

Anthro 532a
DIRECT ACTION AND RADICAL SOCIAL
THEORY

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Yale University
Spring 2004

class meets Wednesday, 10:00-12:20PM, in Luce 102, until we change it to something
more reasonable
my office is: 158 Whitney Room 9 (phone#=432-3687)

This course is meant to explore some of the recent directions of radical social theory within, and around, the emergence of the globalization movement and the politics of direct action. As the development of a "permanent global uprising" has been met by a imperial doctrine of "permanent global war", it has become all the more important to begin theorizing what is different and new about this particular historical moment.

The American academy is, currently, in a very particular juncture. For more than a generation now, those who consider themselves cutting-edge radicals have been endlessly recycling French theory of the '70s (rather the intellectual equivalent of "classic rock")— basically, the post-May '68 moment of theorizing the failed insurrection, the collapse a certain sort of hope—activists have been reading a very different series of French theorists, including names like Guy DeBord, Cornelius Castoriadis, Raoul Vaneigem. These were revolutionary theorists from the decade or so immediately prior to '68, and their tradition has been further developed in countries (in Europe, notably Germany and Italy) where insurrectionary communities—squats, social centers—had managed to endure. They are now beginning to inspire creative syntheses with ideas spurring from new forms of radical practice (e.g., consensus process and new forms of direct democracy) pioneered in the anglophone world. The study of such currents tends to challenge many of the usual distinctions not only between theory and practice, but between highbrow and lowbrow, intellectual and popular discourse, and the readings have been self-consciously designed to emphasize the continuities between. The course begins with a famous example of direct action, the shut-down of Seattle meetings of the WTO in November 1999, and examines some of history of the ideas (anarchism, direct action, direct democracy, primitivism) which inspired the different actors. The second section of the course traces the influences of Situationism and related branches of radical theory on the Continent; the last is a series of particular case studies from the "global uprising" which provide particularly revealing conjunctures of new theory with radical forms of practice.

requirements

this course will be a graduate seminar, open to undergraduates at the professor's discretion. The requirements will involve one brief presentation during the semester, a research

proposal around the middle of it, and a research paper at the end. Or something else if we can work it out. I can be flexible.

at the bookstore:

Barbara Epstein: *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s*. Berkeley, 1990.

Starhawk: *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising*.

Twenty-First Century Anarchism: Unorthodox Ideas for a New Millenium. (Jon Purkis and James Bowen, eds.; London, Cassel, 1997).

Our Word is Our Weapon: writings of Subcomondante Marcos.

Cornelius Castoriadis: *The Imaginary Institution of Society*.

Raoul Vaneigem: *The Revolution of Everyday Life*.

Crimethinc Collective: "Days of War, Nights of Love: Crimethink for Beginners." Canada: Crimethinc Ex-Workers Collective."

Paolo Virno & Michael Hardt: *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Minnesota Press, 1996.

George N. Katsiaficas: *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life*, Humanity books, 2001.

PART I: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS NEW AND NOT-SO-NEW

Week 1 (January 14): Set up: Seattle, Civil Disobedience, and more militant alternatives

Acme Collective: N30 Black Bloc Communique

Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics*, chapters on Germany Autonomomen

Voices from the WTO

David Graeber: "The Globalization Movement and the New New Left" (in *Implicating Empire*, 325-338)

video: *This Is What Democracy Looks Like*, and/or *Breaking the Spell*.

Week 2 (January 21): Background: Classical Anarchism

Guerin: *No Gods No Masters* (Readings in Classical Anarchism TBA)

Howard Ehrlich, ed: *Reinventing Anarchy, Again* (AK Press, 1996). Part I: What is Anarchism?)

Yves Fremian: *Orgasms of History: 3000 Years of Spontaneous Insurrection*. 2002, AK Press.

Robert Barsky: "Bakhtin as Anarchist? Language, Law, and Creative Impulses in the Work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Rudolf Rocker." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 1998 volume 97, pp.623-42.

Week 3 (January 28): Background: Direct Action

Georges Sorel: "Reflections on Violence"

"Direct Action & Sabotage: Three Classic IWW Pamphlets from the 1910s", ed. Salvatore Salerno, Chales Kerr Labor Classics

Lindsay Hart: "In Defense of Radical Direct Action: Reflections on Civil Disobedience, Sabotage and Nonviolence." *Twenty-First Century Anarchism*, pp.41-61.

Video: Crowd BitesWolf.

Week 4 (February 4): Reinventing Democracy: Spokescouncils, Consensus, the Feminist Backlash against Macho Leadership

Barbara Epstein: Political Protest and Cultural Revolution.

Bernard Manin, "On Legitimacy and Political Deliberation" in *New French Thought: Political Philosophy*. Mark Lilla, ed. Princeton, 1994.

Randal Doane, Michael Menser, Robert Ausch, and Heather Gautney, "The Politics of Assembly: Building an Urban Ecology from A16". *Found Object 9: Fall 2000*, pp141-180.
some web document on how to do consensus/facilitation

Week 5: (February 11) Chiapas and PGA

Auroras of the Zapatistas (Autonomea)

Our Word is Our Weapon: writings of Subcomandante Marcos

PART II: THEORETICAL CURRENTS OF '68

Week 6: (February 18) Cornelius Castoriadis: Revolution as Creative Action

Cornelius Castoriadis: *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (selections)

"Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy: Essays in Political Philosophy" (Cornelius Castoriadis) Oxford, New York, 1991.

Hans Joas: "Institutionalization as a Creative Process: The Sociological Importance of Cornelius Castoriadis' Political Philosophy" in *Pragmatism and Social Theory*, Chicago, 1993 (pp154-171)

John B. Thompson, "Ideology and the Social Imaginary: An Appraisal of Castoriadis and Lefort." *Theory and Society* 1982 vol. 11:659-681.

Week 7: (February 25) Situationism and its Legacy

Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*

Guy Debord: *Society of the Spectacle*.

Luther Blissett: *Guy Debord is Really Dead*, London, Sabotage Editions, 1995.

Henry Lefebvre, interview on the Situationists

Week 8: (March 3) May '68 and the Politics of Failed Revolt

Daniel Singer: "1968 Revisited: 'Be Realistic, Ask for the Impossible.'" In *New Politics* 2000 v.8: 133-140.

Gilles Lipovetsky: "May '68, or the Rise of Transpolitical Individualism," in *New French Thought: Political Philosophy*. Mark Lilla, ed. Princeton, 1994.

Peter Starr; *Logics of Failed Revolt, French Theory after May '68* (Stanford '95)

Foucault on sovereignty

Todd May: *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*. Penn State Press, 1994

Week 9: (March 24) Culture-Jamming, the Situationist Legacy, and the Politics of Optimism

Crimethinc Collective: "Days of War, Nights of Love: Crimethink for Beginners"
 Canada: Crimethinc Ex-Workers Collective."
 Bob Black, *The Abolition of Work*
 various Crimethinc material TBA
 Critical Art Ensemble: *Electronic Civil Disobedience, and Other Unpopular Ideas*.
 Autonomedia 1996.
 Kalle Lasn: *Culture Jam*. Quill: New York, 1999.

Week 10: (March 31) Anthropology, Primitivism, the Struggle against Work

Pierre Clastres: *Society Against the State* (just the title essay)
 essay by Joanna Overing on the Piaroa
 sample of Zerzan (essay from *Future Primitive?*)
 Freddy Perlman: "Against Leviathan, Against His-Story."
 Marcel Gauchet, "Primitive Religion and the Origins of the State", in *New French Thought: Political Philosophy*. Mark Lilla, ed. Princeton, 1994.
 selections from: *Gone to Croatan; The Origins of American Dropout Culture*.

PART III: FROM AUTONOMIA TO GLOBAL UPRISING

Week 11: (April 7) Autonomia and Radical Theory in Italy

Katsiaficas, chapter on Italian Autonomia
 Agamben: *Means without End: Notes on Politics*. Minnesota, 2000.
 Paolo Virno & Michael Hardt: *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Minnesota Press, 1996.
 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: "Globalization and Democracy", in *Implicating Empire*, p109-122.

Week 12: (April 14) Paganism, Feminism, and Direct Action Theory

Starhawk: *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising*.
 selections from *Truth or Dare* (Starhawk)
 Janet Biehl: *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics*. Boston: South End Press.

Week 13: (April 21) Cracks in the Plate of Empire: Argentina's Autogestion and the Future

Que Se Vayan Todas... (film)
 Toty Flores, ed: *De la culpa a la autogestion: Un recorrido del Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados de la Matanza*. MTD, 2003.
 Carmen Ferradás: "Argentina and the End of the First World Dream." in *Implicating Empire*, pp309-324.
 (more material as the situation develops)