

Society for Socialist Studies
Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences
Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
27 – 30 May 2009

Kapital Connections: Socialism, Nation, State

Call for Papers

Updated 22 January 2009

This Call for Papers is available as a downloadable .pdf at <http://www.socialiststudies.ca>

Anyone wishing to organise a roundtable or other special session should contact Chad D. Thompson, Programme Committee Chair, at chad.d.thompson@gmail.com

Sessions at Carleton University 2009 mark 40 years of Socialist Studies at the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences in Canada. Sessions in the call for papers concentrate on how being in Canada has influenced analyses from the left. Canadian political economy emerges with the metropolis-hinterland thesis, challenging the assumption that we are ordained to be hewers of wood and drawers of water while exploring our subject status in the global economy.

But Canada as a state has a very different existence vis-à-vis First Nations, their territories and their place in the world. Many forms of socialism employ an ongoing reliance on the state as a lever to exert power, a premise that has been undermined by post-modernist thought, and has since been promoted by the popular media in that vein. "Indeterminacy" could act as a dis-assembler of popular organizations and political thrusts -- a fragmenter of groupings organized around state, nation and territory -- even around the abstract notion of "place".

Marxism holds positions about state, nation, territory and place that differ from those of social democracy, of anarchism, other socialisms, feminist and ecological points of view. What are those contrasts, and are there similarities and/or parallels? What is the practical or theoretical impact of these similarities and differences? The Society for Socialist Studies welcomes paper proposals for sessions exploring these connections as we mark forty years of Socialist Studies.

All sessions are open for proposals until **31 January 2009**. Please send paper abstracts of a maximum of 100 words directly to the session organisers, including author name, affiliation, and contact information. Authors will be notified of decisions by **15 February 2009**.

Sessions

Prospects and Futures: the next forty years of the Society for Socialist Studies

With the 2009 Congress at Carleton marking over 40 years of the Society for Socialist Studies, the Society is engaged in looking forwards as well as reflecting on its legacy. What are the futures and prospects for socialist thought, organisation, and action? Does our situatedness within Canada offer unique opportunities for understanding these possibilities? This session is open to roundtable panel presentations as well as formal papers.

Organiser: Frank Cunningham

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New Scholars Forum

As part of its mandate to “facilitate and encourage research and analysis in Canada with an emphasis on socialist, feminist, ecological and anti racist points of view,” the Society for Socialist Studies is pleased to offer a venue to new scholars working in these areas who have not yet completed a Masters degree. Paper proposals could be in any of these areas, as well as on topics relating to the Society’s theme, “*Kapital Connections: Socialism, Nation, State,*” or the 2009 Congress theme, “*Capital Connections: Nation, Terroir, Territoire.*”

Organiser: Chad D Thompson

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Exploring issues of one’s identity and/or theoretical perspective on research or teaching

Papers are sought that explore the relationship between one’s theoretical perspective(s) such as Marxism, feminism, and postmodernism, and/or one’s social, ethnic, gender, sexual identity and one’s research and/ or teaching. The session wishes to attract papers that examine one’s identity and theory/ practice when one is studying post-conflict situations, peoples and cultures that have experienced violence, atrocities, and/or genocide. Session organizers are especially interested in studies of indigenous history and oral traditions of marginalized groups without (m/any) written records, e.g. consideration of oral traditions in Canadian land disputes and their legal implications, which reflect on the researcher’s identity and theoretical framework.

Organisers: Sima Aprahamian (Concordia) & Marion Gerlind (Independent Scholar)

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The Spectre Haunting America

The 2008 American presidential election had an unprecedented result: an African American was chosen to lead a developed capitalist state. In contrast with the soporific Canadian election, it was impossible to avoid the American campaign's enthusiasm, the bizarre return of "Marxism" to the American lexicon, and the combined grassroots and hi-tech organisation. At the same time, however, affirmative action laws were struck down, same-sex marriages banned, and the state poured billions into the reckless banking sector that had shattered the global economy. Proposals are invited offering insights from the left on what "change we can count on" might mean.

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The Impact of Manufacturing Job Loss on Workers, Families and Communities

Manufacturing job loss was raised as a major concern in Canada with the 1988 Canada-US Free Trade Agreement and the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement. More recently, Canadian trade unions launched campaigns around further manufacturing job loss since 2002, and the global economic crisis has made the situation even more severe. This session calls for papers on the impact of manufacturing job loss on workers, families, and communities, and possible responses by trade unions and other social organizations. Papers focusing on global, national, regional, and discriminatory status aspects of the issue are invited.

Organiser: Dave Broad

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The Working-Class Movement in Contemporary Canada and Quebec

This panel is an opportunity for researchers to present papers that contribute to increasing our knowledge and understanding of the working-class movement in Canada and Quebec today, including studies of unions, community-based workers' organizations and working-class politics.

Organiser: David Camfield

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Winnipeg MB R3T 2N2

Class structure and class struggle in transnational contexts

This session welcomes empirical or theoretical papers centered upon class relations and practices of two kinds: those that span national borders (as in transnational corporations or migrant labour systems) and those that appear 'locally' but are shaped by such forces as international finance, globalizing mass media and transnational political-economic governance. The session aims to explore class from above, as a structure of appropriation and control, and from below; hence issues of resistance and prefiguration are highly relevant.

Organiser: Bill Carroll

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Radicalization and other personal-is-political transformations

Papers submitted should focus on personal transformations of political orientation, conceptualization, or responsibility, such as bell hooks' "what happens when white people change?" The changes explored can be toward 'the left,' toward 'the right,' or in a direction that doesn't unambiguously plot onto the 'political spectrum' (e.g., from Marxism to anarchism, from postcolonial to antiracist, from dialectical to *différential*, from any of these to a focus on disability, etc.). Papers may attempt to theorize such personal/political transformations, may attempt to consider how to effect or prevent such changes, or may do something else entirely.

Organiser: Chris Chapman

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Capital and Class in Canada after the Crash of 2008

The Crash of 2008 is having the effect of highlighting the latent contradictions and tensions in Canada's social formation. We have seen the credit crisis in the United States creep north of the border, an intensification of the crisis of manufacturing in Ontario, and a sudden shift to Keynesianism and away from neo-liberalism in sections of the capitalist class. This session calls for papers which explore the way in which this crisis is reshaping class politics in Canada. Possible themes include implications for Canada's place in the world economy, the changing terrain of party politics, the changing terrain for trade unions and the social movements, and implications for Canada's national questions (First Nations and Quebec).

Organisers: Murray Cooke (York) & Paul Kellogg (Trent)

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Marxism and Psychoanalysis

According to Slavoj Žižek, Marxism and psychoanalysis are the only two theories, today, which imply and practice an 'engaged notion of truth'. This session seeks papers that engage the relationship between Marxism and Psychoanalysis in contemporary critiques of ideology. Particular focus will be placed upon Lacanian readings and interpretations of Marxism, or critical Marxist perspectives on Psychoanalysis. Critical analysis of Freudo-Marxism and Althusserian Marxism are also welcome.

Organiser: Matthew Flisfeder

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Ryerson University and York Universities
School of Graduate Studies
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Imperialism and Culture

This session will explore the relationship between contemporary culture and the current development and crisis of globalized imperialism. Papers on Canadian culture and cultural industries particularly welcome. Subjects could include: the impact of American-led globalization on particular media; aesthetics in particular media; developments in Marxist cultural theory; the political and ideological conjuncture; changes in technology and cultural labour; cultural resistance. Papers combining theoretical and political analysis with aesthetic and textual criticism encouraged.

Organiser: Scott Forsyth

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The Current Crisis of Capitalism: Lessons from the Great Depression

Schumpeter termed capitalism a system of "creative destruction." The creation of the post-war Keynesian welfare state was meant to lessen the destruction occasioned by unfettered capitalism during the Depression. The advent of neo-liberal globalization, beginning in the 1980s, saw much of this protective framework eroded, however. The economic crisis which began in 2007 bears similarities to that of the 1930s. This session considers the lessons that the Great Depression might offer in terms the causes of the crisis, the array of outcomes that could arise, and the strategic value for the left in looking back to the 1930s.

Organisers: Trevor Wesley Harrison (Lethbridge) & Slobodan Drakulic (Ryerson)

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Socialism, Bureaucracy and Trade Unions

Karl Radek at the 2nd Congress of the Comintern when discussing the trade union question emphasizes the need to have a concrete analysis of the trade union bureaucracy and the need for socialists to actively defeat said bureaucracy. This panel seeks to re-address the problem of the trade union bureaucracy by asking several questions including: What is the role of unions in the struggle for socialism? How should socialist trade unionists relate to the trade union bureaucracy? How can socialists defeat the trade union bureaucracy?

Organiser: Dhruv Jain

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What Is Radical Imagination?: Potentials and Barriers to Mobilization in the Global North

In the face of massive financial crisis, increasing inequality, and ecological collapse, why do North American elites enjoy reckless accumulation untroubled by mass movements demanding radical socio-political change? While possible answers are legion, radical imaginations of political possibility capable of provoking movement are strikingly absent. This panel's conveners invite contributions from diverse theoretical and methodological approaches which explore radical imagination(s) by focusing on concrete sites of struggle, particularly - but not exclusively - in North America. Papers should focus on the ways movements seek - or fail - to conceive of, articulate, and mobilize radical imagination(s) and the consequences thereof.

Organisers: Alex Khasnabish (Mount Saint Vincent) & Max Haiven (McMaster)

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Afghanistan, Imperialism, and the New Canadian Foreign Policy

The war in Afghanistan has been a catalyst for radical changes in Canadian foreign policy. The war has been used to increase military spending and to recentre the institutions of the state around the military and security apparatus. It has also been used as a testing ground for new counter-insurgency strategies, and as a means by which to break the legacy of peacekeeping in Canadian foreign policy. In the process, Canada has become much more aligned with the United States and other core powers in the NATO alliance. In these ways, the war in Afghanistan has been a central aspect of Canadian imperialism over the past eight years. To address these issues, we invite critical papers on topics such as: the new patterns of military spending and rearmament; the role of the media or defence lobby in promoting the war; the relationship between Canadian academics and the foreign policy apparatus; the application of the "3D" policy in Afghanistan; Canada, the war, and international law; new forms of 'interoperability' between Canada, the US, and NATO; and the growing crisis of the occupation.

Organiser: Jerome Klassen

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Rethinking Leninism

It is difficult to overstate the influence of Lenin's intervention in Marxist praxis. His achievements (including his ideas) have reshaped the landscape itself. However, this influence is not properly reflected in contemporary Marxist thought. While rethinking Marxism has won some legitimacy in the academy, rethinking Leninism continues largely on the margins. In recent years, this near-silence has been broken by the publication of books like *Lenin Rediscovered* by Lars Lih and *Lenin Reloaded*, edited by Budgen, Kouvelakis and Zizek. This session invites papers on rethinking Lenin's contribution to Marxism in light of the current moment.

Organiser: Alex Levant

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Capacity building and virtual (online) community

Many virtual (online) communities form around media output such as a TV show, movie, author, book, video game or other enthusiasm, such as gardening or car repair. However, these communities do sometimes exhibit the very capacity building that has long been a focus of socialist, feminist and other progressive movement. Howard Reinhold, Henry Jenkins and Pierre Levy offer some conceptual tools with which we can analyze these online formations and consider their utility and relevance to social movement building and practice. This session seeks papers that address the problems, possibilities and practices involved in building capacities through virtual (online) community and similar study of offline community.

Organiser: June Madeley

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Academic Capital

The University can be understood as both the site of great privilege and creative labour, and as an oppressive and alienating institution that produces and re-produces certain kinds of social subjects. Traditionally, the university was interpolated through modernist narratives of progress and enlightenment, as one of the great bastions of civil society, safeguarding the free flow of ideas, a myth or ideological commitment belying the fact that academic economies generate a great deal of capital, and also confer what Bourdieu might call social capital. What are the uses of academic capital? This panel seeks to create a space for inter-generational dialogue on being within and against the university and the university as a site of struggle.

Organiser: Alyson McCreedy

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Critically Evaluating the Linkages between Food, Capital and Community Within and Beyond Borders

The current food system is being impacted by capital and people's actions far beyond the time and place of production. The costs and benefits of modern agri-food systems are not evenly distributed. Contained within the rubric of the global food chain are a number of tensions and contradictions centring on health, economic, social, political, environmental, and sovereignty concerns. Meanwhile, food system structure and processes are shifting political, social, cultural, and biological boundaries. This session welcomes theoretical and empirical papers contributing to a critical assessment of the contemporary food system, as well as responses, from a socialist, feminist, and/or environmentalist perspective.

Organiser: Darrell McLaughlin

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What's Left of Islam?

Islam and the left have had a tempestuous relationship. In the early 20th century, Muslim modernisers frequently recognised common interests with socialist anti-colonial and revolutionary movements, playing a significant role in the Soviet Revolution – until they were denounced and purged as "bourgeois nationalists." Thus emerges a more common theme, repeated in Turkey, South Asia, and the Middle East, wherein secular socialist forces saw Islam as a reactionary force. As we continue the perpetual "War on Terror," this session invites papers which consider historical or contemporary aspects of this relationship, asking what is possible beyond anti-colonial solidarity and the liberal discourse of human rights.

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The State and Civil Society

The nationalism associated with the State is increasingly counterpoised to the national identity associated with ethnicity. While the incorporation of ethnic national identity with the State gives rise to the “exclusive nationalism”, national identity *per se* is associated with Civil Society. The evident contradiction of the two concepts of national-identity and The State is found in the mutual demands for self-determination for a common territory, as is the case in Palestine/Israel or the impasse of Québécois/se national-identity, in the context of the Dominion of Canada. This session welcomes papers which address the tendency of the 20th Century which sees an increasing number of States which separate the various ethnic identities on a territorial basis with the accompanying series of ethnic cleansing operations.

Organiser: Abraham Weizfeld

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Immigration Policy, Migrant Workers & Growing Underclass

Immigration continues to shape and transform the Canadian political and economic landscape. Recent reforms to immigration policy have created a new “experience” class of immigrants to meet labour market needs, while at the same time the number of Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) have been increased. This session will examine how Canadian immigration policy has changed the face, diversity and demographics of Canadian society. What lessons can be learned from other countries facing similar demographic pressures?

Organiser: Tony Wohlfarth

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