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
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cooporation—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/#StopCopCity 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, Clara Maier, Frieda Ekotto, Che Gossett,
Chloe Howe Haralambous, Rahel Jaeggi, Antonio Pele, André Pettman, Derecka Purnell, 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. Please submit at least one of your written essays for the Spring semester to Professor Harcourt and Kiana Taghavi by the Spring recess on March 11, 2024.

Professor Harcourt will hold office hours. Please contact his assistant, Kiana Taghavi...
(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](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](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](https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services).
1/13 DEFEND THE ATLANTA FOREST/#STOPCOPCITY, 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:


Additional Readings and Resources:


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 and Jens Meierhenrich

Please read:


3/13 RADICAL ACTS OF JUSTICE

Wednesday, September 27, 2023 6:15 – 8:45 pm at the Jerome Greene Annex

With Osyrus Bolly, Tracy McCarter, and Joceyn Simonson

Please read:


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 and Antonio Pele

Please read:

5/13 ÉTIENNE BALIBAR ON MARX AND COOPERATION

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

With Étienne Balibar

Please read:


6/13 PUBLIC SEMINAR IN CONSTRUCTION

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:


Additional Readings and Resources:

8/13 THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL CRITIQUE OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM AND STATE CAPITALISM

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

With Clara Maier, Jens Meierhenrich, and William E. Scheuerman

Please read:


Otto Kirchheimer, “Memo on Horkheimer and State Capitalism” (in German), dated May 1940 in New York.

9/13 LORRAINE DASTON: HOW SCIENTISTS LEARNED TO COOPERATE

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 at 6:15 pm at Pulitzer Hall

With Lorraine Daston, William Deringer, Nicholas Lemann, and Alma Steingart

Please read:

10/13 A MODEL FOR A COOPERATIVE UNIVERSITY
Wednesday, February 21, 2024 6:15 – 8:45 pm at the Jerome Greene Annex

11/13 RESCUE AT SEA: THEORY AND PRAXIS
Wednesday, March 6, 2024 6:15 – 8:45 pm at the Jerome Greene Annex
   With Chloe Howe Haralambous

12/13 COOPERISM 12/13

13/13 AXEL HONNETH AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE WORKPLACE
Wednesday, April 17, 2024 6:15 – 8:45 pm at the Jerome Greene Annex
   With Axel Honneth
Coöperism 13/13 Bibliography


https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1923/jan/06.htm.


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Report: To the Committee of the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor, Referred to the Committee of the House of Commons on the Poor Laws. March 12, 1817.
http://la.utexas.edu/users/hcleaver/368/368owenrptcom.html.


