

CH ST 176  
54585  
Fall 2009

## Theories of Social Change Course Syllabus

### Instructor e-mail

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■ South Hall 1709, Thursdays 1:00 - 3:00pm or by appointment.

### Office hours

■ Tuesday / Thursday, 6:30-7:45; GIRV 1112 (4.0 units).

### Logistics

### Description

■ Theories of social change have been present ever since language has allowed us to interrogate our relationship to the environment and the group. Consequently, theories of social change are as broad and complex as the scope of human history. However, three key interventions in the gambit of social change include the historical materialist interventions of Karl Marx; the disciplinary rupture of Michel Foucault's genealogy; and the anti-West oppositions of postcolonial rebels. Although Marx and Foucault are well-known, their debts to subaltern theorists are less so. This course will explore the contributions to social change by the world's "social majorities" as part of a larger project of "grassroots postmodernism."

### Objectives

- This course will encourage participants to
  - examine theories and strategies in response to neoliberalism;
  - explore autonomous political practice;
  - introduce and interrogate the concept of grassroots postmodernism.

### Materials

■ Primary text: Esteva and Prakash, *Grassroots Postmodernism* (London: Zed Books, 1998). Additional readings are available at the course web page <[www.mitotedigital.org/mcallahan/chst176](http://www.mitotedigital.org/mcallahan/chst176)>. (There will be no course reader so participants can reproduce readings as they see fit.)



### Strategy

■ This course will be organized as a combination of class presentations group discussions, and workshops that focus on specific skill sets for convivial community-based research. We will designate **research clusters** each of which will pursue a specific topic.

Class meetings will be an opportunity to review assigned materials through short presentations and interactive class activities. Each participant will be expected to actively participate applying key concepts and analytical frameworks. Our conversation and skill sharing will depend on close reading of selected texts. A prepared text for discussion assumes each participant can represent the text's claim and share questions provoked by the readings.

We will pursue our work and organize the space convivially. By convivial we mean a practice that privileges the unique perspectives, histories, experiences, skills, and desires of each participant insuring that everyone is able to share their unique perspectives and develop new skills by learning from each other while constructing new tools for narrating complex social phenomena that impact our daily lives.

### Rules of Engagement:

■ In our pursuit of serious scholarly inquiry we will engage difficult and controversial topics, concepts, and issues. It will be our collective responsibility

to maintain an intellectually rigorous and respectful environment. Thus, it is imperative that our interaction in class be thoughtful and supportive of the views, experiences and expertise of others at all times. In order to maintain a convivial learning environment we must agree:

- to give each person a chance to say what they want without having it dismissed, attacked, debated, agreed with, or supported;
  - to listen to others, accepting only one person talks at a time without interrupting anyone who has the floor;
  - to speak for oneself and his or her experiences;
  - to respect and allow expression of the feelings of each participant;
  - to step up, and step back;
  - not to diminish, ridicule, or attack other participants or their contributions;
  - not to repeat what someone says in class discussions outside of class without permission from that person or the group;
  - not to treat others differently based on what was said or discussed in class;
  - to try on the process.
- Participants will be expected to:
- arrive to class sessions on time and prepared to aggressively engage class activities having carefully read selected texts and completed assignments (the quality of our conversation will depend on the level of preparation by the entire class);
  - contribute to class discussions and group projects;
  - inform the instructor of any special needs regarding the space, curriculum, and activities (see campus services at <http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/>);
  - manage personal communication devices making sure these do not disturb other participants; and
  - conform to university standards for academic conduct (see policy on student conduct and responsibility <<http://www.catalog.ucsb.edu/current/general/app.htm#Academic-conduct>>).

## Assessment

- In order to assess the quality of our conversation and our success in researching and applying complex historical, political, social, and cultural analysis you will submit a project prospectus (750-1000 words), a research essay (2,500 words), and a course review (500 words). You will be expected to represent your written work in class. Please see assignment sheets available on the course web page <[www.mitotedigital.org/mcallahan/chst176](http://www.mitotedigital.org/mcallahan/chst176)> for more information.

Naturally you must meet the highest standards of written English, meaning your work should be free of grammatical and spelling errors. The work you present for the course should be well organized, sufficiently researched, and related to the course discussions and readings. You will be evaluated based on your ability to follow directions as well as your success in engaging the debates, themes, issues, and conceptual tools presented in class. All written work must be typed, double-spaced, in the *Times New Roman 12 point font*, with page numbers and a heading that includes name, course, and date. Allow enough time to proofread and edit your work before the due date.

## Grade

- The grade for the course will be based on participation and the total score of a final cartography, project prospectus, and a course review. Please be aware that the quality of your projects will depend on the level of engagement with the assigned readings and course activities. The three assignments and point values are as follows:

- Project Prospectus (40 points);

- Research Essay (40 points);
- Course Evaluation (20 points)

■ The grading schedule to calculate the final grade for the course will be:

A (100-90); B (89-80); C (79-70); D (69-60); F (59 and below).

### E-etiquette

■ Please contact me via e-mail which I check regularly. I will address your question or concern as soon as possible in class or by e-mail. Please avoid sending casual or conversational e-mails which are inappropriate and ineffective in this circumstance. Please be advised that e-announcements are made using the UCSB class list.

### List of readings

- Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory* 34: 6 (December 2006): 690-714;
- Midnight Notes, *Promissory Notes: From Crisis to Commons* (Jamaica Plains, 2009);
- W. E. B. Du Bois, "African Roots of War," *Atlantic Monthly* 115: 5 (May 1915): 707-714;
- Retort Collective, "Permanent War," in *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (New York: Verso, 2006): 78-107;
- Nick Dyer-Witheford, "Species-Being and the New Commonism: Notes on an Interrupted Cycle of Struggles," *the commoner* 11 (Spring 2006): 15-32;
- Nick Dyer-Witheford, "Global Body, Global Brain/ Global Factory, Global War: Revolt of the Value-Subjects," *the commoner* 3 (January 2002): 1-30;
- Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Autonomist Marxism and the Information Society*,
- Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15: 1 (2003): 11-40;
- Henry Giroux, "Reading Hurricane Katrina: Race, Class and the Politics of Disposability," *College Literature* 33: 3 (Summer 2006): 171-196;
- Turbulence Collective, "Move Into the Light? Postscript to a turbulent 2007," *ephemera* 7: 4 (2007): 588-600;
- Paul Routledge, "Convergence Space: process geographies of grassroots globalization networks," *Transactions* 28: 3 (2003): 333-349;
- El Kilombo Interglactico, *Beyond Resistance: Everything, An Interview with Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos* (Durham: Paperboat Press, 2007).
- Malgré Tout Collective, *Manifesto of the Malgré Tout Collective*
- Ananthakrishnan Aiyer, "Hemispheric Solutions? Neoliberal Crisis, Criminality and 'Democracy' in the Americas," *Urban Anthropology* 30: 2-3 (2001): 239-268;

## Schedule

■ The following schedule may be subject to change given the tenor of discussions and progress of activities. Consistent attendance will insure that you remain informed about possible changes. It is your responsibility to inquire about changes with assigned readings and class activities.

Week 1 (9-24-09)

■ Topic: Neoliberal Crisis  
■ Readings:  
Brown, "American Nightmare"  
Midnight Notes, *Promissory Notes: From Crisis to Commons*;

Week 2 (9-29-09, 10-01-09)

■ Topic: Permanent War  
■ Readings:  
Retort Collective, "Permanent War,"  
Du Bois, "African Roots of War,"

Week 3 (10-06/08-09)

■ Topic: Cognitive Capital  
■ Readings:  
Dyer-Witheford, "Species-Being and the New Commonism: Notes on an Interrupted Cycle of Struggles,"  
Dyer-Witheford, "Global Body, Global Brain/ Global Factory, Global War: Revolt of the Value-Subjects,"  
Dyer-Witheford, *Autonomist Marxism and the Information Society*,

Week 4 (10-13/15-09)

■ Topic: Necropolitics  
■ Readings:  
Mbembe, "Necropolitics,"  
Giroux, "Reading Hurricane Katrina: Race, Class and the Politics of Disposability,"

Week 5 (10-20/22-09)  
Research prospectus due

■ Topic: Low Intensity War Throughout the Hemisphere  
■ Readings:  
Aiyer, "Hemispheric Solutions? Neoliberal Crisis, Criminality and 'Democracy' in the Americas,"

Week 6 (10-27/29-09)

■ Topic: Movement of Movements  
■ Readings:  
Routledge, "Convergence Space"  
Turbulence Collective, "Move Into the Light?"

Week 7 (11-03/05-09)

■ Topic: Beyond Resistance: Everything  
■ Readings:  
El Kilombo Interglactico, *Beyond Resistance: Everything*,  
Malgré Tout Collective, *Manifesto of the Malgré Tout Collective*

Week 8 (11-10/12-09)  
Holiday: 11-11-09

■ Topic: Beyond Neoliberalism  
■ Readings:  
Esteva, *Grassroots Postmodernism*, pp. 1-49.

Week 9 (11-17/19-09)  
(11-19-09)  
Final essay due

■ Topic: Beyond the Individual Self  
■ Readings:  
Esteva, *Grassroots Postmodernism*, pp. 50-109.

Week 10 (11-24/26-09)  
Holiday: 11-26-09

■ Topic: Beyond Human Rights  
■ Readings:  
Esteva, *Grassroots Postmodernism*, pp. 110-151

Week 11 (12-01/03-09)  
Course review due

■ Topic: People's Power  
■ Readings:  
Esteva, *Grassroots Postmodernism*, pp. 152-207.