This seminar explores the modern and contemporary transformations in our political culture, understood as the practical mode of intelligibility that structures the very nature of politics by determining who qualifies as a political subject, what is visible as a political action, and how the spatio-temporal framework of politics is organized. After a brief methodological and historiographical introduction, we will study the historical emergence of the modern concept of revolution and the transformations in the temporal horizons of the political due to the opening up of the future as an unknown field of utopian possibility. We will examine, in this light, historical writings on various revolutions as well as theoretical attempts to conceptualize the specificity of revolutionary movements. Against this historical backdrop, we will then explore what it means for a revolution to change social structure by discussing the reconfiguration of class relations as well as the role of gender and race in modern revolutions. This will allow us, more specifically, to examine the various accounts of agency used to explain revolutionary change, and we will be particularly interested in developing a non-reductive, multi-agential theory of social transformation. This methodological orientation will go hand in hand with a re-conceptualization of social norms as immanent, multi-tiered, dynamic, and therefore malleable. Finally, after developing tools for a radically historicist and multi-agential approach to revolutions, we will conclude by examining the claim that there has been a shift in political culture from the grand era of revolutionary politics (roughly 1789 to 1968) to a purportedly post-revolutionary epoch (approximately 1968-present). More specifically, we will investigate the contemporary historical imaginary by asking whether or not the belief in an unprecedented future is a thing of the past. Is such a future, in fact, a future past or a future afar (in the sense that revolutions, if they happen, occur far from the hegemonic centers of the Euro-American world)? If so, what are we to make of the recent revolutionary activity around the world, from Latin America to the entire Mediterranean region, the Occupy movement and beyond? What is the status of revolutionary activity in the present, and does it require a reworking of the very category of revolution?

**Required Material**
You are free to use other copies of the books listed below or scan/photocopy the relevant sections (depending on the length). However, these are the editions that will be referenced in class.


6. Essays and articles will be made available to you electronically. It is required that you bring hard or electronic copies of them to every class.

**OPTIONAL BACKGROUND MATERIAL**


**REQUIREMENTS**

1. Attendance and participation – 15%
2. Response paper to one of the sessions – 25%
3. Exposé based on one optional reading or film – 25%
4. Final paper and participation in research symposium – 35%

**PROGRAM (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

**HISTORY**

§1. Introduction

8/25 and 8/27

Required


Optional

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*

Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*

Raymond Williams, “Revolution” in *Keywords*

9/1 Labor Day, No Class and 9/3 Class Cancelled
§2. Words and Things
9/8 and 9/10
Required
Arendt, Hannah, *On Revolution* (Chapters 2-3)

Optional
Film: Andrzej Wajda, *Danton*, 1983
Krishan Kumar, “Revolution” in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*
Félix Gilbert, “Revolution” in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*
Karl Griewank, “Emergence of the Concept of Revolution” in *Revolution*
Reinhardt Koselleck, “Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution” in *Futures Past*
Alain Rey, “Révolution”, histoire d’un mot
Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*

§3. Toward a Radical History of Revolution
9/15 and 9/17
Required
Arendt, Hannah, *On Revolution* (Chapters 4-6)

Optional
Film: Robert Enrico and Richard Heffron, *La révolution française*, 2011 (no English subtitles)
Eric Hobsbawm, “Hannah Arendt on Revolution” in *Revolutionaries*
Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution*
Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution*
David Armitage, “Every Great Revolution Is a Civil War”
Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*
David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context*, c. 1760-1840
Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime*

SOCIETY
§4. What Is a Social Revolution?
9/22 and 9/24
Required
François Furet, “Commentary”
*Declaration of Independence*
*Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*
*Haitian Declaration of Independence*

Optional
François Furet, “L’idée française de la révolution”
Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*
George Comninel, “The French Revolution as Bourgeois Revolution: Orthodoxy and Challenge” in *Rethinking the French Revolution*
Neil Davidson, “Revisionism: The Bourgeois Revolutions Did Not Take Place” in *How
Revolutionary Were the Bourgeois Revolutions?
Sieyès, Qu’est-ce que le tiers-état?
Stathis Kouvelakis, Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx
Gary Kates, Ed., The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies
Nikki R. Keddie, Ed., Debating Revolutions
John Foran, David Lane, and Andreja Zivkovic, Eds., Revolution in the Making of the Modern World: Social Identities, Globalization, and Modernity

§5. Political Subjectivities: Class, Gender, Race
9/29 and 10/1
Required
Condorcet, “On Slavery” and “On the Emancipation of Women” in Political Writings
Mary Wohlstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (prefatory letter and chapters 1-4, or p. 67-155)

Optional
Valentine Moghadam, “Modernizing Women: Reforms, Revolutions, and the Woman Question” in Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East
Olympe de Gouges, “Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne” in Oeuvres
David Scott, Conscripts of Modernity
Angela Davis, Women, Race & Class
Gary B. Nash, Race and Revolution

§6. Revolutionary Propositions and Their Consequences
10/6 and 10/8
Etienne Balibar, “Citizen Subject”

Optional
Jacques Derrida, “ Declarations of Independence”
Etienne Balibar, “The Proposition of Equaliberty” and “New Reflections on Equaliberty: Two Lessons”
Albert Fried and Ronald Sanders, Socialist Thought: A Documentary History
Mikhail Bakunin, Statism and Anarchy
Karl Marx, Capital
Rosa Luxemburg, The Rosa Luxemburg Reader
V.I. Lenin, Essential Works of Lenin
Clara Zetkin, “Lenin on the Women’s Question”
Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks

Semester Recess (10/13-10/17)

AGENCY

§7. Revolutions Made and Unmade
10/20 and 10/22
Required
Jack A. Goldstone, “Theories of Revolution: The Third Generation”
Patrick’s Presentation
Optional
Mikhail Bakunin, “Revolutionary Catechism”
Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions
Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy
Saba Mahmood, “Agency, Gender, and Embodiment” in Politics of Piety
James DeFronzo, “Social Movements and Revolutions” in Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements
John Foran, Ed., Theorizing Revolution
Jack Martin, Jeff Sugarman, Janice Thompson, Psychology and the Question of Agency
Jack Goldstone, Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World

§8. Toward a Multi-Agential Theory of Revolution
10/27 and 10/29
Required
Murray Bookchin, “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought”
Jean-Paul Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason (selection)

Optional
Cornelius Castoriadis, Political and Social Writings, Vol. 1-3
Bruno Latour, Reassembling the Social
Margaret S. Archer, Culture and Agency
E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class
Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution
Films: Peter Watkins, La commune, 2000; Sergei Eisenstein, Battleship Potemkin, 1925 and October, 1928

§9. Political Efficacy
11/3 and 11/5
Required
Thomas Frank, “To the Precinct Station: How Theory Met Practice... and Drove It Absolutely Crazy” in The Baffler no. 21
David Graeber, “Revolutions in Reverse” in Revolutions in Reverse

Optional
Cornelius Castoriadis, Political and Social Writings, Vol. 1-3
Paul Cardan, a.k.a. Cornelius Castoriadis, “Redefining Revolution”
David Graeber, “A Practical Utopian’s Guide to the Coming Collapse”
David Graeber, Direct Action

INTERMEZZO
§10. Writing Revolution
11/10 and 11/12
Required
Victor Hugo, “Reply to a Bill of Indictment”
Colin’s Presentation

Optional
Victor Hugo, Ninety-Three
Victor Hugo, Bug-Jargal
Victor Hugo, Les Misérables
Leo Tolstoy, “Epilogue: Part Two” in War and Peace
Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

NORMATIVITY
§11. Toward an Immanent Theory of Normativity
11/17 and 11/19
Required
Pierre Macherey, In a Materialist Way (selection)
Franz Kafka, “Before the Law”
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Immanence and Desire” in Kafka
Abigail’s Presentation

Optional
Michel Foucault, “Preface to Transgression”
Georges Canguilhem, The Normal and the Pathological
Jacques Bouveresse, La force de la règle
Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations
Saul Kripke, Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language
Jacques Derrida, “Before the Law” in Acts of Literature

§12. Metanormativity, Historical Emergence and Agency without Agents
11/24 (11/26 Thanksgiving Recess, No Class)
Required
Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality (selection)
Paola’s Presentation

Optional
Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols
Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”
Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish

THE CONTEMPORARY CONJUNCTURE
§13. Topological Capture: Thinking the Present
12/1 and 12/3
Required
Alain Badiou, The Rebirth of History (first half of the book)
Film: Bahrain: Shouting in the Dark

Optional
Andrew Whitehead, “Eric Hobsbawm on 2011”
Perry Anderson, “On the Concatenation in the Arab World”
Alain Badiou, The Communist Hypothesis
Hamid Dabashi, The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism
Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Declaration
Slavoj Žižek, The Year of Dreaming Dangerously

§14. Mapping the Contemporary Revolutionary Conjuncture
12/8 and 12/10
12/8: Submit outline of final paper
Required
Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History* (second half of the book)

Optional
Alain Badiou, *Philosophy for Militants*
Noam Chomsky, *Occupy*
Tavis Smiley and Cornel West, *The Rich and the Rest of Us: A Poverty Manifesto*
Paul Mason, *Why It’s Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions*
Slavoj Žižek, *Demanding the Impossible*

12/12
Post rough draft of final paper and share with all members of the class

12/15
Comment on at least one rough draft

12/17
Final paper deadline (please submit electronically)