Gallatin School of Individualized Study
Insistence and Possibility: New and Alternate Economy Projects in 21st Century NYC
CLI-UG 1485
Spring 2016, Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30-4:45
7 East 12th Street, room 134
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Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00am-3:00pm

INSISTENCE AND POSSIBILITY: NEW AND ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY PROJECTS IN 21ST CENTURY NEW YORK

OVERVIEW

There are approximately 25 worker-owned cooperatives currently operating in New York City, as well as numerous collective housing projects, intentional communities, community gardens and urban farms, and various participatory budgeting initiatives. What ethical principles or ideological positions do such projects hold in common, if any? What desires, needs and aspirations do they attempt to address? Do they form a challenge to capitalist hegemony, or do they see themselves as operating outside of it, or both? Is there an outside to capitalism? How do the participants understand themselves as political actors, if at all? What kinds of personal transformation might arise through the act of participation? Upon what kinds of possibility do such projects and initiatives ultimately insist?

In this class, students will examine the social, political and historical trajectories of which these projects and initiatives are a part, through various reading and writing assignments. In addition, students will be asked to engage directly and deeply with a specific ongoing “possibility project” in the city, selected from a long and growing list to which students will be invited to add. The culminating project of the course will be a research-based paper, presentation or art project. The ultimate form that this project will take is up to the students, in consultation with the professor, and collaboration will be encouraged.

We will also be exploring questions around the topic of collaboration and community engagement. Under what conditions can genuine collaboration take place, and what practices can help foster it? How can one engage and collaborate across lines of difference such as race and class, in a process that moves beyond charity towards genuine solidarity?

GOALS

1- Develop a critical language with which to talk about political, social, and economic projects that attempt to create alternative models for addressing human needs and desires such as affordable housing, a decent wage, dignity in work, and participation in civic life.
2- Knowledge of the history and context out of which these alternative models have arisen, up to and including the current moment and current efforts.

3- A deep, first-hand understanding of a specific project’s goals and aspirations, it’s challenges and successes, as well as the motivations and desires of its participants

4- Reflection on the nature of participation itself. How do we participate and/or not participate in the shaping of our own lives and the lives of those around us.

5- How to creatively approach the presentation of research-based art works, literary works, or analytical works.

EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING
Student Responsibilities

● Treat class time as an opportunity.
● Arrive to class on time, with all materials, ready to work steadily throughout the session. Be prepared with all your required materials for every class. Complete all assignments on time.
● Participate in all class discussions and critiques. Confront difficulties in your work in the spirit of learning, creative exploration and personal growth. Ask for help from your instructor when needed.
● Respect your fellow students at all times. Disruptive behavior is not tolerated.
● No radios, players, walkmans, beepers or cellular phones are allowed in class.
● EVERYONE RAISES THEIR HAND

In this class you will be asked to do a significant amount of work on-site, conducting research and participating/volunteering in a project, sometimes in collaboration with others. The amount of time and effort that you put into project work, along with the quality of your participation in the class will be the critical factors comprising your grade. The most important things you can do are to (a) show up to class prepared to participate in discussion; (b) turn in all written assignments on time: and (c) be a responsible and accountable collaborative partner. Here’s a guideline for how grading works in this class:

Attendance and Participation: 50%
Come to class, on time, prepared, and participate. Our classes will be very full, moving from one exercise to another as we try to cover a lot of ground in limited time. It’s important that you show up on time. Three late arrivals will count as one absence. So, show up on time and be prepared to participate. Absences will be excused only in the case of a note from a doctor or other verification that you could not attend class.

Papers and Projects- 50%
There will be significant written work for the class. Most of the written work will come in the form of weekly response papers, which will be 3-5 page papers in response to assigned readings.
These are due at the beginning of Thursday’s class, printed, double spaced. Late papers are graded accordingly. In addition there will be three projects that have written components and class presentations. For projects #2 and #3, the sort of work you produce (in what medium) is something you can decide for yourselves, in consultation with me. More detail on the course projects is in the next section.

Results matter, but so does process. In the end, the quality of the work that you do is what will make you proud of yourselves, and that’s what matters more than any grade. But how you get there, the preparations you make and the process by which you make it all come together is something that I will pay attention to.

Finally, collaboration, collegiality and respect for one another are required. If you choose to collaborate with others in the class, it must be a genuine collaboration based on mutual respect and shared responsibility. Students in one group may receive differing grades if it becomes clear that they are doing more or less work.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

You belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website ([http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html](http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html))

**PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS AND TIMELINE**

**Project 1 - Defining Terms, Sharpening Analysis**

**Due date:** Paper due **February 16th**, which will also be a “teach-in”

**Deliverables:** 3-5 page paper, and brief class presentations (a “teach-in).

For your first substantial assignment, you will be asked to identify a concept or term or philosophy that you have come across in class assignments or discussion. What are you curious about? What do you think you ought to try and understand better? What confuses you? Write a 5 page paper explaining it in great detail, including the history of the term or concept, why it’s important, and why you chose it. Challenge yourself. Upon completing that paper, you will collectively teach one another what you have learned, in class, on February 18th.

Examples of terms/concepts: Hegemony, Anarchism, Solidarity, Fouerierism, Utopian Socialism, Alienation of Labor, Patriarchy, Use-Value vs. Exchange Value, Wage theft, Wage Slavery, Barter Economy, etc...

**Project 2 – Modern Cases of Possibility Projects**

**Due Date:** March 8th/10th

**Deliverables:** You will work in pairs and closely examine one modern case study of a “possibility project” that we are NOT covering in the class otherwise. The modern case studies that we will be...
examining in class are Mondragon, The Zapatistas, Argentina 2001, and Cooperation Jackson. You may pick one from the Google Drive Folder, or choose one of your own and create an additional folder. You will present to the class your findings as a power-point or some other presentational format, on a date sometime between. The length of your presentation should be approximately 15 minutes.

**Project 3- Participatory Research Project**

**Due Date: May 3rd**

**Deliverables:** You will work alone, or pairs, or in groups of up to three people. You will volunteer with a NYC-based “possibility project” of your choosing, for 6-8 weeks, during which you will conduct research about the project and its participants. You will keep a journal of your experiences. Ultimately, this research will be distilled into a creative project of some sort- a video document, photo essay, written paper, short story, one act play, podcast, power-point presentation, etc.- and presented to the class as your final project.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Take Back the Economy

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS- Provisional**

**WEEK ONE- Preliminaries**

*January 26th- Class #1*

WELCOME!

*January 28th*

Assignment Due:
Read Other Economies Are Possible, by Ethan Miller
and the prologue to Take Back the Economy, by JK Gibson-Graham (both in Theoretical Texts folder on G-drive)
Watch Can We Do It Ourselves? (Filmography Folder)
Write 2-4 page movie “review”

**WEEK TWO- Rochdale, etc...**

*February 2nd*

Assignment Due:
Read pages 1-37, and 49-55 in The Meaning of Rochdale, by Brett Fairbairn (in Rochdale Folder, PDF called “Rochdale”)
also Critics of Capitalism Must Include Its Definition, by Richard Wolff (Theoretical texts folder. Links document)
In Class:
Develop timeline for final project and determine process
Discuss Readings
February 4th
Assignment Due:
Response Paper #1
Read Chapter 1 in Take Back the Economy
**Field Trip to Bluestockings
In Class:
Tour and visit of Bluestockings
Exercise for Chapter 1 in TBE

WEEK THREE- U.S. Utopianism and The Path to Freedom
February 9th
Assignment Due
Read Take Back The Economy Chapter 2
Read Radical Equality 1842-1846 (On Associationism Links document on G-drive)

February 11th
Assignment Due:
Response Paper #2
Read Introduction and pages 35-48 in Brooklyn’s Promised Land, by Judith Wellman (in Weeksville Folder)

WEEK FOUR- Taking Stock
February 16th
Assignment Due:
Project #1- Terms/Concept Paper
In Class:
TERMS AND CONCEPTS TEACH IN

February 18th
Assignment Due:
Dig into the Solidarity NYC Website and other resources to choose 3 options for your final project
In Class:
Guest Lecturer Caroline Woolard
Talk about “Modern Case Studies” Project also.

WEEK FIVE- Digging into Utopia
February 23rd
Assignment Due
Read Introduction on Open Utopias website- Stephen Duncombe
Read the introduction of The World Turned Upside Down, by Christopher Hill
Read (skim) A Declaration from the Poor Oppressed People of England
Listen to Billy Bragg Song.
In Class:

**February 25th**
Assignment Due:
Response Paper #3
Read the section entitled “Gerrard Winstanely,” in *Utopias of the English Revolution*, by Marie Louise Berneri
In Class:
WORK DAY- Project #2 work.

**WEEK SIX- Mondragon Spain**

**March 1st**
Assignment Due:
Read article: [The Mondragon Cooperatives and 21st Century Socialism: A Review of Five Books with Radical Critiques and New Ideas](#)
Read Chapter 3 in Take Back the Economy
Watch: [The Mondragon Experiment](#)

**March 3rd**
Assignment Due:
Response Paper #4
Read Chapter 4 in Take Back the Economy

**WEEK SEVEN- Zapatistas**

**March 8th**
Assignment Due:
Read Introduction to Compañeras, by Hilary Klein
Watch [Sixth Sun: Mayan Uprising in Chiapas](#)

**March 10th**
Assignment Due:
Response Paper #5
Read Chapter 1 in *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchists Currents in the Newest Social Movements*

**WEEK EIGHT- Argentina 2001**

**March 22nd**
Assignment Due:
Read from *Everyday Revolutions*, by Marina Sitrin
Watch: The Take
In Class:
March 24th
Assignment Due:
Response Paper #6
Chapter 5 in Take Back the Economy

WEEK NINE- Cooperation Jackson
March 29th
Assignment Due:
Finish Take Back the Economy
In Class:
Site Work

March 31st

WEEK TEN
April 5th
SITE WORK

April 7th

WEEK ELEVEN
April 12th
SITE WORK

April 14th

WEEK TWELVE
April 19th
SITE WORK

April 21st

WEEK THIRTEEN
April 26th
SITE WORK

April 28th
WEEK FOURTEEN- FINAL PRESENTATIONS