

# **From Jacobins to Zapatistas: Radical Democracy since the French Revolution**

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## **Course Description:**

For many of us, the election of Barack Obama stands as a milestone for democracy – the triumphal culmination of a long march that has seen the principles and practices of the French and American Revolutions gradually extended to women, minorities, and the colonial world. Within this story, the Jacobin led Terror, Russian Revolution, and interwar fascism seem as aberrations, excesses, or miscarriages, while utopian societies in the US or the Israeli Kibbutz, turn to quaint but ultimately unviable solutions in a globalized era.

Nonsensical to this history stand the claims of many Germans that Nazi Germany “felt more democratic” than its predecessor the Weimar Republic as well as the existence of ‘censors’ patrolling revolutionary meeting halls in 1794 Paris prohibiting all *private* conversation in the name of democratic transparency and publicness. What do these things mean? How are we to interpret them?

This course will examine the global history of radical democracy from the French Revolution to the present. Our task is to trace the various attempts to practice democracy that lie outside of the liberal representative model. Spanning the political spectrum, we will investigate everything from democratic armies and factories, pirate utopias, to what democratic participation meant in a profoundly illiberal state. We will ask what these radical ways of organizing and instituting society offer us and question why and how the liberal model has come to hegemonize our conception of democracy today.

## **Course Requirements:**

Radical Democratic Writings (25%)

First Paper (4-5 pages) (20%)

Midterm Examination (25%)

Second Paper (10 pages) (30%)

## **Course Schedule:**

Session One: Introduction - Conceptual and Historical Limits of Radical Democracy

Session Two: Interpreting the Greeks

### **Unit I: The Liberal Democratic Tradition**

Session Three: The Bourgeois Public Sphere

- Kant, *What Is Enlightenment?* (1784)

Session Four: Representation and Mistrust in the American Revolution

- Federalist Papers #10
- Sheldon Wolin: Fugitive Democracy

Session Five: Taming Democracy

- Terry Bouton: Taming Democracy "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution

Session Six: *The Ancien Regime*:

- Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre* (Chap 2) 1984

Session Seven: 1789

- Abbé Sieyès: What is the Third Estate? (1789)
- Decree Abolishing Feudalism, (1789)
- Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, (1789)

### **Unit II: Towards a Fully Democratic Society**

Session Eight: Parisians and the Revolution (1789-92)

- Sheldon Wolin: Democracy Without the Citizen
- Cornelius Castoriadis: Democracy as Procedure and Democracy as Regime

Session Nine: Life in the Republic of Virtue (1792-4)

- Robespierre, *On the Rights of Societies and Clubs*, (1791)
- Robespierre, *On the Principles of Political Morality* (1794)

Session Ten: The Mythic Present of Revolutionary France.

- French Constitution of 1793

➤ **First Paper Due in Class**

Session Ten: The Haitian Revolution

- James, *The Black Jacobins* (selections)

Session Eleven: The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Worker's Movement

- Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Socialism and Autonomous Society'

Session Twelve: The Paris Commune of 1871

- La Commune (movie)

Session Thirteen: The Russian Intelligentsia through the Wars (1904-1917)

- Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* (2003)

Session Fourteen: All Power to the Soviets!

- Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* (2003)

Session Fifteen: The October Revolution, 1917

- Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* (2003)

**Session Sixteen: Midterm** (Oct 29)

**Unit III: Fascist Democracy?**

Session Seventeen: The Coalitions of Weimar

- Karl Schmitt: *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*
- Leon Trotsky: *Terrorism and Communism*

Session Eighteen: Nazism and the German *Volksgemeinschaft*

- Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (1982): Part II, National Community and Popular Opposition
- Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (2008): (Reviving the Nation)

#### **Unit IV: !Pirates!**

Session Nineteen: Pirates of North Africa, Pirates of the Caribbean

- Peter L. Wilson, *Pirate Utopias: Moorish Corsairs & European Renegades*, (1995)

#### **Unit V: Imperial Democracy:**

Session Twenty-One: The Kibbutz Movement

- Gavron, Daniel. *The Kibbutz: Awakening from Utopia*, (2000)

#### **Unit VI: Anarchist Democracy and Autonomous Zones**

Session Twenty-Three: Situationist International and Poetic Terrorism

- Guy Debord: *The Society of the Spectacle* (or revolution in everyday life)
- Hakim Bey, *The Temporary Autonomous Zone*, (1993)

Session Twenty-Four: The Zapatista Army of National Liberation

- *Shadows of Tender Fury*

#### **Unit VII: Time and Democracy**

Session Twenty-Five: Developing Democracy – Radical Solutions in the Post-colonial World

- Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed*, (2004)

Session Twenty-Six: Democracy and the Politics of Scarcity

- *The Climate Change Challenge and the Failure of Democracy*

Session Twenty-Six: Review and Evaluations

➤ **Second Paper Due During Finals Week**