

Fall 2015

## HIST 4991

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HIST 4991 (Fall Semester 2015)

Dr. Andreas Oberprantacher

### **SPECIAL STUDIES IN HISTORY: RADICAL DEMOCRATIC THOUGHT**

*Time:* Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM  
*Place:* Liberal Arts Building 362  
*Office Hours:* Tuesday and Thursday at the Department of History, 14:00 – 16:00 PM  
*Tel:* 280-3223 (CenterAustria)  
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### **SYLLABUS**

#### **Course Description**

Radical Democratic Thought is not just another normative theory of democracy. Rather, it is a heterogeneous discourse that reflects a plurality of – sometimes rebellious – practices, which critically engage with existing (institutionalized) democracies. In particular, Radical Democracy challenges contemporary democratic states of affairs by arguing that principles like identity, consent or representation are problematic to the extent that they tend to marginalize political alternatives and minoritarian positions. Ever since the latest financial crisis, which resulted in a global debt regime and in devastating policies of austerity, a variety of movements emerged that exemplify the potentiality and actuality of Radical Democracy. This course provides an overview of Radical Democratic Thought by addressing some of the most pressing issues and seminal authors in the wider context of selected case studies. Apart from that the historical roots of radical democratic discourses will be presented along with a vocabulary of terms that are frequently employed in contemporary discussions.

## Course Readings

- Giorgio Agamben. *State of Exception*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 2005.
- Seyla Benhabib. "From Identity Politics to Social Feminism" *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship and the State*. Ed. by David Trend. New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 27-41.
- Daniel Bensaïd. "Permanent Scandal" *Democracy in What State?* Giorgio Agamben et al. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press 2011, pp. 16-43.
- Wendy Brown. "We Are All Democrats Now..." *Democracy in What State?* Giorgio Agamben et al. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press 2011, pp. 44-57.
- Wendy Brown. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. New York: Zone Books 2010.
- Judith Butler. "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street." *Eipcp* Vol. 09 (2011): <<http://www.eipcp.net/transversal/1011/butler/en>>.
- Judith Butler. "Indefinite Detention." *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Judith Butler. London and New York: Verso 2004, pp. 50-100.
- Iain Chambers/Giulia Grechi/Mark Nash. "Voices in the Ruins." *The Ruined Archive*. Ed. by Iain Chambers/Giulia Grechi/Mark Nash. Milano: MELABooks 2014, pp. 9-26: <[http://www.mela-project.eu/upl/cms/attach/20140722/102611541\\_7245.pdf](http://www.mela-project.eu/upl/cms/attach/20140722/102611541_7245.pdf)>.
- Colin Crouch. "Neo-corporatism and democracy." *The Diversity of Democracy: Corporatism, Social Order and Political Conflict*. Ed. by Colin Crouch/Wolfgang Streeck. Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar 2006, pp.46-70.
- Nicholas De Genova. "The Queer Politics of Migration: Reflections on 'Illegality' and Incurability." *Studies in Social Justice* Vol. 4, No. 2 (2010): pp. 101-126.
- Amarpal K. Dhaliwal. "Can the Subaltern Vote? Radical Democracy, Discourses of Representation and Rights, and Questions of Race." *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship and the State*. Ed. by David Trend. New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 42-61.
- Silvia Federici. *Precarious Labor: A Feminist Viewpoint*. New York: Bluestockings Radical Bookstore 2006: <<https://inthemiddleofthewhirlwind.wordpress.com/precarious-labor-a-feminist-viewpoint/>>.
- David Graeber. "After the Jubilee." *Tidal: Occupy Theory, Occupy Strategy* Vol. 09 (2012): pp. 26-29 <[http://tidalmag.org/pdf/tidal3\\_year-2.pdf](http://tidalmag.org/pdf/tidal3_year-2.pdf)>.
- bell hooks/David Trend. "Representation and Democracy: An Interview." *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship and the State*. Ed. by David Trend. New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 228-236.
- Chantal Mouffe. "Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy?" *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship and the State*. Ed. by David Trend. New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 19-26.

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak/David Plotke. "A Dialogue on Democracy." *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship and the State*. Ed. by David Trend. New York: Routledge 1996, pp. 209-222.

### **Grading**

|                     |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Midterm           | 30 % (equals 30 points max.) |
| 1 Final             | 30 % (equals 30 points max.) |
| 3 Papers            | 30 % (equals 30 points max.) |
| Class participation | 10 % (equals 10 points max.) |
| Grade A             | 88-100 points                |
| Grade B             | 75-87 points                 |
| Grade C             | 62-74 points                 |
| Grade D             | 49-61 points                 |
| Grade F             | 0-48 points                  |
| Grade I             | incomplete                   |

Particular attention will be given to the soundness of arguments, to the consistency of information, and to the academic quality of reflection.

### **Attendance Policy**

Students have to attend ALL class lectures; unexcused absences will result in one grade drop per unexcused absence; a class can only be excused by contacting the instructor in advance or immediately after the absence (e-mail).

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism (including copying work from the Internet!), tempering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the UNO Student Code of Contact for further information. The Code is available online at [http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs-enrollment-management/documents/Student\\_Handbook\\_14-15\\_rv\\_3\\_5\\_2015.pdf](http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs-enrollment-management/documents/Student_Handbook_14-15_rv_3_5_2015.pdf).

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students who qualify for services will receive the academic modifications for which they are legally entitled. It is the responsibility of the student to register with the Office of Disability Services (UC 260) each semester and follow their procedures for obtaining assistance.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to

- have a basic understanding of the principles of Radical Democratic Thought;
- differentiate between radical democratic thinking and existing (institutionalized) democracies;
- critically reflect current challenges to democratic aspirations;
- identify the historical roots of Radical Democracy and their relevance for contemporary discourses and practices;
- reflect historical and contemporary situations and movements in radical democratic terms;
- have a basic understanding of some of the most significant notions and key authors in radical democratic thinking.

## Schedule of Classes and Assignments

### August

- Th Aug 20     *General Introduction*
- Tu Aug 25     *Democracy in a Questionable State*  
(READ: Brown, pp. 44-57)
- Th Aug 27     *Detained Democracy*  
(READ: Butler, pp. 50-100)

### September

- Tu Sept 1     *States of Exception*  
(READ: Agamben, pp. 1-31)
- Th Sept 3     *Post-Democracy?*  
(READ: Crouch, pp. 46-70)
- Tu Sept 8     *Scandalous Democracy*  
(READ: Bensaïd, pp. 16-43)
- Th Sept 10    *What Democracy?*  
(READ: bell hooks/David Trend, pp. 228-236)
- Tu Sept 15    *Roots of Radical Democratic Thought in Early Modernity*
- Th Sept 17    *Roots of Radical Democratic Thought in Late Modernity*

**1<sup>ST</sup> PAPER** due Sept 22 (4 pp.): How does Radical Democratic Thought criticize the current state of affairs? To what extent does radical democratic thinking differ from existing (institutionalized) democracies? What are some of the historical elements of democratic theory that are emphasized in contemporary approaches to Radical Democracy?

- Tu Sept 22    *Radical Challenges to Liberal Democracy*  
(READ: Mouffe, pp. 19-26)
- Th Sept 24    *Gendered Democracy*  
(READ: Benhabib, pp. 27-41)
- Tu Sept 29    *Can the Subaltern Vote?*  
(READ: Dhaliwal, pp. 42-61)

**October**

Th Oct 1      *Towards a Politics of the Street*  
(READ: Butler, pp. 1-13)

**Tu Oct 6      MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

Th Oct 8      *Case Study: "We are the 99 percent"*  
(READ: Graeber, pp. 26-28)

Tu Oct 13     *Movie: The Occupy Wall Street Collaborative Film*

**Th Oct 15      NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**

Tu Oct 20     *Case Study: Precarias a la deriva*  
(READ: Federici, pp. 1-8)

Th Oct 22     *Movie: Adrift in the Circuit of Women's Precarious Lives*

**2<sup>ND</sup> PAPER** due Oct 27 (5 pp.; graduate students 8 pp. – due on Nov 3): Discuss one of the two case studies (*Occupy Wall Street* or *Precarias a la deriva*) against the background of relevant theoretical analyses also addressed in this course: What democratic principles are invoked by the people involved in these movements? How do these movements relate to politically significant issues such as debt, reproduction or, more in general, marginalization? What challenges are they facing?

Tu Oct 27     *Case Study: Illegal Aliens as Political Subjects*  
(READ: De Genova, pp. 101-126)

Th Oct 29     *Movie: Who is Dayani Cristal?*

**November**

Tu Nov 3      *Case Study: Subaltern Movements on the Indian Subcontinent*  
(READ: Spivak/Plotke pp. 209-222)

Th Nov 5      *Movie: Peepli Live*

Tu Nov 10     *A Radical Democratic Vocabulary: Biopolitics*

Th Nov 12     *A Radical Democratic Vocabulary: Dissent*

Tu Nov 17     *A Radical Democratic Vocabulary: Participation*

Th Nov 19     *A Radical Democratic Vocabulary: Multitudes*

**3<sup>RD</sup> PAPER** due Nov 24 (3 pp.; graduate students 8-10 pp.; alternatively, grad students can write a research paper of the same length on a topic of their choosing): How do significant notions in radical democratic thinking such as biopolitics, resistance, participation or multitudes reflect contemporary situations and movements? What is their critical “use-value” considering the case of “illegal aliens” or the case of “subaltern movements” for example?

Tu Nov 24     *A Radical Democratic Vocabulary: Commons*

Th Nov 26     *A Radical Democratic Vocabulary: Hegemony*

### **December**

Tu Dec 1     *Waning Sovereignty?*  
(READ: Brown, pp. 7-41)

Th Dec 3     *Democracy in Ruins*  
(READ: Chambers/Grechi/Nash, pp. 9-26)

**Tu Dec 8     FINAL EXAMINATION**