Social Change: A Graduate Seminar

Tuesdays, 9:50-12:30
Davison Hall 128
Rutgers University, Spring 2013
(16.920.572.01)

Convened by Böröcz József

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office hours: Thursdays, 4:30-5:30 at József’s office
OR TBA
This is a graduate reading seminar probing the intellectual foundations of the comparative-historical sociology of social change and, more specifically, of modernity, by mapping on each other two narratives: /1/ the—for lack of a better term—“scholarly” language of the social sciences and /2/ intellectual production treated, since the west European Enlightenment, as something different from the above, labeled “fiction.”

The course addresses some fundamental conceptual issues of comparative historical research and surveys some of the best studies on various aspects of social change available in English, paying special attention to notions of teleology, coloniality, and their particularly noxious product, Euro-centrism. It works through discussions of the issues emerging form the readings, and József’s occasional summaries of contextual and/or background information. Class discussion—a scholarly, intellectual give-and-take—is thus the most important component of this course. You are required to come completely prepared, including a thorough, “quality-time” reading of the texts, and a mature, constructive, active and intellectually exciting agenda. There will be occasional, short “homework”-style assignments, some of which may not show up in this syllabus.

You are required to prepare a one-page summary of the key points of each week’s readings and upload them to [sakai.rutgers.edu](http://sakai.rutgers.edu), by 6 pm on the Monday preceding each class meeting. These outlines will serve both as tools to start the discussion and as items in a collectively produced archive of the ideas from this class for later reference.

Grading—an uncanny manifestation of the urge, so characteristic of modernity, to quantify the un-quantifiable—will be based on a judicial combination of /1/ your contribution to constructing the class as an creative intellectual space, /2/ your short assignments, and /3/ your paper.

For your paper, develop a maximum 5000-word study on a topic that falls within the broadly conceived subject matter of the course. Book reviews are unacceptable. I will be happy to consider alternative genres as long as their choice is well justified (documentary video, photo-essay, etc.). The ideal project will relate some unique empirical material to theoretical issues relevant to social change in a creative way. Submit a title-plus-150-word topic statement to me as soon as possible, but no later than the class on March 5. Do use my office hours to discuss possible topics and approaches. You may submit your outline via email (see my address above). We shall use the last two classes for a mini-conference of the projects, to receive comments/suggestions/criticisms. The final version of the paper is due one week after the last day of classes (5 pm, May 6, 2013). Submit it by email to me.
January 22:

Intro: Class Organisation + Basic Issues in Social Change

Film-in-class:

*Before the Rain*
(113 min, USA, 1994, dir.: Milcho Manchevski)
January 29: **The European Man Knows Be(a)st**


February 12: The Re-Morphation


February 19:

Empire, Coloniality and Histories for Valid Persons

https://sakai.rutgers.edu/access/content/user/jborocz/Encyclopedia%20of%20Global%20Studies-1.pdf

https://sakai.rutgers.edu/access/content/user/jborocz/Encyclopedia%20of%20Global%20Studies.pdf


February 26:

Denial of Co-Evalness


Recommended:

March 5: Modern? World? System?


March 12:
**Identities: Invention, Tradition, Nationalism**

Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds.) 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Only the following chapters:

- Introduction: Inventing Traditions by Eric Hobsbawm (1-14)
- Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914 by Eric Hobsbawm (263-308)


April 2: Reconstruction of A Life-World


Standpoints / Histories


Last two meetings (April 23 and 30):
Miniconference of paper projects