

UC-5: "Neoliberalism and Crisis" [in English]

Saturday 15 October, 13.15–14.45, Sandler

Jorge Enrique Forero: "Postneoliberal governments in Latin America and Buen Vivir ("Good Living"): Tensions within a counterhegemonic process"

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Reducing the political centrality of organized labor, the neoliberal stage of capitalism generated also an increase of political struggles in peripheral societies. In fact, the genealogy of the "alter-globalization movement" –the first articulated manifestation of antineoliberal struggle- led us directly to the insurrection of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation –EZLN- in Mexico.

A mayor feature of antineoliberal resistance has been a a proliferation of subjects, struggles and claims, that in their most radical versions define themselves as "anticapitalist". Here, the negative definition implies the postponement of the positive moment, which means, the enunciation -and construction- of the political project.

But this context created a fertile field in Latin America for leftist governments that tried to expand popular participation and new visions of development in defiance of neoliberal hegemony. Different versions of Buen Vivir came to contest those perspectives that privilege economic growth over other dimensions of social life, becoming a major ideological field of political dispute.

The governments of the XXI Century Socialism -in Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela- nationalized their main natural resources and redirected the extractive rent to strengthening their State apparatus, providing health, education and focalized subsidies to specific sectors of the population. On the other hand, they have sustained the predominance of capitalist mode of production, maintaining an economic structure based on the production of commodities for the world market, generating social and ecological conflicts, and stirring radical opposition from the main social movements of their own countries.

In this paper, we offer some insights to understand the class struggle behind these political processes, incorporating the analysis of correlations of forces as a major feature to understand the way it shaped the Latin American political scenario during the transition to the XXI Century.

Søren Mau: "The Ideology of Crisis"

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Crisis is the concept through which contemporary Europe understands itself. At least since 2008, this concept has functioned as a kind of prism through which contemporary political struggles understand themselves.

In this paper, I will examine how the concept is used in the context of the contemporary economic crisis in Europe. My claim is that the creation of consensus about the word ‘crisis’ as an adequate diagnostic term makes certain acts more plausible than others – in other words, that the use of the concept of crisis is a technique of power. However, the use of this technique is not unequivocal: on the one hand, institutions like the EU, IMF and WTO mobilize the concept in the attempt to legitimize austerity policies. But on the other hand, several anti-austerity movements also operationalize the concept of crisis in order to criticize and counter the neoliberal crisis regime in Europe. The concept of crisis thus seems to delineate a field of ideological struggle, in which institutions and social movements struggle over questions such as: who or what is the crisis a crisis of? What does the crisis reveal? What consequences should be drawn from the crisis? Who or what is responsible of the crisis?

In this paper, I will – by way of a Marxist theory of ideology – examine the ideological space constituted by the use of the concept of crisis in Europe since 2008. In order to do this, I will also identify the fundamental structure of the general concept of crisis, thereby disclosing the reasons why precisely this concept is able to function as a kind of reservoir of legitimacy. This analysis reveals that the concept implies certain understandings of modality, temporality and morality, and that these conceptual elements have a clear connection to the origin of the concept of crisis in ancient law, medicine and theology.

Carl Wilén: "On the relation between the French and the Haitian Revolution: Contribution to the Critique of Politico-Juridical Forms in Marx"

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The French Revolution declared the rights of man and of the citizens in 1789. Yet, the implication was not an immediate abolishment of slavery within the French colonial empire. However, in 1791 the slaves at an island called Hispaniola took to arms and initiated what was to be entitled the Haitian Revolution – the only revolution in history executed by slaves that has succeeded with establishing a state claiming sovereignty and with abolishing slavery within its territory. In 1789, the French part of Hispaniola was called Saint Domingue. Saint Domingue was a small part of the colonial system and at once the most profit generating in the world. By implication, the slaves did not only turn their weapons at their French owners but also at a well-established commerce with sugar, tobacco and black slaves. The political ideas of 1789 encouraged the slaves in their struggle at the same time as the economic current and its politics were running in the opposite direction of abolition. The conflict-ridden relation between the two events has led scholars to deep conflicts over the problem of historical continuity and discontinuity: are we to understand the Haitian revolution as a break against, or as a prolongation of, the French Revolution? The overarching aim of this article is to construct a theoretical defence of a third position arguing that the relation ought to be understood as one of radicalization containing both difference and unity. The theoretical argument will be constructed through a reading of Marx on the problem of politico-juridical forms. The result of this reading is that if we are to reach the third position on the relation between the French and the Haitian Revolution,

we also have to accept the later Marx' implicit self-critique that indicates a shift from his earlier understanding of liberal rights as merely illusions. Lastly, the unity of the historical problem and the theoretical argument presuppose a number of qualifications on the relation between Hegel and Marx and of the concepts of form, ideology, and class.

Keywords: the French and the Haitian Revolution, Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, the critique of right, liberal political categories, form, ideology, and class.

Sergey Bodrunov: "New quality of material production and changes in production relations and labour"

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[abstract to be received]