

THE COLUMBIA CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL THOUGHT

AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

COÖPERISM 13/13 (2023-2024)

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WEDNESDAYS 6:15 PM TO 8:45 PM
13 SESSIONS SPREAD OVER THE 2023-2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

Seminar Description

Each year, this seminar focuses on a different set of topics at the heart of contemporary critical thought. During the 2015-2016 academic year, the seminar focused on Michel Foucault's Collège de France lectures and produced the [Foucault 13/13 series](#). During the 2016-2017 academic year, the seminar focused on critical readings of Friedrich Nietzsche and produced the [Nietzsche 13/13 series](#). During the 2017-2018 academic year, the seminar focused on modalities of uprisings and produced the [Uprising 13/13 series](#). During the 2018-2019 academic year, the seminar focused on the relationship between critical theory and praxis, and produced the [Praxis 13/13 series](#). During the 2019-2020 academic year, the seminar returned to the fundamental texts of critical theory, and produced the [Critique 13/13 series](#). During the 2020-2021 academic year, the seminar went completely virtual due to the pandemic and focused on the history, theory, and future of abolition, and produced the [Abolition Democracy 13/13 series](#). During the 2021-2022 academic year, the seminar focused on the ideas and manifestos of 13 "worldly philosophers" who ignited revolutions, and produced the [Revolution 13/13 series](#). Last year, we explored different experiments and models to reorganize society to address head on our current crises, and produced the [Utopia 13/13 series](#).

This year, we turn to "[Coöperism 13/13](#)".

What are the most promising forms of cooperation that can be harnessed to build a more sustainable, equal, and just society? What can we learn from existing forms of

cooperation—such as worker cooperatives, mutual aid, revolutionary movements, temporary autonomous zones, producer and consumer coops, mutuals, and solidarity networks—in order to create robust networks of cooperation? How might we overcome the common challenges and barriers that undermine working together? How can we combine, concentrate, leverage, and compound existing experiments in cooperation in order to construct a sustainable ecological, political, economic, and social environment? Is it possible to do this in societies with histories of colonialism, conquest, and slavery? Would it be possible to imagine a robust regime of “Coöperism” that would eclipse current forms of neoliberal capitalism?

These are the questions that we explore this year in [Coöperism 13/13](#). We seek to examine and evaluate different cooperative initiatives, to understand how they are constructed and maintained, to see how they work, to ask whether they can serve as exemplars, to explore whether they can work together, to determine how they might influence our critical praxis. The questions could not be more urgent.

A surge of cooperative energy materialized during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mutual aid groups brought food and necessities to those who could not leave their homes. Massive protests against the police galvanized people and brought them together, in the streets, on social media, in bail funds. Climate activists rallied together to challenge global climate change. But things slowly reverted to “normalcy”—neoliberal, exploitative, authoritarian normalcy. And all our political efforts today are monopolized trying to fight against resurgent, white nationalist, aspiring dictators, with little time to focus on sustainable and just futures. Yet the crises go on unabated—global climate change, racialized mass incarceration, our punitive society, grossly unconscionable inequalities... The need for cooperation to counter these crises is more pressing than ever.

Last year’s public seminar [Utopia 13/13](#) demonstrated the promise and the importance of what we called “*concrete utopias*”—really-existing, ongoing, on-the-ground initiatives that realize utopian visions of a better future through concrete, material, organizing efforts. Drawing on the critical framework of “concrete utopias,” we turn this year to promising forms of cooperation that could be combined, concentrated, leveraged, and compounded into a political, economic, and social regime of Coöperism.

We start with the communal occupation of the forest and explore forms of cooperation that take place within temporary autonomous zones (TAZs) such as Defend the Atlanta Forest/Stop Cop City and Notre-Dame-des-Landes. We explore rescue at sea operations in the Mediterranean as a form of cooperation that steps in when there is no functional or willing state. We have sessions on forms of cooperation in Brazil within the Landless Workers Movement and the cooperative occupation of unused agricultural lands. We interrogate the writings of great philosophers of cooperation such as Simone Weil. We speak with critical theorists, practitioners and philosophers including Bethania Assy, Étienne Balibar, Alyssa Battistoni, Benjamin Davis, Kamau Franklin, Che Gossett, Chloe Howe Haralambous,

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Rahel Jaeggi, Antonio Pele, André Pettman, Thula Pires, Derecka Purnell, Saskia Sassen, Omavi Shukur, and Jocelyn Simonson.

And through these explorations of promising forms of cooperation, we seek to imagine and instantiate a new world of Coöperism that can displace current forms of neoliberal, extractive, and authoritarian capitalism.

The graduate student seminar will be structured to frame a series of 13 formal seminars at which one or more guests, from different disciplines, will be invited to discuss the readings and present on the themes of the seminar. Each formal seminar will host contemporary critical theorists from across the disciplines. It will also frame and interrelate with a Paris critical theory seminar at the EHESS that will run alongside the seminar. The graduate student seminar thus will serve as the vehicle to enrich the formal 13/13 seminars and support the intellectual apparatus that will accompany those formal seminars. This seminar will function as an advanced graduate research seminar.

We will be holding the formal 13/13 seminars on Wednesday evenings this coming year, generally from 6:15pm to 8:45pm EST, mostly at Columbia University. Students will be expected to be present at the seminars at the seminar table, ready to go at least 5 minutes before the seminars start.

Books and Texts

All reading materials will be posted to the [Coöpersim 13/13 website](#).

Requirements

Graduate students are expected to read the assigned materials prior to the formal seminar and should be prepared to offer public comments to facilitate seminar discussion. There should be no absences. If a student has an excused absence, please e-mail Kiana Taghavi (knt2121@columbia.edu) by 10:00 a.m. of the day of the seminar.

Students will conduct their own research and prepare, for each semester, (a) one *ex ante* 5-page book review or pre-seminar blog-post providing guidance on the writings we will be reading that week or on the theories and practices we will discuss, and (b) one *ex post* 5-page blog-post discussing and elaborating on the intellectual discussion at one of the 13/13 seminars.

Professor Harcourt will hold office hours. Please contact his assistant, Kiana Taghavi

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(knt2121@columbia.edu) to schedule an appointment. Office hours are by appointment only.

Laptop Policy

Please note that you *may only use* your laptop for three purposes: (1) as a *word processor* to take and read notes; (2) as a *reader* to consult assigned course materials that are on-line or saved on your hard drive; or (3) to do any research directly related to our seminar. You *may not* use your laptop during the seminar, ever, to write emails, shop on-line, or for any other purpose that is not seminar related. If you are the kind of person who cannot resist temptation, please leave your laptop at home. It is *very distracting* to one's peers when someone else is shopping on-line. Please respect your peers and this policy.

Statement Regarding Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Columbia University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work. The complete Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity can be found at: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity-statement> and the Columbia University Undergraduate Guide to Academic Integrity can be found here: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

Disability Statement

Columbia Law School is committed to the full inclusion of students with disabilities in the life of the University. In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), CLS provides accommodations and supports to students with documented disabilities on an individual, case-by-case basis. To request disability accommodations for this course, students must first be registered with Disability Services (DS). Detailed information is available regarding the registration process, drop-in hours schedule, documentation requirements and important deadlines online here at <https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services>.

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SEMINAR SCHEDULE AND READINGS

1/13 DEFEND THE ATLANTA FOREST/STOP COP CITY, NOTRE-DAME-DES-LANDES, & TEMPORARY AUTONOMOUS ZONES

Wednesday, September 6, 2023 6:15 – 8:45 pm at the Jerome Greene Annex

With Kamau Franklin, André Pettman, and Tiffany Williams Roberts

Please read:

Akbar, Amna. “The Fight Against Cop City.” *Dissent* (Spring 2023). <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/the-fight-against-cop-city/>.

Bey, Hakim. *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. 1985. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/hakim-bey-t-a-z-the-temporary-autonomous-zone-ontological-anarchy-poetic-terrorism>.

James, Joy, and Kalonji Jama Changa. “The Rubik’s Cube of Cop City.” *Inquest*, July 18, 2023. <https://inquest.org/the-rubiks-cube-of-cop-city/>.

Mauvaise Troupe. *The Zad and NoTAV: Territorial Struggles and the Making of a New Political Intelligence*. <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/authors/mauvaise-troupe>.

Additional Readings and Resources:

“Praxis 13/13 | The Space of Praxis.” *Praxis 13/13*, May 8, 2019. <https://blogs.law.columbia.edu/praxis1313/13-13/>.

Farrell, Hugh. “The Strategy of Composition.” January 14, 2023. <https://illwill.com/composition>.

Mauvaise Troupe. “Remaining Ungovernable.” May 1, 2021. <https://illwill.com/remaining-ungovernable>.

Nevrat, Frédéric. “Satellite Signals for the Atlanta Forest.” <https://illwill.com/satellite-signals>.

The English-language blog dedicated to the ZAD, which houses several different readings/”dispatches” from the movement. <https://zadforever.blog/>.

2/13 COOPERATION: A POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC THEORY
Wednesday, September 20, 2023 6:15-8:45 pm at Maison Française

With Rahel Jaeggi, Saskia Sassen, Kendall Thomas

Please read:

Harcourt, Bernard E. *Cooperation: A Political, Social, and Economic Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2023.

3/13 RADICAL ACTS OF JUSTICE

Wednesday, September 27, 2023 6:15-8:45 pm

With Osyrus Bolly, Omavi Shukur, and Joceyn Simonson

Please read:

Simonson, Jocelyn. *Radical Acts of Justice: How Ordinary People Are Dismantling Mass Incarceration*. New York: New Press, 2023.

**4/13 HISTORIES OF COOPERATIVE RESISTANCE IN BRAZIL AND THE
LANDLESS WORKERS' MOVEMENT**

Wednesday, October 18, 2023 6:15-8:45 pm at the Jerome Greene Annex

With Bethania Assy, Antonio Pele, and Thula Pires

Please read:

Nicas, Jack. "If You Don't Use Your Land, These Marxists May Take It." *The New York Times*, April 30, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/30/world/americas/brazil-land-occupation.html>.

5/13 ÉTIENNE BALIBAR ON COOPERATION

Tuesday, October 24, 2023 6:15-8:45 pm at Maison Française

With Étienne Balibar

Please read:

[“The Expropriators and Expropriated”](#) by Étienne Balibar

6/13 PUBLIC SEMINAR IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

7/13 SIMONE WEIL ON COOPERATION

Wednesday, November 29, 2023 6:15-8:45 pm at the Jerome Greene Annex

With Benjamin Davis and Frieda Ekotto

Please read:

Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*

Simone Weil, *On the Abolition of All Political Parties*

Simone Weil, “Reflections Concerning the Causes of Liberty and Social Oppression,” in *Oppression and Liberty*

Simone Weil, “Factory Journal,” in *Formative Writings*

Sophie Bourgault “Reading Weil as a feminist care theorist”

Benjamin Davis, *Simone Weil’s Political Philosophy*

Helen Kinsella on the role of force and colonialism in Weil

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8/13 RESCUE AT SEA: THEORY AND PRAXIS

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 6:15-8:45 pm at the Jerome Greene Annex

With Chloe Howe Haralambous

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- Akuno, Kali, and Ajamu Nangwaya. *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi*. Wakefield, Quebec: Daraja, 2017.
- Aronoff, Kate, Alyssa Battistoni, Daniel Aldana Cohen, and Thea Riofrancos. *A Planet to Win: Why We Need a Green New Deal*. New York: Verso, 2019.
- Becker, Gary. *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*, 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1975].
- Benkler, Yochai. "Peer Production, the Commons, and the Future of the Firm." *Strategic Organization* 15, no. 2 (2017): 264–274.
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- Bonin, John P., and Louis Putterman. *Economics of Cooperation and the Labour-Managed Economy*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Borowy, Iris, and Matthias Schmelzer, eds. *History of the Future of Economic Growth: Historical Roots of Current Debates on Sustainable Degrowth*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

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<https://www.proquest.com/working-papers/economic-growth-cooperative-economy/docview/2587466273/se-2>.

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Chancel, Lucas, Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zucman. *World Inequality Report 2022*. World Inequality Lab. https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2022/03/0098-21_WIL_RIM_RAPPORT_A4.pdf.

Chiapello, Eve. “Accounting and the Birth of the Idea of Capitalism.” *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 18, no. 3 (March 2007): 263–296.

Curl, John. *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America*. 2nd ed. Oakland, CA: PM, 2012.

———. *History of Work Cooperation in America: Cooperatives, Cooperative Movements, Collectivity and Communalism from Early America to the Present*. Berkeley, CA: Homeward, 1980.

Daly, Herman E., and Joshua Farley. *Ecological Economics: Principles and Applications*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: Island, 2011.

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