**Sociology 400: Alternative economies**

**Upper Year Undergrad**

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Office Hours: TBD and by appointment

Lectures: Tues/Thurs 11:00am-12:15pm

Room: 114 Ingraham

**Course Description**

Fredric Jameson once quipped, “It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism”. This quote is often interpreted as a measure of our belief in the stability of corporate capitalism. Sometimes it is assumed to signal the failure of our collective imagination. I think, instead, the Jameson quote is true because the end of the world simply implies destruction. The end of capitalism, however, implies an alternative set of working institutions, ones that embody our deepest aspirations for a humane and just world and advance human flourishing while simultaneously taking seriously the problem of institutional feasibility and sustainability over time. Contra Jameson, that is no small task.

This class explores a range of such institutional designs, from promising but forgotten historical alternatives as well as darker moments of our economic past to far-flung sci-fi futures and the bits and pieces of alternative institutions existing today, if only in embryo. We investigate the following: the social economy, social democracy, “high-road capitalism”, worker-run cooperatives, universal basic income, guaranteed job schemes, Soviet planning, participatory economics, and new versions of economic planning.

Which aspects of capitalism need transformation? And which aspects can be retained? From the perspective of feasibility, the main question is this: How can a set of interlocking institutions resolve the thorny problems of coordination, motivation, and innovation? But there are many other questions too: Would productivity decline? Would we have less stuff? Would people work? Will there be money? Can I keep my iPhone? Should we anticipate major unintended consequences? Could people vote capitalism back? Before people commit to alternatives, they might want answers to some of these questions.

Sometimes work on alternatives economies assumes that the central problem is an inherently political and ideological issue rather than a technical one. On this view, institutional and technical problems are easily solvable. It is a matter of the balance of political power, not a matter of effective institutions. This class begins with the assumption that the following question is not settled: Is a socially just alternative to capitalism feasible?

We will evaluates ideas and examples of alternative economies with the following two criteria in mind: (1) desirability and (2) feasibility. Are these systems ones we actually want? Once in place will they tend to be stable or will they unravel? We close the class with a final, more opaque criterion: (3) achievability. How can we get from here to there?

**Requirements**

*Reading*

All readings (except for the recommended ones) listed in the syllabus are mandatory, and they should be completed *before* class. In cases where readings are listed for the whole week, ie, for two classes together, it is best to have completed all of the readings before the first class. If that isn’t possible you can read the first half of the readings for the first class and the second half for the second class.

ALSO: Bring the readings to class, we will be going through them, and you might need them for a quiz!!

*Grading (In Brief)*

Attendance/Participation 15%

Pop quizzes 20%

Final Essay 20%

Midterm exam 20%

Final exam 25%

Final grades will be allocated as follows: 92-100=A; 88-91=AB; 82-87=B; 78-81=BC; 70-77=C; 60-69=D; Under 60=F.

*Two exams*

There will be two exams – one on materials from the first half of the course, and a final on the second half. (See Course Schedule for dates.) They will be closed book and held in class. The exams will assess whether you have done the readings, paid attention in class, watched and paid attention to the three movies, and thought through the material seriously. They will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. More information will be provided as we go along.

The exams are not designed to trick you. Likewise, exams do not test your creativity; it is an evaluation of whether or not you have mastered the material. The wording of the questions will be straightforward and there will be no need to psychoanalyze the question wording.

*Pop quizzes*

Nobody likes pop quizzes, but the goal here is motivate everyone to really do the readings. The quizzes will not be difficult; they are not intended to test how deeply you have thought through the text and absorbed the ideas. They are simply meant to assess *whether* you’ve done the readings assigned for that day. So, as long as you’ve done the relevant readings, and underlined, highlighted, or made notes on what seems to be relevant, you should be able to answer very basic questions about the text. Unless I specify otherwise, they will be open book. And they will take about 10 minutes at the beginning of any given class. But if you arrive late and miss the quiz you will receive a zero.

There will be four quizzes scattered across the semester. As you can see, by not telling you when the quizzes will be there is a real incentive on your part to do all the readings. Everything in this class is geared to get everyone to sit down and read. Also, I will drop your lowest grade.

*Final Essay*

One essay is required for this class. The essay involves choosing one idea about an alternative discussed in the class and interrogating it in some depth. The essay will be due at the end of the semester, however, everyone will be required to submit a one paragraph summary of your essay plan, three weeks in advance (Details TBA)

The essay will be 10 pages, double-spaced, with 12-point font, and one-inch margins. You will write on one of the alternatives that we have discussed in this class. The paper will have three tasks. First, you will give a brief, crisp summary of the proposal/institution/alternative in question. Next, you will have two separate sections, which examine the alternative with two criteria in mind:

1. *Is it desirable?* On what moral grounds is this something that we might actually want? What harms does it repair? Why might it be good? Or, by contrast, perhaps the alternative under study negatively affects some other important value. Is it in fact undesirable?
2. *Is it feasible?* Once in place will these alternatives be stable? Or will they unravel due to unintended consequences? Why might it go wrong? Why might it actually work?

You need not agree with the alternative to write about it. In all cases however, I want you to look at arguments in favour and arguments opposed, and then describe why on balance you fall to one side or the other.

*Attendance/Participation*

Attendance is required, and your grade for this part of the class depends on coming to class regularly, on time, and prepared to discuss the readings. Everyone is granted one free absence during the semester; any additional absence will be penalized. The only exceptions beyond this will be for serious family or medical emergencies.

Participation is always murky to assess, but you will be given a rough grade on the basis of your contributions to discussions and level of engagement with the materials. It will be a rough three point scale:

* 3 gets you full points and means you participated actively, consistently asking and answering questions and stating opinions and concerns;
* 2 gets partial points and means you opened your mouth but didn’t really convince your TA that you’ve seriously engaged with the reading;
* 1, no points, means you showed up to snooze. I realize talking in class is not easy for everyone and if that is the case I actively encourage you to set up an appointment to talk to me about the materials.

*Electronics*

I do not allow the use of any electronic devices in class, which includes cell phones, laptops, ipads, and other devices. The World Wide Web is just too tempting. Any slides I use will be posted to the course website, which should minimize the notes you’ll need to take. Exceptions will be made for students who require a laptop for accessibility reasons or who see the laptop as essential to their work. Students in the latter group will need to see me in office hours and convince me that they require the device.

**Readings and Course Schedule (subject to adjustment)**

**Class 1 – Why not capitalism?**

* G.A. Cohen. (2009). “The Camping Trip" (3-11) in *Why not socialism?*
* D. Schweickart (2011), “Justifying Capitalism” in *After Capitalism.*
* E.O. Wright (2011), “Chapter 3. What’s so Bad about Capitalism?” in *Envisioning Real Utopias*.
* A. Deaton. (2013). Ch. 5. “Material Wellbeing in the United States” in *The Great Escape*.

*Recommended*

* L. Kenworthy. (2015). “Shared Prosperity” in *The Good Society*.
* A. Einstein (1949), “Why Socialism?”, in *Monthly Review* (4 pages).
* J. Iceland. 2003. *Poverty in America*. University of California Press, selections.
* M. Friedman, (1963). *Capitalism and Freedom*, selections.
* P. Van Parijs, (1995). “Capitalism, Socialism, Freedom”, in *Freedom in Real Freedom for All: What (if anything) can justify Capitalism?*
* J. Cohen and J. Rogers, *On Democracy*, chapter 3, “Structure”, pp.47-87.

**Class 2 – What do we want in an economy? The normative core and the possibility of alternatives**

* M. Albert. (2003). “Economic Values” in *Parecon: Life After Capitalism*.
* G.A. Cohen, (1994) “Back to Socialist Basics,” *New Left Review*, 207, Sept/Oct.
* E.O. Wright (2011), “The Socialist Compass”, in *Envisioning Real Utopias*.

*Recommended*

* F.A. Hayek, (1988). *The Fatal Conceit*, pp. 6-10, 48-88.
* M. Friedman, (1963). *Capitalism and Freedom*, selections
* R. Friedman and M. Friedman, (1980). *Free to Choose*, selections
* D. Hausman and M. McPherson, (2006). “Ch. 1 – Ethics and Economics” in *Economic Analysis, Moral Philosophy, and Public Policy*.
* B. Barry. (2005). “Social Justice: The Basics”, in *Why Social Justice Matters*.
* M. Bunge (1998). “Designing the future”, in *Social Science under Debate: A Philosophical Perspective*. Pp.439-450.
* J. Cohen and J. Rogers, *On Democracy*, chapter 6, “Democracy”, pp.146-183
* B. Russell. (1918). “The World as it Could be Made”, in *The Proposed Roads to Freedom*
* S. Bowles, and H. Gintis (1986). “Ch. 1: Politics, Economics, Democracy”in *Democracy and Capitalism*.

**Class 3 – But, what about “human nature”?**

* S.J. Gould, (June 1997). "Kropotkin was no crackpot". *Natural History* 106: 12–21.
* S. Bowles and H. Gintis. (2011). *A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and its Evolution*, Selections.
* J. Freese. 2013. “No Revolution? Don’t Blame Evolution.” *Contemporary Sociology* 42(2): 190-193.

Recommended:

* J. Freese. 2002. “Evolutionary Psychology: ‘New Science’ or the Same Old Storytelling?” *Contexts* 1(3) 44-49.
* R. Axelrod (1984), *The Evolution of Cooperation*, selections.
* S. Pinker, “The Moral Instinct”, New York Times, pp. 1-14.
* J. Elster, (2007). “Ch. 5 – Self Interest and Altruism” in Explaining Social Behaviour, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
* P. Singer, (1981). *The Expanding Circle: Ethics, Evolution, and Moral Progress*, selections.
* E. Fehr and H. Gintis (2007) “Human Motivation and Social Cooperation: Experimental and Analytical Foundations,” Annual Review of Sociology 33:43-64.
* Geras, N. (1983). *Marx and Human Nature: Refutations of a Legend*, selections.
* Rose, H., and S. Rose. *Alas poor Darwin: Arguments against evolutionary psychology*. Random House, 2010.

**Class 4: Utopian Socialist thinking and the long history of alternatives**

* R. Heilbroner, “Dreams of Utopian Socialism”, *The Worldly Philosophers*
* R. Levitas. 1990. *The Concept of Utopia*. London: Philip Allan.
* G. Stedman Jones, (1981). “Utopian socialism reconsidered” in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People's history and socialist theory*.

*Recommended*

* R. Levitas., 2013. *Utopia as Method: The imaginary reconstitution of society*. Springer.
* E. Bellamy, (1887). *Looking Backward*, selections
* K. Taylor. (1992) *The political ideas of utopian socialists*. Selections.
* M. Buber. 1949. *Paths in Utopia*. Selections.
* R. Owen. 1920. *The Life of Robert Owen.* New York: Knopf.
* F. Manuel. 1962, *The Prophets of Paris*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
* A. Gray. 1946. The Socialist Tradition. London: Longmans.

**Class 5: Marxian thinking on Alternatives**

* P. Sweezy, “Marxian Socialism”, pp. 83-94.
* R. Heilbroner. “Ch. 4: Commitment to Socialism”in *Marxism For and Against.*
* J. Elster, 1985. “Capitalism, Communism, and Revolution”, in *Making Sense of Marx*.
* K. Marx. *The Critique of Gotha Programme* & *Communist Manifesto*, selections

*Recommended*

* E.O. Wright, "Socialist Strategies and the State in Advanced Capitalist Societies", chapter 5, *Class, Crisis and the State* (Verso: 1978) pp.226-252
* A. Gorz. 1968. “Reform and Revolution”. Socialist Register. 1968.
* J. Roemer. 1985. "Rationalizing revolutionary ideology," *Econometrica* 53: 84-108.
* Dobb, M. 1975. *Welfare economics and the economics of socialism: Towards a Commonsense Critique*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
* Mandel, E. 1974. Ten theses on the social and economic laws governing the society transitional between capitalism and socialism. *Critique*, *3*(1), pp.5-21.
* F. Parkin, 1979. “The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Social Democracy”, in *Marxism and class theory: A Bourgeois Critique.*

**Class 6 – Understanding social democracy: History and Variations**

* G. Esping-Andersen. “De-Commodification in Social Policy”, in *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, pp. 35-54
* D. Sassoon, 1998. “Introduction”, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, p.xix-xxv.
* T. Judt, 2010, “The World We Have Lost,” in *Ill Fares The Land*.

*Recommended*

* M. Stephanie, D. Bradley, E. Huber, F. Nielsen, and J. D. Stephens. 2003. “Determinants of Relative Poverty in Advanced Capitalist Democracies.” *American Sociological Review* 68: 22-51.
* P. Lindert. 2004. "Keys to the Free-Lunch Puzzle." Pp. 227-263 in *Growing Public: Social Spending and Economic Growth Since the Eighteenth Century*.
* W. Korpi, and J. Palme. 1998. “The Paradox of Redistribution and Strategies of Equality: Welfare State Institutions, Inequality, and Poverty in the Western Countries.” *American Sociological Review* 63: 661-687.
* I. Gough, “The Welfare State and the Capitalist Economy” in *The Political Economy of the Welfare State*.
* Sheri Berman. 2006. *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's. Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press.
* D. Brady. “The Welfare State and Poverty”, in *Rich Democracies, Poor People: How Politics Explain Poverty*, pp. 70-92
* A. Orloff and T. Skocpol, 1984. “Why Not Equal Protection? Explaining the Politics of Public Social Spending in Britain and the US” *American Sociological Review*, 49:6, , pp.726-750.

**Class 7 – Understanding social democracy: Limits and Possibilities**

* A. Przeworski. 1985, “Social Democracy as Historical Phenomenon” in *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, pp.7-43.
* L. Kenworthy. *Social Democratic America*, selections.
* G. Esping-Anderson, 1985. “Social Democracy in Theory and Practice”. in *Politics against Markets: The Social Democratic Road to Power*.

*Recommended*

* G. Olsen. 2002. *The Politics of the Welfare State: Canada, Sweden, and the United States*. Oxford University Press.
* P. Gay. *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism*, selections.
* R. Brenner. (1985), “The Paradox of American Social Democracy”, in *The Year Left*, pp. 32-87.
* A. Shaikh. 2003, “Who Pays for the "Welfare" in the Welfare State? A Multicountry Study”, *Social Research*, pp. 531-550.
* P. Frase and B. Sunkara. 2012. “The Welfare State of America: A manifesto on building social democracy in the age of austerity”. *In These Times*.
* J. Quiggin, (2012). “An Agenda for Social Democracy”, Whitlam Institute.
* J. Pontusson, *The Limits of Social Democracy*, selections.

**Class 8 – Understanding the planned economy and the Soviet model**

* F. Spufford, (2010). *Red Plenty*, selections.
* A. Nove, (1987) “Planned Economy,” in Eatwell, J., et. al., *The New Palgrave: Problems of the Planned Economy*, 186-197.
* M. Burawoy and J. Lukacs, (1985). “Mythologies of Work: A comparison of work in State Socialism and Advanced Capitalism”, *American Sociological Review*, 50:6.

*Recommended*

* L. Kolakowski*,* (1974) *“*My Correct Views on Everything*”,* inMy Correct Views on Everything*,* pp. 3-16.
* J. Kornai. (1992). *The Socialist System*, selections
* E. Mandel (1986) “In Defense of Planning”, *New Left Review*, (5-37) 33 pages
* F. Adaman And P. Devine, “Socialist Renewal: Lessons from the “Calculation” Debate”, *Studies in Political Economy.*
* T. Judt, (2008). “Leszek Kołakowski” in *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century*.
* A. Nove, (1991). *Economics of Feasible Socialism*, selections.
* R. Meek, (1986). “Ch 2. The Inns and Outs of Economic Planning”, in *Matrices and Society*.
* G. Konrad and I. Szelenyi, (1978). *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power.*

**Class 9 – Cooperatives and the Social Economy: Theory and Practice**

* R. Dahl, 1986. *A Preface to Economic Democracy* (Berkeley: the University of California Press,), “Ch. 4 - The Right to Democracy within Firms.”
* T. Malleson, 2014. After Occupy: Economic Democracy for the 21st Century. Selections.

*Recommended*

* H. Hansman, 1997. *The Ownership of Enterprise*, selections.
* R.D. Wolff, “Workers’ Self-directed enterprises as a cure” in *Democracy at Work*
* G. Alperowitz, “The Democratization of Wealth” in *America Beyond Capitalism*.
* S. Kasmir, 1996. *The Myth of Mondragon: cooperatives, politics and working class life in a Basque town*.
* W. F. Whyte and K. K. Whyte. 1991. *Making Mondragon*.

**Class 10 -- “Real Utopian” innovation: From Participatory budgeting to Randomocracy**

* E.O. Wright (2012) “Transforming Capitalism through Real Utopias”, *American Sociological Review*, 78, pp. 1-25.
* B. de Sousa Santos, 1998. “Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre: Toward a Redistributive Democracy,” *Politics & Society* 26(4), p. 461-510.
* J. Gastil1 and R. Richards. (2013). “Making Direct Democracy Deliberative through Random Assemblies”. *Politics & Society*, 41(2), pp. 253-281.

*Recommended*

* Fourcade, M., Riley, D., Tuğal, C. and Wright, E.O., 2011. “Discussion Forum: On Erik Olin Wright, Envisioning Real Utopias”. *Socio-Economic Review*. 10, 369–402.
* Fung, A. and Wright, E.O., 2003. *Deepening democracy: Institutional innovations in empowered participatory governance.* London: Verso.
* A. Lang, 2007. “But Is It For Real? The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly as a Model of State-Sponsored Citizen Empowerment,” *Politics and Society,* 35(1).
* P. Medoff and H. Sklar. (1994). *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of An Urban Neighborhood*. Boston, MA: South End Press. Selections.
* Daniel Gavron, 2000. *The Kibbutz: Awakening from Utopia*.

**Class 11 – Guaranteed income or guaranteed work?**

* E. Fromm (1963) “The Psychology of Basic Income”, *The Nation*, (439-442) 4 pages
* P. Van Parijs. “A Basic Income For All” in *What’s Wrong with a Free Lunch*, pp. 3-26.
* A.B. Atkinson, 2015. “Employment and Pay in the Future”, in *Inequality: What Can be Done*, pp. 133-54.

*Recommended*

* B. Bergmann. “A Swedish-Style Welfare State or Basic Income: Which Should Have Priority?” *Politics & Society*, 32(1): 107-118.
* D. Calnitsky. “’More Normal than Welfare’: The Mincome Experiment, Stigma, and Community Experience.” *Canadian Review of Sociology.*
* Van Parijs, P., 1991. Why surfers should be fed: the liberal case for an unconditional basic income. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, pp.101-131.
* A. Przeworski, 1985. “Postscript: Social Democracy and Socialism” in *Capitalism and Social Democracy*
* M. Kalecki, “Political Aspects of Full Employment”, *Political Quarterly*, 1943
* H. Minksy. (1965), “The Role of Employment Policy” in *Poverty in America*. p.175-200.
* P. Tcherneva (2012): Permanent On-The-Spot Job Creation—The Missing Keynes Plan for Full Employment and Economic Transformation, *Review of Social Economy*, 70:1, 57-80.

**Class 12 – Market Socialism, “Coupon Socialism”, and The Meidner Plan**

* S. Ackerman. (2013). “The Red and the Black”, *Jacobin*, (37-46) 10 pages
* J. Roemer, (1996). *Equal Shares: Making Market Socialism Work*. Selections.
* R. Meidner.(1998).*“The Rise and Fall of the Swedish Model. Interview with Rudolph Meidner*”. *Challenge Magazine*, p. 69-85.
* R.L. Heilbroner, (1980). “The Swedish Promise”, in *New York Review of Books*.

Recommended

* Stiglitz, J.E., 1996. *Whither socialism?*. Cambridge: MIT press. Selections.
* Bardhan, P.K. and Roemer, J.E., 1993. *Market socialism: The current debate*. Oxford University Press, USA.
* Folbre, N., 1994. Roemer’s Market Socialism: A Feminist Critique. *Politics & Society*, *22*(4), pp.595-606.
* Burawoy, M., 1994. Why coupon socialism never stood a chance in Russia: the political conditions of economic transition. *Politics & Society*, *22*(4), pp.585-594.
* G. M. Olsen, 1992. *The Struggle for Economic Democracy in Sweden*.
* D. Schweikark, “The Meidner Plan” in *After Capitalism*
* J.E. Stiglitz, *Whither Socialism?*, selections
* J. Pontusson, *The Limits of Social Democracy*, selections.
* R. Meidner. 1993. “Why did the Swedish Model Fail?” *The Socialist Register*.1-18.

**Class 13 – New Perspectives on Participatory Planning**

* M. Albert. 2004. *Parecon: Life After Capitalism*, selections.
* A. Cockshot and A. Cottrell. 1984. *Towards a New Socialism*, selections

Recommended

* R. Hahnel and Wright, E.O., 2016. *Alternatives to capitalism: Proposals for a democratic economy*. London: Verso Books.
* P. Devine, “Market Socialism or Participatory Planning?” *Review of Radical Political Economics*
* P. Devine, (1988). *Democracy and Economic Planning*, selections.
* R. Meek, (1986). “Ch 2. The Inns and Outs of Economic Planning”, in *Matrices and Society*.
* D.M. Kotz (2002). “Socialism and Innovation”. *Science & Society*: Vol. 66.
* G.M Hodgson. 1998. Socialism against markets? A critique of two recent proposals. *Economy and Society*, *27*(4), pp.407-433.
* F. Adaman. and Devine, P., 2001. Participatory planning as a deliberative democratic process: a response to Hodgson's critique. *Economy and Society*, *30*(2), pp.229-239.
* G.M Hodgson. 2005. The limits to participatory planning: a reply to Adaman and Devine. Economy and Society, 34(1), pp.141-153.
* D. Schweickart (2006). “Nonsense on Stilts: Michael Albert's Parecon.” Available online.

**Class 14 – Fantastic Futures**

* G.A. Cohen. “Is the ideal feasible" (53-79) 36 pages, in *Why not socialism?*
* P. Frase, “Four Futures”, *Jacobin*, Winter 2012, 27-34 (8)
* J. Lanchester, “The Robots Are Coming”, *London Review of Books*, pp. 3-8.

Recommended

* J. Schor. 2010. *Plenitude* New York: Penguin Press.
* Brynjolfsson, E. and McAfee, A., 2014. *The second machine age: Work, progress, and prosperity in a time of brilliant technologies*. WW Norton & Company.
* Frey, C.B. and Osborne, M.A., 2013. The future of employment: how susceptible are jobs to computerisation. Oxford Martin Programme on Technology and Employment.
* P.K. Dick, “Autofac” 1-30.
* J. Rifkin, *Zero Marginal Cost Society*, selections.
* M. Yglesias. 2015. “The automation myth: Robots aren't taking your jobs”. July 27, 2015. Available online: <http://www.vox.com/2015/7/27/9038829/automation-myth>

**Class 15 – How to get to There from Here**

* A. Przeworski, "Material Interests, Class Compromise, and the State", in *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, pp. 171-177 (7 pages)
* A.B. Atkinson, “The Case for a Participation Income”, *Political Quarterly*, pp.1-4.
* R. Van der Veen and P. van Parijs, “A Capitalist Road to Communism”, *Theory & Society* v.15:5, 1986 ,pp. 635-655.

Recommended

* J. Stephens, *The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism*, selections.
* E.O. Wright, “Why Something like Socialism is Necessary for the Transition to Something like Communism”, Chapter 7 in *Interrogating Inequality*.
* D. Schweikert, “Getting from Here to There”, in *After Capitalism*. Pp. 161-176.
* M. Carnoy, 1985. Chapter 5 “The State, Democracy and the Transition to Socialism” in *The State and Political Theory.*

**Final Exam**