



# Institute for the Radical Imagination

WINTER 2020 SEMINARS



## What Is and What Is Not

In fall 2019, we examined the beginning of the Presocratic tradition up to Heraclitus and Parmenides. Starting from Parmenides again and ending with the Atomists, our conceptual focus will once again be on the ontology of individuation, singularity, and unrest. We will again consider the first question asked by the Presocratics, What is it? We will go back to Parmenides' central question, Is it or is it not? We will problematize his discovery of what-is and the exclusion of what-is-not. Most importantly, we will appreciate the idea that what-is is essentially what-can-be, namely, reality is potentiality: with Parmenides, just like with Heraclitus, a subterranean and never-ending fire, or unrest.

A four week course with *Bruno Gulli* beginning Tuesday, January 21st, 2020 at 6:30 – \$15 per class or \$50 for all four sessions

## Hegel and After: Reason, Revolution and Regression

This six week lecture and interactive seminar will engage in a reading of the sections in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit on Reason, Spirit and Religion in the light of contemporary struggles as the world historical spirit unfolds. In particular, we will try to trace the "cunning of Reason" from the age of Revolution to the reactionary spirit of the middle 19th century through the tendencies of State reason to the reason and rights to rebellion. Poetic challenges to the Hegelian system by Rimbaud and Mallarme as well as the materialist inversion and overturning of the "idealist" system by Marx and Engels will be engaged. The question of Subjectivity and dialectical reason will consistently be emphasized in the course and in this context a very careful reading of the "Ethical Order" will be encountered with the necessary correlations to Antigone.

A six week course with *Michael Pelias* beginning Thursday, January 23rd at 6:30 – \$15 per class or \$75 for the entire seminar.

## Left-Legalism and the Antinomies of Resistance

In the face of the ongoing rightward shift in politics, much of the resistance that has arisen on the nominal left has focused on formal and legalistic efforts. From the impeachment of Donald Trump to the attempts to outlaw hate speech and establish housing and healthcare as 'rights', the efforts to overcome the current political impasse imagine existing political institutions and norms as capable of providing a solution to the very same political realities that characterize them. This seminar will review Marxist legal and political theories with a focus on better understanding the limitations and antinomies of current efforts to resist the right through the language and institutions of law. Does left-legalism function to strengthen the very institutions and norms that constitute the capitalist state? What forms of resistance would be necessary for breaking the existing political hegemony and creating the possibility of a democratic society?

A four week seminar with *Peter Bratsis* beginning Saturday, February 8th at 3:00 – \$15 per class or \$50 for the entire seminar.

## Dialectical thought in the Modern Period: Paths of Inquiry

Much has been said about "dialectics" in the context of leftist thinking about politics, yet often the conversation is often vague on the specifics of does dialectics in thinking actually mean? What is gained practically and politically by deploying "dialectical thought"? To counter this tendency, we will trace specific articulations of dialectical movement in thought, with the aim of gaining a clearer understanding of the fundamental concepts, ideas and methods that relate to this mode of thinking. Our focus is on building a grounding in thinking about everyday life that seeks (rather than avoids) contradictions, and is capable of surviving (as Hegel said) the tensions that arise within it.

An eight week seminar with *Arto Artinian* beginning Wednesday, January 22nd at 6:30 – \$15 per session or \$100 for the entire seminar.

## Transformations of the American Left: From 1900 to the Present

In 1900, a new political party was founded: the American Socialist Party. Its main organization came from different strands of the Left. Although this Party achieves considerable electoral success, it split again when the international communist movement emerged in the period of 1917-1919. Both parties still exist but are mere shadows of their past glory. Alongside these two parties, anarchism was a vital movement. In this course, a historical and analytical approach to the ideological debates with the left will be taken and connected to the past, present and future of the American everyday life that seeks (rather than avoids) contradictions, and is capable of surviving the tensions that arise within it.

An eight week seminar with *Stanley Aronowitz* beginning Saturday, February 1st at 12:00 – \$15 per session or \$100 for the entire seminar.

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