

Is Another World Possible?
From Social Theory to Social Transformation
Sociology 190.5
Fall 2012

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This course examines a variety of efforts – big and small, revolutionary and reformist – to change the world. Our main focus will be on examining the possibilities and challenges inherent in the idea of creating what Erik Olin Wright calls “real utopias”. This is a term that refers to institutional changes that seek to create radical change within the confines of the world-as-we-know-it. What motivates these efforts? What challenges do they face? Can they succeed? How? These are a few of the questions we will explore as we examine a variety of real utopias: factory councils in Turin, Italy, cooperatives in Mondragon, Spain, a socialist factory in Allende-era Chile, universal basic income grants, participatory budgeting in Brazil and Venezuela, and the prospects of creating racial and gender utopias. In addition to reading about real utopias, students will conduct firsthand research projects examining local efforts to establish real utopias.

Course Requirements:

Weekly Bspace Postings (10%): Each student will choose one reading (or chapter from a longer reading) for one week during the semester and post a 1 page response paper to BSpace by Monday night. The paper should pose and seek to answer a question that you see as central to the reading, and which relates to the theme of the course. Other students will respond to this posting by Tuesday night. These responses should be about a paragraph (approx. 100-200 words). Students who have posted the initial response may be called upon to help facilitate discussion during their week; if this occurs, you will meet with me during office hours Tuesday before seminar meets Wednesday night.

2 short analytical papers (20%): Students will write short papers, of 5 pages, which engage analytically with classical theory (for paper 1) and an example of a contemporary real utopia (paper 2). Each paper is worth 10% of the final grade, with due dates listed in the syllabus. I will provide more details about these papers in class along with instructions on writing, citations, thesis statements, etc.

Class Participation (20%): Students are required to *attend* seminar each week and *participate* in discussion. This means paying attention and having thoughtful things to say. The quality of your participation is more important than the quantity. But I expect that all students will participate in discussions, and that no students will dominate. Since we only meet once per week students should not miss class, and

missing more than one class will negatively affect your participation grade (unless there is an emergency in which case you need to let me know before or after).

Final paper (50%): For your final paper, you will choose a contemporary local example of a real utopia and analyze it using the theoretical frameworks presented in the course. You are required to do some original research through interviews or participant observation. If you choose interviews, you must conduct 3 to 5. For participant observation, you must do 7 to 10 hours. Further instructions will be provided over the course of the semester.

Your grade for the final paper is broken into the following components:

2 page proposal (5%) – Due 9/12

Literature Review (5%) – Due 10/3

Data Analysis (5%) – Due 10/31

Draft of Final Paper (5%) – Due 11/14

Final Paper (30%) – Due 12/10 (10-20 pages total, double-spaced)

Books (The following books are available in the bookstore and online):

Baiocchi, Gianpaolo. 2005. *Militants and Citizens*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Peter Winn. 1986. *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarrur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism*. Oxford.

Wright, Erik Olin. 2010. *Envisioning Real Utopias*. London: Verso.

Additional materials will be available online or in the course reader.

Course Outline

8/29 – Introduction: As Erik Olin Wright, this year's president of the American Sociological Association says, the idea of a "real utopia" seems like a contradiction in terms. For our first session we'll begin with the following questions: What is Utopia? What is a "Real Utopia"? What are the benefits and/or drawbacks of thinking about real utopias? Should we be thinking about real utopias today? Why or why not?

Wright, Erik Olin. 2010. "Why Real Utopias?" Ch. 1 (pp. 1-9), *Envisioning Real Utopias*. London: Verso. (Earlier version available online: <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/ERU.htm>).

9/5 – Emancipatory social science and the critique of capitalism: What is emancipatory social science? How is it different from "traditional" (or "non-emancipatory") social science? What is Wright's critique of capitalism? To what extent can the problems Wright discusses be seen in the 2008 financial crash? What is Friedman's argument in "The Golden Straitjacket"? What would Friedman say to Wright and how might Wright respond?

Wright, Erik Olin. 2010. "The Tasks of Emancipatory Social Science" and "What's so bad about capitalism?" Ch. 2-3 (pp. 10-85) *Envisioning Real Utopias*. London: Verso.

Friedman, Thomas. 2000. Ch. 6, "The Golden Straightjacket", pp. 101-11 in *The Lexus And The Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*. Anchor/Random House.

Film in class (excerpts): *Inside Job*

Part I: Theoretical Frameworks for thinking about Real Utopias

9/12 – Classical Marxism: What is socialism? What is the difference between "utopian" and "scientific" socialism? Why do Marx & Engels prefer the latter? What is their argument about how socialism will come about? What will socialism or communism mean in terms of the division of labor and the relationship between what Marx calls the "realm of freedom" and the "realm of necessity"? How might Wright and Friedman respond to Marx and Engels' arguments?

Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific", pp. 683-694, 700-719 (including first paragraph of p 700), skim 694-699, *Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Tucker (Reader)
Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 473-500 (skim 491-497) in *Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Tucker (Reader)

Marx, Capital Vol 3, Pp 441 in Tucker (Reader): Read paragraph beginning 'In fact...'
Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, p 160 on division of labor. Read from 'Division of labor and private property...' to "...historical development up till now."

****2 Page Proposal for Final Paper Due in Class****

9/19 – Lenin and Weber: What does Lenin mean by "socialism"? How is this different from "communism"? What is Lenin's argument about the transition from capitalism to socialism, and from socialism to communism? What is Weber's critique of socialism?

Lenin, *State and Revolution*, pp. 5-20, 32-44, 47-48, 66-85 [Reader]

Weber, Max. 1978. "Socialism", pp. 251-262 in Runciman, W.G., *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Reader]

****Essay 1 Due in Class (no essays accepted after 4:10 PM)****

9/26 – The Real Utopias Framework: What is Wright's critique of Marx? What does Wright propose instead? How might Marx & Engels, Lenin, and Weber respond?

Erik Olin Wright, "Why Real Utopias?" Ch. 1 *Envisioning Real Utopias* (re-read)
- Ch. 4, "Thinking about Alternatives to Capitalism", pp. 89-109.
- 2006. "Compass Points: Towards a Socialist Alternative", *New Left Review* [Online]

Part II – Real Utopias in Practice: Historical and Contemporary Examples

10/3 – The Turin Factory Councils: What were the Turin factory councils? How and why did they develop? What did they accomplish? Why were they ultimately unsuccessful? What is the vision of socialism/socialist democracy? How would Marx & Engels, Lenin, Weber, and Wright evaluate the factory councils?

Gramsci, Antonio. 1977. Essays on Turin Factory Councils in *Selections from Political Writings, 1910-1920*. New York: International Publishers.

“Workers’ Democracy” (1919);
“The Conquest of the State” (1919);
“Unions and Councils” (1919);
“Trade Unions and the Dictatorship” (1919);
“Syndicalism and the Councils” (1919);
“The Party and Revolution” (1919);
“The Factory Council” (1920);
“Two Revolutions” (1920);

di Paola, Pietro. 2011. “Factory Councils in Turin, 1919-1920: “The Sole and Authentic Representatives of the Proletarian Class””, pp. 130-147 in Ness, Immanuel, and Dario Azzellini, eds. *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers’ Control from the Commune to the Present*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.
[Reader]

****2 Page Literature Review Statement Due in Class****

10/10 – Participatory Budgeting: What is participatory budgeting (PB)? How and to what extent is PB an example of a real utopia? How did Porto Alegre’s participatory budget come into being? What is Baiocchi’s analysis of how, why and in what ways Porto Alegre’s participatory budget has been successful? How would Marx & Engels, Lenin, Weber, and Gramsci respond? Can participatory budgeting work in the US?

Baiocchi, Gianpaolo. 2005. *Militants and Citizens*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, pp. 1-48, 71-111 (skim 49-70).
2-3 short newspaper articles on participatory budgeting in Chicago, NYC, Vallejo, CA.
[Available online]

10/17 – Universal Basic Income: What is UBI? Why does van Parijs see it as a “simple and powerful idea for the 21st century”? In what ways is it a real utopia? How and why does Wright think it will impact class relations? What is Pateman’s argument about citizenship and in terms of feminist concerns? What are the critiques of it? What is the feasibility of achieving this in countries like the US today?

Van Parijs, Philippe. 1995. Pp 1-51 (intro, Ch. 1-2), *Real Freedom for All: What (if anything) can justify capitalism?* New York: Oxford University Press.

Note for reading this: The meaning of the somewhat bizarre term 'leximin' which van Parijs uses many times, roughly means 'how to maximize the benefits while limiting the drawbacks'. In other words it's a term for seeking what might be called an "optimal point" in terms of a trade off. Van Parijs uses the term to discuss the best design that helps the worst off to the maximum extent possible without unduly penalizing the best off].

Chapters by Erik Olin Wright (Ch. 4, pp. 91-100) and Carole Pateman (Ch. 5, pp. 101-119) in *Redesigning Distribution*. Ackerman et al. Verso. [Reader]

10/24 – Mondragon Cooperatives: What is Mondragon? How did it come about? To what extent has it succeeded in instituting "economic democracy"? What problems has it faced? What are the different views presented by Flecha and Santa Cruz, Bakaikoa et al. and Cheney regarding the extent to which Mondragon has successfully managed the tension between democratic self-management and social justice on the other hand and market competitiveness and efficiency on the other?

Flecha, Ramon and Iñiqui Santa Cruz. 2011. "Cooperation for Economic Success: The Mondragon Case", *Analyse & Kritik*, 33 (1), 157-170. [Online]

Baleren Bakaikoa, Anjel Errasti and Agurtzane Begiristain. 2004. "Governance Of The Mondragon Corporacion Cooperativa" *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics* 75:1 pp. 61-87 [Online]

George Cheney. 1999 *Values at Work: employee participation meets market pressures at Mondragón*. Ithaca: ILR Press. Pp. 35-142. Skim pp. 52-65.

The official website of Mondragon: <http://www.mcc.es/ing/index.asp>;

****Essay 2 Due in Class**** – 5 pp. analyzing factory councils, participatory budgeting, basic income or Mondragon in light of Erik Olin Wright's essay "Compass Points".

10/31 – Socialist Production in Salvador Allende's Chile: How was the Yarur factory "liberated"? What is the relationship between the workers' struggle within the factory and the political struggles taking place outside the factory? Can "Ex-Yarur" be considered an example of socialist production? What are the similarities and differences between Yarur, the Turin factory councils, and the recuperated factories of Argentina?

Film: *The Take*, special viewing outside class or on own.

Peter Winn. 1986. *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism*. Oxford. Read pp. 3-10, 32, 53-69, 92-104, 134-143, 159-252. Pay especially close attention to 3-10, 53, 92-104, 182-196 and 209-226. Skim other chapters as well.

****5 Page Data Analysis Due in Class****

11/6 – Beyond Gender and Race? Feminist and Racial Real Utopias. What does it mean to think about a world beyond gender? Before answering this question we'll have to think about what we mean by gender and how gender works. Lorber et al. provide 3 ways of thinking about this in terms of individuals, interactions and institutions. They also press us to think about “doing gender” and “undoing gender”. Stacey examines sexuality, and its link to

Risman, Barbara, Judith Lorber and Jessica Holden Sherwood, “Toward a World Beyond Gender: A Utopian Vision”, paper prepared for ASA 2012 annual meeting.

(<http://www.realutopias.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Risman-Lorber-Sherwood-Real-Utopia-Proposal-Beyond-Gender.pdf>)

Giddens, Anthony. 1992. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Stanford University Press. Pp. 1-3 [Reader]
Judith Stacey. 2011. Ch. 5: “Unhitching the Horse from the Carriage: Love without Marriage among the Mosuo”, pp. 152-187. *Unhitched*. NYU Press. [Reader]

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2012. “Utopias “For Real”: Contours of Racial Utopia”, paper prepared for ASA 2012 annual meeting

(<http://www.realutopias.com/proposal-sessions/proposal-sessions-l-z/real-utopia-proposal-session-utopias-for-real-mental-emancipation-freedom-practices-and-the/>)

11/14 – Final Project presentations (Group 1)

Draft of Final Paper Due in Class. 2 copies: 1 copy exchanged with another student, and 1 copy to me

11/21 – No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

11/28 – Final Project Presentations (Group 2)

Monday December 10th. Final Papers due in my box in 410 Barrows, 3:00 PM.

Breakdown of Final Paper Components:

2 Page Proposal – Explain (a) what your real utopia is, (b) how it is a real utopia, (c) why you're interested in it, and how you plan to analyze it: i.e. (d) what method of research (ethnographic, interviewing), and (e) what literature you plan to analyze. Your grade will be based on your attention to each of these five aspects, 1 point for each.

2 page literature review: You need to list at least 5 sources that you plan to use for your final paper. 3 sources *must* be readings from the course itself, and 2 *readings must be from outside the course*. The point of this assignment is for you to tell me *why you are using the sources you are*, i.e. in addition to listing the 5 sources you need to have an argument about *why they are relevant*. The best way to do this is to develop your argument of the real utopia you will be studying in relation to your sources. It's OK if your argument itself is still in progress. You'll be evaluated based on your ability to articulate *what the connection is* between the literature you are using your real utopia example.

2 page data analysis: You can choose to do interviews or participant observation. Students who choose interviews must conduct 3-5 interviews lasting between 30 minutes and 1 hour per interview. These interviews must be recorded and transcribed. For participant observation, you need to conduct 7 to 10 hours, and take field notes on your experience. I will discuss how to take field notes in class. For your data analysis assignment it's OK if you have not yet completed your data collection but *it must be in progress*. Therefore, I expect that you will have done at least 2-3 hours of participant observation or 2 interviews to do this assignment. The assignment requires you to develop an argument about your real utopia, related to the theory we have read and that you put forward in your literature review, and bringing the evidence you have gathered to bear on this. I will be looking for you to develop an articulate argument about how/why this is a real utopia, how it relates to the theories you are working with and how your evidence helps you know this.

Draft of Final Paper: This will primarily be a peer review exercise although I will briefly look at your essays as well. The final paper will have an introduction that lays out the argument you are making, in which you connect your evidence to your theory, relating to the idea of real utopias and some of the theorists we have covered in the course. Then you'll have a literature review section. But rather than simply repeating others' arguments I want you to develop your own argument, drawing on other theories to do so. Then you'll apply this argument to your case. The conclusion should draw out the significance of your case for sociology, focusing on the literature you have chosen. You must also comment on the limitations of your data.

Choosing a Real Utopia: Students should consult with me about their choice. For ideas please go to the American Sociological Association's 2012 Annual Meeting website on "real utopias" which is the theme of this year's meeting. Over 20 real utopias can be found here: <http://www.realutopias.com/proposal-sessions/>