts, spending 5-10 minutes on each piece of text before moving on to the next one. I hope that this format will promote collective exploration of several themes: 1) the barriers to true democratic exchange that are thrown up by phenomena as diverse as political polarization, intensifying socioeconomic inequality, exhaustive (and increasingly individualized) entertainment possibilities, and a culture of acquisition, consumption, and debt; 2) why and how these barriers frequently make us feel uncomfortable or even incapable today of talking openly with others in person about social and political topics, especially charged or possibly divisive ones; 3) the measures of self-control and self-repression we therefore adopt in our everyday lives; and 4) possible ways to resist or counteract these tendencies and habits. Authors from whose works I intend to read excerpts include: Michelle Alexander, Derrick Jensen, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Naomi Klein, Bill McKibben, and Arundhati Roy.

Erika Soto, Independent Scholar

“Equality and Its Invisible Subjects: The Case of CeCe McDonald”

In 2011, Cece McDonald and a group of friends were attacked outside a local bar in Minneapolis. The altercation, which began with hateful, racist, homophobic and transphobic slurs, turned into a violent physical assault between the two groups, leaving Cece with injuries across her face and ended with the stabbing of Dean Schmitz. Although Cece was the first to be attacked by one of Schmitz's group members, she was the only one arrested that evening. Cece pleaded guilty to stabbing her aggressor, although she claims that it was an act of self-defense. The court did not see it this way and sentenced her to 41 months in prison for 2<sup>nd</sup> degree manslaughter. Why were Cece's actions not considered acts of self-defense? Why was she the only person arrested that night? Why did the law refuse to see her as a victim? Where has the discourse on equality taken us if they fail to recognize Cece and *her* right to self-defense?

In this paper, I address the manner in which equality that culminates in the failure to locate Cece's oppression and often rendering her invisible. The current discourse of equality is manipulated by neoliberal discourse that aims at accommodating people's experiences into a normative paradigm stripping it of its substance and complexity. In other words, this narrow understanding of equality is unable to work through the complexities of social identities. In order to address the inability to locate or identify with Cece's complex oppression, I discuss Maria Lugones' account of intermeshed oppression and the indifference exhibited to women of color that she brings forth throughout her works. By understanding the narrow conception of equality that renders impossibilities and dismisses the complexities of oppression, I conclude that equality could be radically redefined if it were to include a space of solidarity for the experiences and demands of Cece's cause.

The manner in which equality is used in this paper is the seductive yet unattainable ideal that bases itself on normalizing and marginalizing. Equality only includes the life experiences of others if they are normalized and synthesized into a conception of self that does not threaten structural framework as part of modern heteronormative society. Cece McDonald is just one of many examples where her particular experience does not neatly fit a mold or category of subjectivity that caters the neoliberal economic order. Her experience as a transwoman of color makes her susceptible to structural vulnerabilities such as societal marginalization and economic disadvantages, to name a few. By addressing the blindness that surrounds Cece's case, I argue that the current discourse of equality renders people who face systematic oppression

impossible or invisible; creating difficulty for social justice movements of resistance to locate or take up their cause. To make this case, I approach Cece's case in two ways: the unfair way her trial was handled and the way social justice movements to come together in solidarity to address her oppression.

Tony Smith, Iowa State University

“The End of One American Century... and the Beginning of Another?”

In the final part of Capital 1 Marx discussed the historical development of the world market since the sixteenth century. He noted that three regions held the leading position at the ‘center’ of the world market in succession: Venice, Holland, and England. Each followed the same trajectory. There was first an extended period in which the region was “preponderant in commerce and industry.” Eventually, this “preponderance” was lost. In each case the region was nonetheless able to retain its privileged place for another extended period, due to the expansion of a financial sector overseeing cross-border flows of “enormous amounts of capital.” Eventually, however, the region declined, its place at the center of the world market taken over by a new hegemonic power. Marx implied that England would eventually decline after the 1860's, its place ceded to the United States. Has the U.S. followed the pattern Marx discerned? There was a certainly a period in which the U.S. was “preponderant in commerce and industry,” culminating in the “golden age” after World War II. With the rebuilding of Europe and Japan the U.S. then seemed to lose its commercial and industrial “preponderance” in the 1970s. In nonetheless retained its privileged position at the center of the world market. According to this narrative, it was able to do so through neoliberal “financialization.” Many suspect that the Great Recession signaled the end of U.S. supremacy, and that a long period of relative decline is now in store. After presenting this narrative in the first part of the paper, it will be called into question in the second. Financialization has not undermined the U.S. national innovation system, which continues to be the most extensive and effective in the world. U.S. capitals associated with this national innovation system can be expected to retain relative advantages in the world market in the coming period. In the third and final part of the paper I suggest that the future of U.S. capitalism may be determined less by these relative advantages than by the rapidly approaching historical limits of capitalism itself.

James Stanescu, George Washington University

“Animals, Cartesianism, and Democratic Materialism”

Meat is the common zone of man and beast, their zone of indiscernibility ... – Gilles Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation.

In the packer's world, it was easy not to remember that eating was a moral act inextricably bound to killing. Such was the second nature that a corporate order had imposed on the American landscape. Forgetfulness was among the least noticed and most important of its by-products. –William Cronon, Nature's Metropolis. In Henry Ford's autobiography he noted that the assembly line was not invented by him, but instead inspired by the disassembly line of the Chicago slaughterhouses. Indeed, much of what we call Fordism and Taylorism, that is to say, the production of subjectivity under machinic capitalism, was originally created in the Union Stockyards. My paper pushes us not to see this as an historical accident, but rather that the abattoirs were a constitutive space for creating this transition in capitalism. Because of this, I argue against the dominate belief that what makes the factory farm so terrible is capitalist expropriate applied to our relationship to other animals, and instead contemporary capitalism depends upon speciesism applied to capitalist expropriation. Within the space of the stockyards, we discover that Fordism and Taylorism depended upon a certain Cartesianism that separated not just the humans from animals, but the human from the human animal.

The first part of the paper quickly traces the ways that the packers of Chicago produced new forms of capitalist subjectivity. Drawing upon this analysis, the second part of the paper argues that resistance to capitalism will therefore depend upon our ability to undo the Cartesian split. Moreover, undoing the split will require us to affirm ourselves as finite, vulnerable, animals. This is contrasted to Alain Badiou's conception of anti-capitalist militancy, which is based upon the human transcending the human animal. Furthermore, his conception of dialectical materialism is based upon the human understanding its immortality, against its finitude. By critically examining the space of the abattoir, we will challenge Badiou's model of resistance, and chart a different way to undo capitalist violence.

Jenny Strandberg, Stony Brook University

“Political Pathologies and Natural Disasters: Diagnosing an Unhealthy Planet”

The abundant environmental threats all forms of life on earth are facing due to irrational, uncontrollable, self-gratifying human activity are so severe and extensive that, instead of leading to immediate political action, they tend to instill paralysis and despair among the enlightened, and denial and resignation among those who prefer to live in an illusion of eternal, human progress. We live in a world where human strength and cleverness are constantly celebrated and on display against the backdrop of deforestation, extinction of species, acidification of oceans, and the disastrous warming of the planet, which, paradoxically, accentuate human smallness and impotency. We need to find a viable, political pathway out of the Platonic cave where we are currently bonded by liberal economics while watching the shadow theater of market solutions being applied to environmental problems. Such a pathway, I propose, can be found in Plato’s “Republic” if we attempt to stretch his political and ethical project to include a discussion of the natural world. I would like to do so by continuing Plato’s analogy between the city and the soul and think of Nature as the body of the city-soul. In this analogy, I see environmental problems as “bodily” symptoms of a pathological, communal soul. Thus, my objective here is to diagnose some of our modern, mental disturbances and search for possible political remedies that can restore balance and health to nature and all forms of lives on earth.

Karsten Struhl, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

“Bakhtin’s Carnavalesque as Political Praxis: Another World is Possible”

This talk will explore the implications and applicability of Mikhail Bakhtin’s analysis of the carnivalesque as both a spontaneous form of resistance and an intentional political praxis. In both forms, the carnivalesque transgresses limits and opens a space to challenge the “seriousness” of global capital’s hegemonic ideology. I will discuss some of the ways in which the carnivalesque has manifested itself in social movements from the 1960s to the present, and especially in the movements for global justice, for globalization from below, and in the more recent “occupy” movements in Spain, Greece, the Arab world, and the United States. I will consider some of the limitations of the carnivalesque, and I will conclude with some observations about the way in which carnivalesque laughter can confront the “humorless state,” release revolutionary energies, and help to create a vision of another world which is really possible.

Jasmina Tacheva, State University of New York, University at Buffalo

“Capitalism’s Privatization and the Killing of the Social”

Besides disrupting the stability of global market conditions and policies, the financial crisis of 2007/8 helped uncover serious chronic social problems made worse by the globalizing expansion of unfettered neoliberal capitalism. This paper evaluates critically the sustainability of the current capitalist system by examining not just whether it is economically and environmentally sustainable, but also if it is psychologically and socially justifiable.

Using critical theory and Marxism as its primary reference, the paper explores contemporary sociopsychological trends such as Mark Fisher’s concept of the privatization of stress and disease, Christian Marazzi’s idea of the profitization of human relations and activities, Lisa Guenther’s analysis of the death-in-life experience of solitary confinement, and the conflation of capitalism, democracy and freedom. Ultimately, the paper seeks to demonstrate how capitalism’s immediacy and pervasiveness affect the very psychological constitution of society and create an inescapable form of ideology most have come to accept as an unwavering norm.

Henry Theriault, Worcester State University

“Post-Capitalist Extractionism and Social Response”

There is no doubt that Marx and Engels’ analysis of modern economics captures with tremendous insight core elements. What is more, the agreement of pro-capitalist and Marxian theorists on the predominance of

capitalism as well as its general form makes challenging their account a virtual absurdity. And yet, this general analysis of capitalism is not without its unclarities and lacunae. While elaborate theories explaining the relationship of colonialism, slavery, and other economic forms and forces to capitalism have been developed, in light especially of contemporary issues, such as the rise of the oligarchs in the post-Soviet world, native elite expropriation of international aid, uncertainty as to what the form of the Chinese economy actually is and the Nazi economy actually was, the resurgence of slavery as a globalized economic form, questions arise as to whether “capitalism” adequately captures the nature of global economics today and possibly even in the past few centuries.

This paper attempts to develop a distinct model of global economics based on the notion of “extraction” or “expropriation.” While it will undoubtedly meet with determined resistance, ranging from concerns about the limitations and inadequacies of the analysis, raised by those with extensive knowledge of contemporary and historical economics, to reactions due to limitations imposed by years of habitual thinking along particular, well-defined lines. Whether the analysis presented here ultimately succeeds, at the least it can provide an opportunity for reexamining a long-held view in the light of numerous complexities.

Serious consideration of recent forms of economic oppression such as the use of credit card fees to extract wealth as well as of historical forms, such as the use of movable and immovable wealth expropriated through genocide to establish the modern national economies of the US, Britain, Australia, Argentina, Turkey, etc., suggests that the capitalism or semi-capitalism built later does not encompass these expropriations but is circumscribed by them. While it is possible to account through capitalism for massive transfers of wealth in slavery systems, apartheid systems, colonialisms, military conquests, etc., the accounts seem sometimes to be Ptolemaic stretches. One might just as readily view the state capitalist systems that arose within such contexts of mass expropriation as a continuation of and specific kind of systematic wealth extraction, with the capitalist component recurrent and the mass expropriation cataclysmic and singular (in its context). Using the framework of extractionism allows us to make sense of the full range of modern economic domination and violence. It must be emphasized that extractionism is not a distributive principle, but a structural economic form. Exploitation is one form of extraction.

Despite Marx’s determinist developmentalism, there is nothing inherent in communism or socialism that makes it a response only to capitalism. Indeed, at the moment that Soviet “communism” has apparently failed and Chinese “communism” has been absorbed into and transformed by and into (global) capitalism, genuine communism or socialism offers an important challenge to extractionism. After its analysis of extractionism, this paper will argue that communism or socialism represents the appropriate response.

Joseph Trullinger, George Washington University

“Leisure Is Not a Luxury: The Revolutionary Promise of Reverie in Marcuse”

In this paper, I will adopt a Marcusean perspective to argue for the legitimacy of daydreaming as a personally and socially enriching activity. From this perspective, leisure is not a luxury to be occasionally enjoyed as an appendage to a life primarily devoted to alienated labor, but is instead a precondition for a liberated life of tranquil, creative cooperation. The unchaining of imaginative playfulness entailed in daydreaming is therefore not only an element of “the new sensibility” operant in Marcuse’s ideal world, but it is also an activity that threatens repressive forces through the very act of considering desirable alternatives. I will focus this analysis by exploring how daydreaming demands free time—that is, time in which one is free. I will begin by showing how free time is not the same as a pastime (that is, an unfulfilling recreational activity that reproduces conditions of alienated labor). I then use Marcuse’s analysis in *Eros and Civilization* to illuminate an internal contradiction of existing labor practice: the very thing it exists to produce (leisure) is the same thing its alienated logic disallows us to enjoy (free time). Through the reduction of our liveliness into impersonally managed performances, civilization instills the sense that we must “earn” free time through distressing work, thereby reinforcing the irrational opposition between work and play. Daydreaming, for example, is increasingly impermissible while “on the job,” since “time is money” (that is, a scarce commodity in a world suffering from manufactured scarcity and commodification). We resign ourselves to spending the majority of our lives in inhumane work, and restlessly look for ways to “pass the time” when away from work. Complementing Marcuse’s vision for a playful society, I will use Eugen Fink’s notion of play as an “oasis of happiness” that is a “glimpse of eternity.” Fink demonstrates how play-time is not the empty time of toil enchained to a predetermined end, but is instead an enriched experience of the weight of things, such that time itself is more authentically felt in play, and calls for joyous perpetuation. I argue that Marcuse’s own thesis that “timelessness is the ideal

of pleasure” should be understood along the lines of Fink, with the result that there is a kind of flexible stability to an Eros-centered society that constitutes a healthy relationship to time. This stands in contrast to the instability and insecurity of capitalism’s destructive drive for “innovation,” in which the performance principle forbids one to meditatively reflect, wonder, and revere. Rather than being mere escapism, daydreaming is a way to reacquaint ourselves with how to exist freely in time, because it entertains transformative possibilities within ourselves and the surrounding world, and longs for their perpetual vivacity and development.

Harry van der Linden, Butler University  
“Deadly Surveillance: Drone Warfare”

I will discuss a variety of objections to the use of weaponized drones in warfare, such as that it makes war too easy and destabilizes international relations, but I will focus on an aspect of drones (fitting with the conference topic) that has received less attention in the literature on the ethics of drone warfare: weaponized drones are instruments of continuous *surveillance* and the killing is the culmination of a process of surveillance. I will argue that this aspect of killing by drones makes drone killing especially morally reprehensible, say, as compared to other long- distance killing such as killing by cruise missiles launched from manned aircrafts or ships.

Current weaponized drones may become a stepping stone toward the miniaturization of drones, the development of drones attacking drones, and the emergence of autonomous drones or killer robots. My second aim in this paper is to discuss what might be the most promising strategy to prevent such a horrifying future of warfare. One strategy is to fight for an international ban on autonomous weapons, a strategy adopted by Human Rights Watch and a host of other NGOs. My own thinking at this juncture is that this strategy might be viable (and, so, is attractive) but falls short in light of the pervasive immorality of remote-control surveillance killing and how widespread this killing might become.

Nicolas Veroli, Marist College

“Freedom is Not a Thing!: Escape from the Neo-Liberal Prison”

The neoliberal age is simultaneously a moment in which the sanctity of freedom is universally proclaimed and one in which its reality is universally trampled. On the one hand, neoliberal thinkers argue that democracy has never been as widespread as it is today. On the other, the largest spying program in human history has recently been uncovered, the range of political and intellectual expression seems more narrow than at any time since the 1950s, and gargantuan social inequalities are transforming liberal electoral systems into the means for ratifying oligarchy. How is it possible for all this to be justified under the aegis of ‘increasing freedom’? Ideologically speaking this situation is the result of the neoliberal reappropriation of the concept of freedom as private ownership, which allows freedom to appear like a consequence of neoliberal capitalism. But from Proudhon’s initial insight that “property is theft!” (1840) to Marcuse’s *Essay on Liberation* (1969) and from the abolitionist to the feminist, civil rights, and gay liberation movements freedom was, both in practice and in theory, a rallying cry of those forces aiming at demoting the principle of private property. In this presentation I will seek extend this tradition and elaborate a critical conception of freedom, one that incorporates recent scientific and historical insights. The concept of freedom I will develop will then serve as the basis for developing the elements for a systematic critique of global capitalism.

Sarah Vitale, Ball State

“Utopia and the Politics of Hope: Marx, Bloch, Benjamin”

This paper rests on two hypotheses: that we are living in a capitalist age and that a particular logic dominates the capitalist age; this is the logic of production or productivism. I call the ontology of production the understanding of being itself as a closed, finite whole, in which nominally new beings arise as a result of a redistribution of the already existing elements. Production is thus the only possible mode of generation, foreclosing the possibility of other modes like creation or emergence. I hold that both the

thought and practice of critique, the challenge of capital's spaces of control, is closed off in large part by productivism. In this paper, I look at two Marxist philosophers who read Marx against the grain and help us turn to Marx to think outside productivism: Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin. Not only do they resist a productivist reading of Marx, but they also call on Marx to challenge the determinism and productivism of their age. While both Bloch and Benjamin at times accuse Marx of valorizing the concept of production, they both end up finding the resources in Marx to think beyond this concept. They challenge capitalism's spaces of control by holding that the given always contains fissures. While capitalism has performed a metaphysical flattening on the field of social experience, Bloch and Benjamin argue that the utopian imaginary points to the possibility of other worlds. I examine how they challenge a static metaphysics through challenging the presentism of capitalism and venturing new ways of understanding temporality. Bloch argues that we remain in a stalled present, but the fact that we cannot see around the corner must not prevent us from breaking away; we can use a mirror, he explains, or we can "hear around the corner," and "the dialectical turning can be actively promoted." In this way, Bloch's account is similar to Benjamin's, which holds that the now-time is the revolutionary moment in which the past collides with the present. Bloch and Benjamin help us chart out what it might mean, not only to oppose a static metaphysics, but to venture to think the new. While we cannot possibly think the new in any figurative sense, we have to think the possibility of the creation of the undetermined. I suggest that this is the thought of revolutionary creativity. It is playful and suggestive, refusing to ontologize the new and instead only gesturing toward its possibility.

Robert Anthony Ward, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

"Hip Hop as an Emancipatory Project and the U.R. Movement"

This panel will explore the possibility of critically informed self-performance theory, a key component to educational contexts that serve as a precursor to the transfiguration of the present social order. The importance of this corpus is to converge the tremendous explanatory insights of Critical Race Theory with the cultural artifact of Hip Hop in an effort to provoke questions on the extent to which the performance of 'race', 'racism, and white supremacy operate as an obstacle to interpretation. We argue that these ideologies have an inexorable connection as to why the perceived value of hip-hop performances has been such a greatly contested form of aesthetic expression. By tracing both its historical origins and its sociological roots, we will explore the aesthetically informed milieu of hip-hop as a culturally specific product, of the African American community. In addition, to using a critical race theory framework, we will explore the aesthetically informed milieu of hip-hop as a culturally specific product.

Mary Watkins, Stony Brook University

"Limit Acts at the Border between Citizens and Immigrants"

Soren Whited, Stony Brook University

"Constraint, Consciousness, and Freedom in Freudian Psychoanalysis"

The relationship of Freudian psychoanalysis to the tradition of the Enlightenment – if such a relationship is ever considered – is easily regarded as one of contradiction, particularly with regard to the question of freedom. The possibility of something like Kant's fully rational, self-legislating subject looks to be all but entirely foreclosed in the Freudian subject, determined as it is by layers of unconscious drives and impulses over which the subject has little if any conscious control, rational or otherwise. This paper makes the case that this apparent antipathy or incongruity between the Enlightenment ideal of freedom and Freudian psychoanalysis is only that. Freud's attempts to understand the nature and dynamics of the human psyche, then, in fact provide important and even necessary insights into the conditions of and possibilities for the kind of human freedom evinced by Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant, among others.

The paper locates the key to this proposed continuity between Enlightenment thought and Freudian psychoanalysis in the decisively important role of *constraint* in the former's understanding of freedom. For Rousseau, the possibility of human freedom derives from our capacity to "disobey" the dictates of nature, which find expression in instinct. As he put it, "Nature commands every animal, and beasts obey. Man feels the same impetus, but he knows he is free to go along or to resist." It is in resisting – or *constraining*

oneself against – the compulsions of nature that the human being can express her freedom. Not quite a half-century later, Kant expressed the role of constraint in freedom in different, perhaps more direct terms: “The less a human being can be constrained by natural means and the more he can be constrained morally... so much the more free he is.” According to Kant’s categorical imperative, one is not free because one can choose whether or not to act in accordance with it, but rather only when and insofar as one does act in accordance with, or obeys it.

If we operate with an understanding of freedom as self-determination – as both Rousseau and Kant did – the neuroses that Freud sought to understand, along with the repression in which they are rooted, are certainly to be regarded as expressions of unfreedom; the subject in question is unable to self-consciously determine her own thoughts and actions. However, if self-constraint is to be regarded as a central feature of self-determination, then it is not the constraining character of repression that renders it (and the neurotic dysfunction to which it gives rise) unfree. Rather, it is the by-definition unconscious character of repression that does this. Driven to the unconscious, self-constraint becomes repression, and as repression, it is unfree. Repression is pathological freedom.

It would seem, then, according to this constellation of reasoning, that freedom is achieved through *self-conscious self-constraint*. And if this is so, then neurotic thought and behaviors are instances of *un-self-conscious self-constraint*, and are therefore pathological expressions of freedom, or at least of its potential. If we transcribe this reasoning from the level of the individual to the level of the social, then practices of state repression can likewise be seen as pathological expressions of (the possibility of) freedom. Regarded in this way, the “increasingly punitive measures of control” that potentially emancipatory political practices face today can be understood not simply as so many obstacles to their achievement (which they are), but also and simultaneously as the pathological expression of humanity’s capacity for freedom. In this way the “spaces of control” that progressive or revolutionary movements must contend with today might be registered not merely as an impediment that we face from without – which we would therefore oppose but have little if anything to learn from – but as stunted and therefore distorted expressions of the very task of human emancipation to which we, as progressives, have devoted ourselves. It is in this way, this paper argues, that political reaction and suppression might be overcome. In other words, it is by recognizing that unfreedom arises only with the possibility of freedom – or that unfreedom is but a pathological expression of the capacity for freedom – that the genesis of unfreedom might be more adequately understood, and thereby potentially overcome. Or perhaps, we might say, that unfreedom might be redeemed.