

*Hist. 1955*  
*No gods, no masters: Histories of Anarchism*



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Lecture: Goldwin Smith Hall, Lewis auditorium  
Sections: Keeton house seminar room (Craib)  
Hans Bethe house seminar room (room 240) (Edwards)  
Alice Cook house seminar room (room 106) (TBD)

Anarchism. What is it good for? A political philosophy and approach to social organization that arose simultaneous with other grand “-isms,” anarchism, perhaps more than any other idea and practice, has been condensed down by its critics and observers into a vague set of often contradictory caricatures. Is ‘it’ characterized by bohemian communities of nihilists, their rebellion culturally innovative but politically impotent, book-ended by Friedrich Nietzsche and Johnny Rotten? Or is ‘it’ individualist libertarians who walk in the ideological footsteps of Murray Rothbard and David Friedman or collectivist anti-capitalists who tread the paths blazed by Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin? Or, most famously, is ‘it’ a murky underworld of conspiratorial bomb throwers, held together less by bonds of solidarity than by a commitment to violence? This course provides some relief from such limited and constraining perspectives by taking anarchism seriously as a social and political practice and tradition, one rooted largely in the left-wing critique of the liberal state and capitalism.

Questions we will continually consider include: What has anarchism been historically? Would we be better off thinking in terms of anarchisms (in the plural) rather than in the singular? Why or why not? What have been the basic principles that are foundational to most anarchist movements? Autonomy? Self-management? Non-hierarchy? Consensus? And what about the issue of violence? At what points, and why, has anarchism resonated with people? At what

points, and why, has it been suppressed, gone underground, and subsequently re-emerged? Why has anarchism refused to go away? And what is an anarcho-syndicalist anyway?!

### **Course requirements:**

This course is very reading-intensive and time-demanding. You will be reading upward of 200+ pages per week and some of the materials are not easy. Moreover, you will be asked to write weekly short papers on some of the readings, to present readings as a group for discussion, and to work in a group setting on an ‘anarchist archives’ project. Please be sure you are committed to this course—and the work it entails—before enrolling or remaining in it.

1. Three reading responses (one page each, single spaced). Everyone must write a response to the readings for the week “Defining anarchism.” Thus you should choose two additional weeks—from the options given—for writing a response. These must all be completed prior to spring break.
2. Leading discussion in one discussion section as part of a small group. This means the following:
  - a. meeting as a group prior to the class session to organize and structure your presentation;
  - b. a fifteen minute presentation of the readings in which you do not summarize or recapitulate the readings (everyone in the class will have read them already) but rather raise questions for discussion, offer up critiques and criticisms, and relate the readings to larger questions in the course and/or previous readings;
  - c. you will, as a group, run the day’s discussion so be prepared to call on your peers in class and to facilitate discussion;
  - d. you should plan, as a group, on drawing up an outline of your questions, critiques and presentation for distribution to the class at the start of discussion section.
3. Collective anarchist archive projects. We will discuss this further the first day of class and in a special class session at the Kroch Rare Books and Manuscripts Library on Thursday, January 26th.

### **Grading:**

To be determined by all of us in the first week or two of class. While the structure of the university is such that overcoming its hierarchies can be difficult, it is worth at least exploring both your interest in, and the possibilities of, unsettling those a little bit. I am open to a variety of possible grading schemes in this course but these need to be discussed as a class to see if we can reach some consensus. To give you some sense of the pedagogical impetus here, I am circulating an excerpt from an old 1970s classic, Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, that I would like you to read prior to our class session on Tuesday, January 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Books**

The following texts, or a substantial portion of them, are required reading for the course. They are available—tax-free—at **Buffalo St. Books**, a local book cooperative at **215 N. Cayuga St.** in Dewitt Mall in downtown Ithaca (an easy and relaxing walk down Buffalo St. from campus and a nice work-out coming back). When you enter the bookstore you will see their course book section in the back corner, next to the exit in to the DeWitt mall. Their phone number is 273-8246 and e-mail is [BuffaloStreetBooks@hotmail.com](mailto:BuffaloStreetBooks@hotmail.com) . Buying from them will help support the only independent bookstore in the greater Ithaca area (a good thing for a community of readers and thinkers and for small presses and local authors) and the only bookstore

collectively owned (to the best of my knowledge) in the state of New York. A recent study has shown that for every \$100 spent at local bookstores, \$45 remains in the local economy; by comparison, only \$13 out of every \$100 spent in chain bookstores remains in the local economy and \$0 (nothing! nada! zip!) remains in the local economy if you order on-line . Regardless of how you choose to acquire the books, please ensure you have access to the readings by the dates required and please ensure that you read the correct edition of the text. In addition, all books are available on 3-hour reserve in Uris Library.

Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (NYRB edition)  
Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (Autonomedia)  
Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism* (AK Press)  
Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale* (Modern Classics Library, with an introduction by Robert Kaplan)  
Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Dover edition)  
George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (Mariner books)  
Rudolph Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism: theory and practice* (AK Press, with a preface by Noam Chomsky and introduction by Mike Davis)

## Films

*La commune* (dir. Peter Watkins)  
*La Patagonia Rebelde* (dir. Héctor Olivera)  
*The Wobblies* (dir. Stewart Bird and Deborah Shaffer)  
*Land and Freedom* (dir. Ken Loach)

### **THE FINE PRINT: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING!!**

1. The Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity states:  
Absolute integrity is expected of every Cornell student in all academic undertakings. Integrity entails a firm adherence to a set of values, and the values most essential to an academic community are grounded on the concept of honesty with respect to the intellectual efforts of oneself and others.  
A Cornell student's submission of work for academic credit indicates that the work is the student's own. All outside assistance should be acknowledged, and the student's academic position truthfully reported at all times.  
Students are encouraged to discuss the content of a course among themselves and to help each other to master it, but no student should receive help in doing a course assignment that is meant to test what he or she can do without help from others. Representing another's work as one's own is plagiarism and a violation of this Code. If materials are taken from published sources the student must clearly and completely cite the source of such materials. Work submitted by a student and used by a faculty member in the determination of a grade in a course may not be submitted by that student in a second course, unless such submission is approved in advance by the faculty member in the second course.

## Course schedule

1/24

### Introduction

1/24 introduction to the course

1/26-1/31

### The anarchist and popular culture

1/26 discussion of anarchist archive projects. This is a required class session. - Please be on time. Please note the change to the initial syllabus: this class session will take place in our regular classroom, NOT in the library.

1/31 discussion of Conrad, discussion of grading system, and creation of discussion sections

Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*

2/2-2/7

### Defining anarchism

2/2 lecture

2/7 discussion

James C. Scott, "Hills, Valleys, and States" from Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*

Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* [chaps. 1 and 2]

Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, "Socialism from below: Defining anarchism," from Schmidt and van der Walt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism*

\*Due in class on 2/7: Brief #1. Everyone must do this paper assignment.

Scott and Schmidt and van der Walt provide us with two distinct understandings of anarchism. Discuss what you see as the differences between their respective understandings and the implications of those differences. One page, single spaced!

2/9 – 2/14 **Property, theft, and the commons**

2/9 lecture

2/14 discussion

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, "Property is Theft," from D. Guérin, *No gods, no masters: An anthology of anarchism*

Thomas Hobbes, "Of the natural condition of mankind," from Hobbes, *Leviathan* [ available at <http://www.bartleby.com/34/5/13.html> ]

Lewis Hyde, "Defending the Cultural Commons" and "What is a commons?," from Hyde, *Common as Air: Revolution, Art and Ownership*

E.P. Thompson, "Custom, law and common right," from Thompson, *Customs in Common*

\*Due in class on 2/14: Brief #2:

What is property? Is it a thing or a relation? Where does it come from? Is the commons a kind of property? If so, how would you describe it and why? One page single spaced!

**2/16 – 2/21 The Paris commune and revolutionary praxis**

2/16 lecture and excerpts from *La commune* in class

2/21 discussion

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, "Proudhon against 'communism,'" from D. Guérin, *No gods, no masters*

Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, excerpted from Guérin, *No gods, no masters*

Mikhail Bakunin, excerpts from G.P. Maximoff, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*:

"The modern state surveyed;"

"Representative System Based on Fiction;"

"Criticism of Marxism;"

"The Rationale of Revolutionary Tactics;"

"Economic Problem Underlies All Others;"

"Revolution by Decree Doomed to Failure;"

"On the Morrow of the Social Revolution"

Karl Marx, "After the Revolution," excerpted from Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*

\*Due in class on 2/21: Brief #3.

Discuss the variations in political perspective between Stirner, Bakunin and Marx.

Stirner and Bakunin are often seen as anarchists, but with very different perspectives.

What are those differences? The rivalry between Bakunin and Marx has attracted significant historical attention: how did their perspectives differ? In all three cases, what are these individuals seeking to explain and/or develop? One page single spaced!

**2/23 – 2/28 Competition and cooperation: Malthus, Darwin, Kropotkin, Reclus**

2/23 lecture

Monday, 2/27: Visting speaker, Latin American Studies Program: Jose Moya

2/28 discussion

Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* [chaps. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and conclusion]

\*Due in class on 2/28: Brief #4.

Is Kropotkin the 'anti-Darwin'? Why or why not?

**3/1 – 3/6 Anarcho-syndicalism, tactics and the question of violence**

3/1 lecture

**3/1 Film: *The Wobblies***

3/6 discussion

Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* [chaps. 3-6]

James Gelvin, "Al-Qaeda and Anarchism: A Historian's Reply to Terrorology," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20:4 (Autumn 2008)

Slavoj Zizek, "Revolutionary terror," from his *In Defense of Lost Causes*

\*Due in class on 3/6: Brief #5.

Is it appropriate to put Al-Qaeda and anarchism in to the same discussion? Why or why not? Relate your answer to the issues raised also by Rocker and Zizek. One page single spaced!

**3/8 – 3/13 Anarchism, colonialism and nationalism**

3/8 lecture

Monday, 3/12: Visiting speaker, Latin American Studies Program: Kirk Shaffer

3/13 discussion

Arif Dirlik, "Anarchism and the Question of Place: Thoughts from the Chinese Experience," from Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940*

Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (excerpts TBA)

Maia Ramnath, *Decolonizing Anarchism: An anti-authoritarian history of India's Liberation Struggle* (excerpts TBA)

\*Due in class 3/13: Brief #6.

Discuss the relationship between anarchism and anti-colonialism. What is the anarchist and anti-colonial critique? How does nationalism fit?

**3/14 Film: *La Patagonia Rebelde***

**3/15 discussion**

\*Due in class 3/15: Brief #7.

The film brings together many of the issues we have been discussing over the previous weeks, particularly that between (neo) colonialism, nationalism, and syndicalism. What is it that the 'anarchists' in the Patagonia want? How do their demands fit in to or diverge from aspects of anarchism we have discussed? What does this suggest to you about ways we might think about anarchism?

Be sure to begin Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* as it is very long and you need to get a good start on it for the break.

**Spring break**

**3/27-29 Prisons**

3/27 Ryan Edwards: guest lecture

3/29 discussion

Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*

Emma Goldman, "Marriage and Love;" "The tragedy of woman's emancipation;" and "Prisons: A social crime and failure"

All three readings available at:

[http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_archives/index.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_archives/index.html)

- 4/3-5**            **Revolutions and the 'new' left: Mexico and Russia**  
4/3    lecture  
4/5    discussion  
Readings TBA
- 4/10-12**        **Out of town (conference)**  
4/10   *Land and Freedom* (part 1)  
4/12   *Land and Freedom* (part 2)
- 4/17-19**        **The Spanish civil war**  
4/17   Anarchist archives projects presentations  
4/19   discussion  
George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*  
Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (epilogue)
- 4/24-26**        **Anarchism, anarcho-capitalism, punk and the cold war**  
4/24   Anarchist archives presentations  
4/26   discussion  
Paul Feyerabend, Introduction and chapters 1 and 2 from Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*  
Kristen Ross, "The Police conception of history," from Ross, *May '68 and its afterlives* [available as an e-book through Cornell University Library gateway]  
Murray Rothbard, "Property and Exchange," from Rothbard, *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto* (available through google books)
- 5/1-3**            **New anarchists?**  
5/1    discussion  
Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.*  
Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*  
David Graeber, "The New Anarchists," *New Left Review*  
5/3    Anarchist archives presentations concluded. End of semester discussion.