

Socialist Studies 2020 Conference
Call for Papers
June 1 to June 3, University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario

List of Open Sessions

(Re)Imagining Queer/Trans Feminist Anti-Capitalism: Borders, States and Geographies

Recent protests around the world urge anti-capitalist engagement with multiple structures of power globally, regionally and locally. A queer, feminist and anti-capitalist response requires careful examinations of the converging and diverging movement of capital, affect, culture, bodies, sexualities and border-making. What kinds of ethical questions do queer feminist anti-capitalism pose regarding Iran, Iraq, Rojava, Palestine, Chile or Bolivia where ‘women’ ‘queers’ and ‘trans’ are mobilized differently? What sets of geopolitical tension are saturated by/for global financial capital in China’s role in Hong Kong or India in Kashmir? How do the situated socio-historical contexts impact the ways in which people conceptualize historical materialist perspectives of gender and sexuality that draws attention to the third world/second world perspectives and rework Anglo-Eurocentrism? A related inquiry is how do culturally/socially/historically-mediated sex-gender-sexuality regime(s) tell us about queer and trans politics in the diasporas of the empire? And how to respond to the crisis as queer feminist anti-capitalists in North America by centring anti-blackness, decolonization and indigenous struggles? In this session, we invite contributions from across geographies to discuss these pressing issues include but are not limited to:

Queer liberation without borders in the Middle East
Relocating Blackness in Queer/Trans feminist Marxism
Indigenous sexuality and anti-capitalism
Sex-gender-sexuality assemblage in different social-historical geographies
Queer, Trans and Feminist politics of anti-capitalism in North American
Marxist Feminism, Whiteness and the Racial Politics of Knowledge
Classed and queer migration and anti-capitalism
The racist economy of global incarceration, detention and imprisonment
Trans* anti-capitalism in the Global South Cold war,
Socialism and the geopolitics of queerness sexuality,
Gender and environmental racism across the globe
Social reproduction, sexuality and the commodification of care work in the Global South
Queer development, neoliberalism and militarized violence in the Global South

Organizers:

Ian LiuJiaTian, OISE
Jade Da Costa
Sabra Rezaei
Ken Wallingford

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Strategizing Resistance: Achieving an Intersectional Politics Against the Right

This session aims to explore solutions to the problem of an atomized working-class against the political right by examining strategies that attempt to unite workers from diverse backgrounds, while accounting for and ameliorating the uniquely violent experiences of racialized, colonized, and sexualized peoples in what are purported to be liberatory spaces and politics. To this end, this panel will focus on interrogating strategies that facilitate the achievement of a historically rooted, materialist working class politics, that open up avenues of radical solidarities among and between working class peoples of the global north and south. The xenophobic scapegoating of Othered populations that have led to the rise of the alt-right and Trump in America, the allure of Johnson's Brexit, and Modi's apartheid-style policies in Kashmir are exemplifications of politics that use the condemnation of red herrings to make promises about revitalizing a nostalgized past that no longer exists under globalized capitalism. Recently, many among the Left have focused on political strategies that create avenues of solidarity with primarily the white working classes, sometimes, to the detriment of marginalised peoples by facilitating Leftist spaces that can perpetuate the same racist, xenophobic and misogynistic rhetoric proudly claimed by the right. Accordingly, this panel intends to explore strategies that do not demand marginalized groups sacrifice their safety in Leftist spaces. In achieving this, this panel intends to demonstrate that neither whiteness nor masculinity need remain hegemonic in Left political spaces in order to foster solidarity with those considered vulnerable to right politics.

Organizers:
Kaitlin Peters
Hena Mehta

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Finance for the 99%?: Critical Perspectives on the Financialization of Development, Resistance and Alternatives

The Occupy Wall Street movement called critical attention to the role of private banks in preying on the poor and creating social crises in their relentless drive for profit rather than meeting human needs. A decade later, the world is revolt again with resistance struggles emerging across the world in reaction to the oppressive and exploitative nature of global financialized capitalism. While the Occupy movement came and went, the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 continues to unfold in myriad ways, including what critical scholars and activists call the "financialization of development." This agenda, supported by the G20 and a host of other international organizations, revolves around the securitization of infrastructure and social protection projects to build new asset classes for institutional investors, allowing

developing economies to tap into global liquidity. The Canadian government has also jumped on-board with its enthusiastic embrace of ‘blended finance’ and the creation of FinDev in 2017. This panel aims to critically assess this agenda and resistance to it, focusing on three questions: 1) What, if anything, is ‘new’ about this agenda? 2) How does the new agenda intersect with racial capitalism, and what are the continuities and breaks with colonial capital? And, 3) What are the alternatives? Contributors are encouraged to propose theoretical and/or empirical work.

Organizers:

Susan Spronk

Adrian Murray

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Roundtable on What’s the Future of the Left in Latin America?

Two decades have transpired since the late Hugo Chávez launched the ‘Pink Tide’ by toppling the political establishment in the 1998 Venezuelan presidential election. In the past two years, there have been dramatic shifts in the region towards both the Right and the Left, with the election of Bolsonaro in Brazil, the crisis in Venezuela, uprisings in Ecuador, Chile, and Colombia, the coup in Bolivia, the return of Peronistas in Argentina and the election of AMLO in Mexico. The participants in this roundtable are invited to reflect on meaning of the political turbulence in the region. With respect to their expertise, they are invited to reflect on the following three questions: 1. Are these crises a crisis of neoliberalism or a crisis within neoliberalism? 2. What are the prospects for the rebuilding and/or strengthening of popular power? 3. What is revealed by the crisis about the limits and continuity of imperialist power in the region?

Organizer:

Susan Spronk

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The Political Economy of Breaking Up

The end of a romantic relationship is often devastating. While some offer relief, others prompt anxiety about a new financial reality. In addition to concerns about relocating, changes in household income, and the distribution of reproductive labour, there are trade-offs as one collects their dignity and divides the things. Sentimental and economic value are currency for negotiation, and there may be a strong need or desire simply to leave assets behind in the

name of self-preservation. The emotional and often gendered legacies of homemaking/making home may not be sufficiently counted as boxes are sealed, and possessions divvied up. Some scholarship exists. A small body of scholarship exists offering insight into decision-making for those leaving abusive relationships, the economic implications of separation and divorce, and on new divisions of reproductive labour. Seeking to explore and expand these historic assumptions, this panel examines the political economy of the break-up with an emphasis on the changing nature of contemporary relationships, the evolution of gender norms, and the pressures of late capitalism. We are seeking contributions—academic papers, reflections, and others—addressing how the end of relationships come to shape our socio-economic futures. Intimacy is one scale through which gendered and racialized capital operates. We are particularly interested in contributions that examine the relationship between gender, race, dis/ability, sexuality, class, language (and others) and the economic consequences that emerge from the dissolution of romantic relationships.

Organizers:

Alana Cattapan (UWaterloo)
Catherine Bryan (Dalhousie University)
Erin Wunker (Dalhousie University)

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Teaching Critical Political Economy in Adverse Conditions

If you are the only critical political economist in your unit, what are successful teaching strategies to get students interested, excited – and informed -- about the field? (Indeed, how does one evaluate and justify what success means?) How does one start undergraduate students on dialectical thinking if their wider learning environment is training students to deal exclusively in independent and dependent variables or to privilege purely quantitative methods? How do you deal with the economics students in your political economy course who would be fine with it – if only they could use their marginalist economic tools in the course, and if only there wasn't so much talk about Marxism? How do you communicate basics without emptying the classroom? How do you link learning these frameworks with current political struggles without encouraging students simply to mouth what they think your politics are, or to assert without analysis what their own politics are? This panel is a roundtable on the fine art of teaching courses in socialist thought, Marxism, or critical political economy in isolation or in adverse conditions. Proposals that share teaching problems for discussion and proposals that share successful strategies are equally welcome.

How do you communicate basics without emptying the classroom? How do you link learning these frameworks with current political struggles around racial capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, environment and/or class struggle without encouraging students

simply to mouth what they think your politics are, or to assert without analysis what their own politics are?

Organizer:

Jamie Lawson (U Victoria)

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New Tactics for 21st Century Struggles

Around the world groups fighting against racial injustice, dealing with environmental issues and class struggles have adopted new strategies and tactics. Some have been very successful, others less so. This session seeks to analyze some of the reasons for this, as well as to suggest new creative possibilities for action.

Organizer:

Gary Potter (WLU)

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Climate Crisis, Corporate Power and Humanity's Future: Contending Projects and Strategies

Amid a deepening climate crisis, humanity's socio-ecological future depends on which of three distinct political-economic projects, currently vying for hegemony, comes to prevail. Each project is rooted in distinct class fractions with racialized, colonial interests. Carbon capitalism, currently ascendant institutionally yet increasingly under attack from various quarters, is a project of 'business as usual', with efficiency improvements (and possible sunseting of coal) but no major changes to the political ecology of contemporary capitalism. Climate capitalism proposes ecological modernization, redirecting capital from fossil fuels toward more climatically benign energy sources. Included within this project are controversial geoengineering schemes to capture carbon from the atmosphere or to deflect solar radiation. The first two projects leave the class structure of capitalism untouched, including the concentration of economic power in the hands of major investors, executives and corporate directors, and the inequalities that issue from that power. In contrast, energy democracy/climate justice finds its social base in environmental and other movements, including sections of the labour movement. Based in a vision of a just transition, it mandates a dual power shift, from fossil-fuel power to renewables (decarbonization) and from corporate oligarchy to public, democratic control of economic decisions (democratization). This session

welcomes papers exploring the development, current state and/or trajectories of these projects, the contestation among them, and the intersections with related social forces, including decolonizing struggles. Analyses that foreground issues of political economy, political ecology and culture-ideology are particularly welcome.

Organizer:
William Carroll

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Rosa Luxemburg and Violence: Revolution from the Minds to the Fists?

Rosa Luxemburg's relation to violence has been torn between two antagonistic sides to this day, both based on emotional or political stands rather than reliable statements. On the one hand, Rosa Luxemburg has been seen by her opponents as "Bloody Rosa", a furious woman calling for the disposal of the current civil order. Revolutionary means of action were then considered as an obsolete political method even in major left-wing circles, a symbol of barbarism which had to be replaced by the peaceful method of reformism through parliamentarism, the new strategy of social-democracy. On the other hand, Rosa Luxemburg became herself a victim of violence with her assassination in 1919 allowed by the same people who formerly blamed her for promoting violent means of action. Because of her martyrdom and her advocacy of democracy and free speech, Rosa Luxemburg couldn't be described as an apologist of violence and became a symbol of humanist Marxism in opposition to the Soviet experience. Indeed, Rosa Luxemburg stood against the use of violence as an exclusive political means to reach emancipation for the working class movement, as she declared at the Stuttgart Congress in 1898 : "I say that the only violent means that will bring us victory are the socialist enlightenment of the working class through day-to-day struggle." Yet, she never categorically excluded the use of violence in the political arena and acknowledged its necessity in a society where violence had always been the driving force employed by both oppressing or oppressed classes in order to seize power, as she stated in 1902 : "Violence is and remains the ultima ratio of the working class, class struggle's supreme law, sometimes in a latent way, sometimes in an active one. And if we revolutionize the minds through parliamentary action or any other activity, this takes place ultimately so that revolution flows down from the minds to the fists, should necessity require it." It is now time to reconsider Rosa Luxemburg's political praxis through the prism of violence in order to understand how the mind and the fist could be connected in our quest for emancipation and decolonization.

Session Organizer
Joshua Wavrant

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Crisis and Global Fascism

This panel seeks papers that examine the relationship between global fascism and capitalism's terminal crisis using the lens of Indigenous and Black radical critiques of colonialism. That is, how do Indigenous and Black radical theories offer frameworks for understanding the conditions from which fascism emerges, what it seeks to accomplish, and what is to be done about it? Eurocentric liberal and traditional Left critiques of fascism understand far right politics as movements to replace liberal democracy with authoritarianism. In these accounts, fascism appears as either a challenge to Western democracy's promise of universal emancipation, or the bourgeois class wielding state power in more extreme ways to protect profits. What does it mean instead to see fascist organizing today as the continuation of centuries-old settler movements that have sought to dispossess Indigenous and African peoples as a means for less- and non-propertied settlers to gain wealth and political power? Through this lens, we might see fascism as an insurgent settler movement that in response to capitalism's terminal crisis aims to attack not only the neoliberal ruling class for valuing profits over whiteness, but also Indigenous and Black-led socialist movements that seek the end of capitalism itself. How does this perspective that reads fascism as a form of settler violence rooted in anti-Indianness and anti-Blackness help inform anti-fascist organizing within socialist movements for liberation today?

Organizers:
Oliver Baker
Shama Rangwala

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Partisanship in Theory and Practice

As recently as the Canadian federal election of 2019, media personalities and candidates alike were commenting that it was the most divisive election in years. A different interpretation suggests that this perceived divisiveness is less about polarization and more about the unmasking of the middle-ground. Claims to the middle-ground have always been partisan moves in disguise, and that mask is slipping in the face of the social, political, and economic consequences of "common sense" austerity: reproduction of gendered and racialized class interests. Some may see this unmasking of false neutrality as inviting political impasses, and on that basis, double-down on the need for a non-partisan consensus. But history shows that

progressive outcomes rarely result when those occupying the middle-ground rest comfortably, which makes a discussion about partisanship particularly opportune. This panel provides a forum to share and develop ideas, tactics, and lessons on the subject of partisanship and its investments in racial capitalism and coloniality. Participants are encouraged to connect partisanship as a theoretical construct to partisanship as a praxis and are welcome to draw on historical case studies.

Some themes that this panel may focus on include:

- Universalism and partisanship
- The terms of partisanship: sorority/fraternity/humanity
- Bridging partisan ideals and immediate necessities
- Partisan resistance as social reproduction (i.e. education)
- Knowledge production: the vernacular as tactic
- Partisanship against disenchantment and the disenchantments of partisanship

Organizers:

Susan Diane Brophy

Rade Zinaic

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Animals and the Anti-Capitalist Left

Anti-capitalism is a common denominator that ought to encourage close collaboration between animal liberation struggles and the socialist Left. In order to maximize capitalist wealth, nonhuman animals are driven out of their habitats, subjected to systemic violence, and often driven to the brink of extinction. Industries such as capitalist industrial agriculture feature extreme violence and hyper-exploitation of both human workers and nonhuman animals. However, these two strands of liberation politics have often been indifferent to one another, when not actively antagonistic. Is this mutual estrangement rooted in differences of fundamental principle? Or has there been a failure to work toward a possible convergence between these two currents of anti-capitalist radicalism? For this session, we invite proposals for papers on the relationship, the tensions, and the points of possible convergence and collaboration between animal liberation movements and the socialist Left, as well as papers that imagine possibilities for an ecosocialist future without animal exploitation.

Organizers:

Steve D'Arcy

Rebecca Ellis

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Is There Still Hope for Public-Serving Universities in Canada?

Since the 1980s, researchers and others have been documenting, warning us about, and urging us to oppose the progressive corporatization of Canada's universities and its many harmful implications for the public's - and the planet's – interests, including collusion with racial capitalism, colonialism, imperialism and environmental degradation. Despite the thousands of books and articles written, numerous conferences held, and countless small and large-scale acts of resistance, the corporatization process proceeds apace, and opposition to it remains fragmented, sporadic, and largely ineffective. This session aims to open space for frank and serious discussion about whether broad-based, sustained, and effective opposition to the corporatization of Canada's public universities can still be mounted or if the battle to reclaim our universities as public-serving institutions is all but lost. If it IS still possible to oppose corporatization, how can this be achieved concretely? If this is not possible, what alternatives to the corporate university exist or can be built? Papers in this panel, whether historical, analytical, or theoretical, should NOT simply critique corporatization. Rather, they should focus on ideas for and/or descriptions of projects that seek to move forward from corporatization by transforming the social relations that make it possible.

Organizer:

Claire Polster

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Harm Reduction and Community Defense: Organizing Against the Police State Violence

As harm reduction gains momentum as 'best practice' and is increasingly adopted as a public health model (state interventions), it is crucial we remain active in solidarity and resistance against decontextualized practices of harm reduction that are devoid of anti-capitalist, anarchist social movement histories that unsettle, queer and challenge anti-blackness and racial capitalism. Harm reduction organizing ought to support decriminalization and prison abolition, and not collude with the police state and capitalism's relentless production of criminalized, disposable lives. We invite papers that explore harm reduction through spaces that innovate and celebrate the "liveability" of what Saidiya Hartman refers to as "wayward lives".

Organizers:

Kourteney King, OISE
Jamie Magnusson, OISE

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Racial Capitalism, Anti-Blackness and Settler Colonialism in Canadian Post-Secondary Education

Papers in this session will examine Canadian postsecondary education as it has been constructed through a globalized knowledge economy characterized by racial capitalism, anti-blackness and colonialism. For students, access to post-secondary education typically involves entry into predatory debt as a precondition to participating in a surveilled and securitized knowledge economy. Students from racialized communities are more exposed to dispossession through predatory debt and experience more surveillance and anti-black police harassment on campus. For faculty, racialized hierarchized segregation is experienced through precarious employment which brings into play its own forms of surveillance and hyper-exploitation. We invite papers that explore postsecondary education and knowledge economies in terms of racial capitalism.

Emilda Thavaratnam, OISE
Kerry Hately, OISE

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