

CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION, YORK UNIVERSITY  
& ART AND SOCIAL CHANGE, OCAD UNIVERSITY  
PRESENT

9:15 AM 27 MAY 2017

# AUGMENTING THE LEFT

ROOM 190, 100 MCCAUL ST  
OCAD U, TORONTO

## PRESENTERS INCLUDE

*AK Thompson, Bertell Ollman, Elise Thorburn, Gary Kinsman,  
Max Haiven, Nick Dyer-Withford, Paul Kellogg, Roni Gechtman  
Sedef Arat-Koc, Svitlana Matviyenko, Tim McCaskell, as well as  
Faculty and Graduate Students from the York Community*

## WORKSHOP SPONSORS

*Department of Political Science, Department of Communication  
Studies, Department of Geography, Department of Sociology,  
Department of Humanities, Graduate Program in Social  
and Political Thought, Graduate Political Science Student  
Association, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

## Augmenting the Left, Overview

The election of Donald Trump is only the most recent example of a discernible global turn to the Right. This victory follows by mere months a Right-oriented vote for Brexit in the UK and is simultaneous with the growing popularity of the Far Right throughout Western Europe. These - when set against the continued rule of Modi in India, the rise of Duterte in the Philippines, and Putin's consolidation of power in Russia - portend, at the very least, a reconfiguration of the social forces and political coalitions linked to an increasingly xenophobic and nationalistic politics of what some consider a post-globalization era. This turn comes at a particularly problematic time, as people around the world face deepening environmental, economic, and social crises - with the turn itself perhaps being part of a crisis of political legitimacy currently affecting long established liberal democratic institutions, (such as the media and regional and global organizations) and norms anchored in human rights (such as those bearing on sexuality or migrant status).

These reorientations do not signify the end of neoliberalism - they may just point to a mutation. Either way, once again the far Left - anchored in the Marxian tradition - faces a changing political terrain on which it might reposition and reorganize itself - a terrain with an amplified set of longstanding challenges involving issues of race, gender, sexuality, the environment, technology, migration, indigeniety, coloniality, culture, political integration, and the media. It is hardly clear how the radical Left might effectively adjust its trajectory to begin confronting such issues on what might be an increasingly hostile, cynical, and polarized social, economic, and political terrain - an ambiguity only reinforced by the recent roadblocks and setbacks for the far Left, for example, in Latin America and now southern Europe. That the Far Left, seems particularly fragmented at this time is noteworthy.

It is important once again to examine and theorize the relationship between the issues listed above (and the forces associated with them) and what is taken to be core Marxist concerns with class, class conflict, work, relations of production and reproduction: to, in effect, consider, again, on what terms and how augmenting the Left in the current socio-political moment (as it relates to Left and Right) might be beneficial and urgent. Notably, there have been lots of vectors of augmentation across 20th century (associated with names such as Franz Fanon, Angela Davis, Walter Benjamin, Stuart Hall, Toni Negri, Nicos Poulantzas, Himani Bannerji, Glen Coulthard, to name but a few). There have been various attempts at augmentation that some might associate with, for example, neo-Marxism, the New Left, Marxist Humanism, Autonomism, or post-Marxism. The conflicts within the Left associated with these past efforts ought to be a new point of departure to be built upon in order to: **A)** confront squarely the tensions associated with augmenting or "stretching" Marxism (Fanon's term) rather than assuming them away with claims about necessary hierarchies of forces or some comfortable "horizontality" or one version of "postism" or another (associated, for example, with the radical democracy of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe); and **B)** situate the augmentation process and theoretical terrain in the current

socio-political moment, with attention to the possibilities of organization for radical social transformation.

This workshop on augmenting the Left will attempt to draw on and re-engage with a long history of Marxian thought through an examination of these issues at this critical historical conjuncture. It seeks to further consider the logics of imbrication and intersection among the array of relevant social/material/political forces and domains, some well-established in the Marxian tradition and others not. Stuart Hall in 2013 said such debates and explorations was something to which the radical Left needed to return and is precisely the problem considered.

To this end, the workshop is interested in presentations and interventions that ask questions such as: How might one reconsider the ways the Marxian heritage can be drawn on to navigate the divisions within the Left and challenge the rise of an increasingly ethno-nationalist, patriarchal, and authoritarian Right? How might we now think again of the connections among economic (relations and forces of production), political, and cultural factors; connections perhaps best understood as mobius strips rather than bounded structures? Should and how can the Left re-examine its understanding of such forms as political consciousness, identity, ideology, and institutions, as they relate, for example, to the forces of production and logics of class that have been so important to Marxian analysis since the beginning of critical theory?

This effort risks being uncomfortably interstitial: caught between those who argue for the primacy of, say, class on the one hand, and those pointing to the salience of, say, identity and culture on the other. Although there are spaces for rethinking the Marxian frame (the journals *Rethinking Marxism* or even *Historical Materialism*) what *Augmenting the Left* seeks after is a double focus on: the tensions and difficulties of augmentation; and the stakes, limits, and possibilities of augmentation in the current socio-political moment. This double focus requires explorations that address various interpretations of the past and the possibilities of present and future trajectories of radical social transformation.

Although the workshop is open to all relevant interventions along these lines, we ask that people address the tensions and difficulties of augmentation; and the stakes, limits, and possibilities of augmentation in the current socio-political moment with the aim of trying to rethink the possibilities of greater and stronger links among the various currents of the radical Left.

**Organized by:**

**Critical Scholarship and Social Transformation, York University  
co-presented with: Art & Social Change, OCAD University**

**Organizers:**

**Robert Latham (Political Science, York), Julian von Bargen (Political Science, York), A.T. Kingsmith (Political Science, York)**

## **Workshop Schedule - Saturday, May 27**

**9:15 - 9:30**

Opening Remarks and Coffee

**9:30 - 11:00 AM**

*Roundtable 1: Workers, Praxis, and Political Mobilization*

Chair: Raju Das;

Panelists: Bertell Ollman, Herman Rosenfeld,  
Paul Kellogg, Sedef Arat-Koc,

**11:00 - 12:30 PM**

*Roundtable 2: Socialist Vision and Political Infrastructure*

Chair: Julian von Bargen;

Panelists: Steve Maher, Jordan House,  
Assya Moustaqim-Barrette, Lina Nasr, Karen Murray

**12:30 - 1:15 PM**

Lunch Break

**1:15 - 2:45 PM**

*Roundtable 3: The National Question*

Chair: Robert Latham;

Panelists: Nico Block, Roni Gechtman,  
James Beirne, Ozgun Topak, Tyler Chartland, Anna Agathangelou

**2:45 - 4:15 PM**

*Roundtable 4: Collective and Cultural Formations*

Chair: A.T. Kingsmith;

Panelists: Scott Forsythe, Elise Thorburn,  
Max Haiven, Terry Maley, Gary Kinsman

**4:15 - 4:30 PM**

Coffee Break

**4:30 - 6:00 PM**

*Roundtable 5: Political Tactics and Social Transformation*

Chair: Lesley Wood;

Panelists: AK Thompson, Nick Dyer-Witheford, Svitlana Matviyenko,  
Niloofer Golkar, Karl Gardner, Will Jacques, David Ravensbergen, Tim McCaskell

## **Biographies**

### **Roundtable 1**

**9:30 - 11:00 AM**

### **Workers, Praxis, and Political Mobilization**

#### **Chair: Raju Das**

*Raju Das teaches at York University, Toronto. His research interests are in Marxist political economy, class theory, state theory, unevenness of capitalist development, and radical social movements. He has written articles in academic journals, including Science & Society, Capital and Class, and Review of Radical Political Economics, and is the author of two books, A contribution to the critique of contemporary capitalism (2014), and Marxist class theory for a skeptical world (2017). He serves on the editorial board of Science & Society, and on its manuscript collective. He is currently writing a book on Capital vol 1.*

#### **Bertell Ollman**

*Bertell Ollman is a professor in the Department of Politics at New York University. Among his many writings are fifteen books and edited volumes, including Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society, Social and Sexual Revolution: Essays on Marx and Reich, Dialectical Investigations, How to Take an Exam...and Remake the World, and most recently Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method.*

#### **Herman Rosenfeld**

*Herman Rosenfeld is a retired staffperson with the Canadian Auto Workers Union, (now UNIFOR). He worked in an auto assembly plant and was a member of the Workers Communist Party in the late 1970's. He taught politics and labour studies at McMaster and York Universities. Currently, he works with Free Transit Toronto, TTCriders and the Fair Fare Coalition. He is a member of Socialist Project and has written numerous articles on socialist politics and unions for left publications and does educational work on these issues. He wrote "American Social Democracy: Exceptional but Otherwise Familiar", in Social Democracy After the Cold War, edited by Bryan Evans and Ingo Schmidt, Athabasca University Press, 2012.*

#### **Paul Kellogg**

*Paul Kellogg is associate professor in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Athabasca University, teaching in the Master of Arts - Integrated Studies Program. His research and teaching interests include political economy, social movements and global governance. He is the author of Escape from the Staple Trap: Canadian Political Economy After Left Nationalism (2015: University of Toronto Press).*

#### **Sedef Arat-Koc**

*Sedef Arat-Koc is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University. Her research interests include immigration policy and citizenship, especially as they affect immigrant women; transnational feminism; politics of imperialism; racialization and the politics of racism; reconfiguration of social and political identities under neoliberal globalization; and "whiteness" in Turkey as a cultural, political and class identity in the context of neoliberalism and post-cold war geopolitics.*

## **Roundtable 2**

**11:00 - 12:30 PM**

### **Socialist Vision and Political Infrastructure**

#### **Chair: Robert Latham**

*Robert Latham teaches in the Political Science Department and the Communication and Culture, and Social and Political Thought programs at York University in Toronto, Canada. He has published on topics including political economy, security, digital activism, technologies of border surveillance, critical theories of sovereignty, transnational relations, migration, and multiculturalism. His most recent book is, *Politics of Evasion: A Post-Globalization Dialogue Along the Edge of the State*. His current book project, *Re-Collectivism*, explores political theories of radical social and political transformation.*

#### **Steve Maher**

*Stephen Maher is a PhD Candidate at York University, and a member of the Toronto-based Socialist Project. His work focuses on the relationship between state and corporate power in the United States, in particular the relationship between state regulation, changes in corporate governance, and processes of capitalist class formation. In addition to academic writing, his work has appeared in *Jacobin*, *Monthly Review*, *Truthout*, the *UK Guardian*, and elsewhere.*

#### **Jordan House**

*Jordan House is a PhD student in the Graduate Program in Political Science at York University. His doctoral dissertation examines prisoner labour organizing in Canada. He is a member of the *Industrial Workers of the World*.*

#### **Assya Moustaqim-Barrette**

*Assya Moustaqim-Barrette Assya Moustaqim-Barrette is a Master's student in Environmental Studies at York University. She's has experience working with a diversity of activist circles in the Toronto area on issues ranging from environmental sustainability to transit justice.*

#### **Lina Nasr**

*Lina is a PhD student in the department of political science at York University, Toronto, Canada. Her research interests include anarchist perspectives on International Relations and its relation to revolutionary violence and dissent. Lina has previously organized with the Toronto (*Industrial Workers of the World*) IWW, and is currently a member of their general membership branch.*

#### **Karen Murray**

*Karen Murray draws upon community archives, ethnographic and narrative methods to bring reciprocity and counter histories into analyses of contemporary politics and pedagogical practice. Karen is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at York University.*

**Roundtable 3**  
**1:30 - 3:00 PM**  
**The National Question**

**Chair: Julian von Barga**

*Julian von Barga is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science at York University (Toronto). He is interested in the political economy and infrastructure of information. His current research examines the competing political struggles over and contradictions inherent to an attempt in Iceland to build a data haven.*

**Nico Block**

*Nico Block is an incoming doctoral student in political science at York University. His forthcoming book for Fernwood Publishing, *Border Anxiety: The Rise of Ethno-nationalism in the Twenty-first Century*, examines the history of racial and reproductive politics in the context of capitalist nation building and settler colonialism. His future research will focus on financial crisis, income inequality, debt accumulation, and socialist alternatives.*

**Roni Gechtman**

*Roni Gechtman grew up in Argentina under military dictatorship and lived in Jerusalem, New York, Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax. He has been active in the Jewish-Palestinian left in Jerusalem, and served time in an Israeli military jail as a conscientious objector. He completed his PhD in History at New York University; his research explores the development of the views and proposals concerning national minorities advanced by the Yiddish-speaking Jewish Labour Movement in early twentieth-century Russia and Poland. Roni has been teaching history at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax since 2004.*

**James Beirne**

*James is a Masters student in Social & Political Thought at York University, Toronto. An Irish citizen raised in Canada, his research troubles questions of national and other identities. He received his undergraduate degree in International Relations and Political Science from Mount Allison University.*

**Ozgun Topak**

*Özgün Topak is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Science at York University. His research interests include surveillance studies, migration & border studies, citizenship studies and human rights. His current project focuses on migration from Turkey to Greece and in the broader Mediterranean region. He has also written on other topics in surveillance studies including authoritarian surveillance in Turkey and border surveillance in Canada.*

**Tyler Chartland**

*Tyler's ancestors were the Métis of Red River / the Selkirk Settlement and he now resides on the land of the Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wyndat and Anishinabek peoples. His PhD research is on the intersections of migrant workers, state administration and communication technology. His activism has been in the areas of youth advocacy, queer community, student & union organizing, and migrant justice.*

**Anna Agathangelou**

*Anna Agathangelou teaches in the Political Science and Women and Politics programs at York University.*

**Roundtable 4****3:00 - 4:30 PM****Collective and Cultural Formations****Chair: A.T. Kingsmith**

*A.T. Kingsmith studies and teaches political theory at York University, where their research probes the dominant affective mechanisms of the informational control society to 'excavate' cartographies of social transformation through and beyond anxious capitalism. They write for a number of platforms and recently authored a bound media artefact entitled: "A Schizo-Stroll: Anxious Reflections on Late Capitalism" (Permanent Sleep Press, 2017).*

**Scott Forsythe**

*Scott Forsyth has taught film history and theory and Marxist cultural politics in the Departments of Cinema & Media Arts and Political Science at York for many years. His research has focused on Hollywood ideology, imperialism and culture and the cultural practices of Communist Parties. He is editor of the film studies journal CineAction. He is a member of the Socialist Project.*

**Elise Thorburn**

*Elise Thorburn is an anti-poverty, anti-capitalist, and food sovereignty activist on Indigenous Mi'kmaq and Beothuk land, in St John's NL. She is a long time editorial collective member of the journal Upping the Anti and has published articles on assemblies, commons, and feminist social reproduction. She is also a board member of the heritage fishing society, Island Rooms - Fishing for Success where she advocates for sustainable small-scale fisheries to allow labour and food sovereignty for people in Northern and Remote communities. She is also an avid huntress and fisher. Along with other organizers in St. John's so co-founded Anti-Poverty NL, a small but mighty anti-poverty organisation fighting for the reinstatement of the Home Heating Rebate for low-income people and those on social assistance. Her article on the history of DIY gynecology and its relationship to class composition and social reproduction, "Cyborg Witches: Class Composition and Social Reproduction in the GynePunk Collective" was published in Feminist Media Studies and she continues to write about and organise around DIY technologies and the prospects for building a post-capitalist future.*

**Gary Kinsman**

Gary Kinsman is a queer liberation, anti-poverty and anti-capitalist activist on Indigenous land. He is the author of *The Regulation of Desire: Homo and Hetero Sexualities*, co-author of *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* and editor of *Sociology for Changing the World* and most recently of *We Still Demand! Redefining Resistance in Sex and Gender Struggles*. He is also the author of "The Politics of Revolution: Learning from Autonomist Marxism" (*Upping the Anti* No. 1) and is doing research on autonomist marxism and feminism in 1970s 'Canada.' He is a professor emeritus in the Sociology Department at Laurentian University, Sudbury.



**Max Haiven**

*Max Haiven is Canada Research Chair in Culture, Media and Social Justice at Lakehead University in Northwest Ontario and director of the ReImagining Value Action Lab (RiVAL). He writes articles for both academic and general audiences and is the author of the books *Crises of Imagination*, *Crises of Power: Capitalism, Creativity and the Commons*, *The Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity* (with Alex Khasnabish) and *Cultures of Financialization: Fictitious Capital in Popular Culture and Everyday Life*. He is currently working on a book titled *Art after Money, Money after Art: Radical Creative Strategies Against Financialization*.*

**Terry Maley**

*Terry Maley teaches critical and radical democratic theory and politics in the Political Science department and in the Social and Political Thought graduate program at York University. He has written about participatory budgeting, radical democratic movements, neoliberalism and critical theory. He has also been an activist who worked with the trade union movement on alternative budgets and social justice issues. His new edited book, "One-Dimensional Man 50 Years On: The Struggle Continues," is being published by Fernwood Publishing in May, 2017.*

**Roundtable 5****5:00 - 6:30 PM****Political Tactics and Social Transformation****Chair: Lesley Wood**

*Lesley Wood is interested in how ideas travel, how power operates, how institutions change, how conversations influence practices, how people resist and how conflict starts, transforms and ends. Her most recent book is *Crisis and Control: The Militarization of Protest Policing*. She is Associate Professor of Sociology at York University.*

**AK Thompson**

*AK Thompson got kicked out of high school for publishing an underground newspaper called *The Agitator* and has been an activist, writer, and social theorist ever since. Currently teaching social theory at Fordham University, his publications include *Spontaneous Combustion: The Eros Effect and Global Revolution* (2017), *Keywords for Radicals: The Contested Vocabulary of Late-Capitalist Struggle* (2016), and *Black Bloc, White Riot: Anti-Globalization and the Genealogy of Dissent* (2010). Between 2005 and 2012, he served on the Editorial Committee of *Upping The Anti: A Journal of Theory and Action*.*

**Nick Dyer-Witheford**

*Nick Dyer-Witheford, an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario, is the author of *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1999) and *Cyber-Proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).*

**Svitlana Matviyenko**

*Svitlana Matviyenko taught political economy of information, social and mobile media at the University of Western Ontario. She studies users' complicity and practices of resistance, the effects of the personalized web on the strategies and tactics of information and cyber warfare.*

**Niloofer Golkar**

*Niloofer Golkar is a Toronto-based activist with interests in environmental resistance and labor movement from the feminist, anti-racist and class-based point of view. She is currently a Ph.D. student in the department of Political Science at York University and on the editorial board of the Upping the Anti the Canadian Journal of theory and action.*

**Karl Gardner**

*Karl Gardner is an organizer, educator, and student based in Toronto. He's a member of No One Is Illegal-Toronto and is involved in various Indigenous solidarity efforts in the city. He is also an editor at Upping the Anti: A Journal of Theory and Action and a member of the Abolition Collective. Once in a while he works on his PhD in Political Science at York University.*

**Will Jacques**

*Netochka b3t4 (Nee Will) is a PhD candidate at York University in the department of political science, a high school teacher, and a founding member of the Console Cowfolk Computer Club (C4). Netochka's research interests include culture in cyberspace, ontological anarchy, contemporary social movements, the thought developed by Guattari and Deleuze, and the relation between aesthetics and politics. Their dissertation is tentatively titled Subjectivity in Cyberflux: Phenomenology and Crypto-anarchism.*

**David Ravensbergen**

*David Ravensbergen is a third-year PhD candidate in Social and Political Thought at York University. He completed his MA at the Freie Universität in Berlin, and is currently writing on ecology, degrowth and the left.*

**Tim McCaskell**

*Tim McCaskell is a long-time Toronto writer, lgbt activist and educator. He worked at the Toronto Board of Education for more than twenty years, developing and delivering programs on racism, homophobia, class bias and sexual harassment with students and teachers. In 2005 he published Race To Equity: Disrupting Educational Inequality (Between the Lines Press), a history of the struggle for equity in Toronto public schools, and in 2015, Queer Progress: From Homophobia to Homonationalism, a history of the impact of neoliberalism on lgbt organizing in Toronto. His video workshop, Neoliberalism as Water Balloon, has had over 50,000 hits on Vimeo and Youtube and has been translated into Turkish and Chinese. He has worked with both the Toronto and York District Labour Council and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers on educational programs on the impact of neoliberalism.*