

Varieties of Freedom*

Mondays 11:15am – 1:45pm

Professor Shimon Edelman
Department of Psychology
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853

<http://shimon-edelman.github.io>

We are not free to cease being free.

Being and Nothingness
— JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

At fifteen I set my heart on learning. At thirty I could stand. At forty I had no doubts. At fifty I knew the Decree of Heaven. At sixty I was already obedient [to this Decree]. At seventy I could follow the desires of my mind without overstepping the boundaries [of what is right].

Analects
— CONFUCIUS

1 Motivation and overview

It should not be surprising that humans, as individually self-aware members of an ultrasocial species, are deeply conflicted by the concept of freedom. Being free means different things to different people; moreover, people often disagree about how much freedom can, or should, be had by their conspecifics, or even by themselves. In this advanced seminar, we shall discuss some of the questions that arise with regard to freedom, sampling from a range of disciplines, including philosophy, evolution and psychology, history and geography, anthropology, politics, and education.

*Final version, June 9, 2023.

2 Notes for participants

This section contains essential information for participants: format description, inclusion statement,¹ ground rules for discussion, and credit requirements.

2.1 Format

2.1.1 The prerequisites

At least one course in a social science (psychology, sociology, anthropology), or permission of instructor.

2.2 Diversity, inclusion, and ground rules for discussion

Unlike in a large-enrollment lecture-based course, in which some students may choose, and succeed, to remain virtually anonymous, in a small-class seminar setting you are required to speak in front of the class (when presenting) and are expected to contribute to the discussion on other occasions. Because *your* informed opinion on every aspect of the material is unique and valuable, I shall strive to facilitate the conversation so as to make all voices heard. In this, I'll be counting on your help, and on the help of your classmates.

Even matters of “consensus” are not always easy to talk about, as the rare dissenters who dare voice their opposition know full well; how then should we approach potentially controversial topics? With care and compassion, diligence, openness, and daring: care for our shared humanity; diligence with regard to the relevant knowledge and findings; openness to informed dissent; and daring to venture into uncharted territory, as befits good education.

If at any point during the semester (no matter whether in class or after hours) you feel that you need to talk about any of these things, please let me know immediately — doing so will be my top priority.

2.3 Credit and grading

There are three components to getting credit for this course:

1. Attend and contribute to the discussion during the **weekly meetings**. During the **closing discussion** at the last meeting of the semester (December 4), offer brief (5 min or so) informal remarks summing up your impressions and lessons from the readings.
2. By 9am on the Monday for which readings have been assigned, post on the Canvas discussion board **questions** on the material (at least 10 questions should be submitted by the end of the semester). Be prepared to raise these questions in class.
3. **By Labor Day (September 4, no class), choose the dates of your two presentations using this sign-up sheet.**

A typical presentation should include:

- A brief introduction to the topic and an overview of the background to the paper(s) and the relevant methodology (if applicable);

¹The remarks in section 2.2, which are specific to this course, are intended to supplement the official Cornell statement on diversity and inclusion, which covers dimensions such as gender, race, socio-economic background, etc., and which can be found here: <http://diversity.cornell.edu/>.

- The paper's findings / arguments;
- A critique of the approach / ideas;
- A summary of the conclusions and their significance for the seminar's theme.

It is recommended that the presenting teams meet/Zoom with the instructor ahead of their presentations, to address any questions and coordinate the details.

Final grade components (for planning your time investment; no actual numerical assessment of anything will be made in this seminar):—

Weekly questions	30%
Participation in the discussions:	20%
Presentations:	50%

3 Weekly topics and readings

- **(August 21) OVERVIEW. VARIETIES OF FREEDOM. FREE WILL.**

1. Bidney, D. (1963). The varieties of human freedom. In D. Bidney, editor, *The Concept of Freedom in Anthropology*, Studies in General Anthropology, 1, pages 11–34. De Gruyter Mouton, The Hague.
2. Edelman, S. (2008). *Computing the mind: how the mind really works*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, section 10.1: Selfhood and Freedom.
3. Edelman, S. (2020). *Life, Death, and Other Inconvenient Truths*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, chapter 14: Free Will.
4. [OPTIONAL] Frankfurt, H. G. (1971). Freedom of the will and the concept of a person. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 68(1), 5–20.

- **(August 28) FREEDOM: SOME PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES**

1. Berlin, I. (1969). Two concepts of liberty. In *Four Essays on Liberty*, pages 121–154, 169–172. Clarendon Press, Oxford, UK.
2. Graeber, D. (2013). Two notions of liberty revisited or, How to disentangle liberty and slavery. Open Democracy Forum. Available online at <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/david-graeber-two-notions-of-liberty-revisited?v=1642976432>.
3. Li, C. (2014). The Confucian conception of freedom. *Philosophy East and West*, 64(4), 902–919. Special issue: Tenth East-West philosophers' conference, "Value and Values: Economics and Justice in an Age of Global Interdependence".

- (September 4) [Labor Day — no class]

- **(September 11) FREEDOM AND BREAD.**

1. Camus, A. (1953). Bread and freedom. Available online at <https://anarchistfaq.org/translations/bread-freedom.html>. This talk was originally published as “Restaurer la valeur de la liberté” (“Restoring the value of freedom”) in the September 1953 issue of *La Révolution Prolétarienne*.
2. Arendt, H. (2017). The freedom to be free. *New England Review*, 38(2), 56–69. A lecture delivered in 1966-7.
3. Spafford, J. (2020). An anarchist interpretation of Marx’s “Ability to Needs” principle. *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 54, 325–343.
4. [OPTIONAL] Arendt, H. (1961a). Freedom and politics. In A. Hunold, editor, *Freedom and Serfdom: An Anthology of Western Thought*, pages 191–217. D. Reidel, Dordrecht, Holland.
5. [OPTIONAL] Arendt, H. (1961b). What is freedom? In *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*, chapter 4, pages 143–172. Viking Press, New York, NY.
6. [OPTIONAL] Kropotkin, P. (1926). *The Conquest of Bread*. Vanguard Press, New York, NY. French original, *La Conquête du Pain*, published in 1892. Available online at <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/petr-kropotkin-the-conquest-of-bread>.

- **(September 18) FREEDOM AND CAPITALISM.**

1. Ci, J. (1999). Justice, freedom, and the moral bounds of capitalism. *Social Theory and Practice*, 25(3), 409–438.
2. Brighouse, H. (2021). If you’re a socialist you need the Real Utopias Project, whether you like it or not. Paper presented at the conference “Engaging Erik Wright: Between Class Analysis and Real Utopias,” October 9, 2021.
3. [OPTIONAL] Wright, E. O. (2013). Transforming capitalism through real utopias. *American Sociological Review*, 78, 1–25.
4. [OPTIONAL] Harman, C. (2010). *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx*. Haymarket Books, Chicago, IL.

- **(September 25) CAPITALISM AND THE STATE.**

1. Jun, N. (2019). The state. In C. Levy and M. S. Adams, editors, *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, chapter 2, pages 27–45. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland.
2. Wiśniewski, J. B. (2020). Is statism an amoral philosophy? *Studia Humana*, 9(2), 121–126.
3. Graeber, D. (2006). Turning modes of production inside out or, Why capitalism is a transformation of slavery. *Critique of Anthropology*, 26(1), 61–85.
4. [OPTIONAL] Jun, N. (2018). Freedom. In B. Franks, N. Jun, and L. Williams, editors, *Anarchism: A Conceptual Approach*, chapter 3, pages 44–59. Routledge, New York, NY.
5. [OPTIONAL] Scott, J. C. (2009). *The Art of Not Being Governed*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

- **(October 2) CAPITALISM AND FASCISM.**

1. Eco, U. (1995). Ur-fascism: Freedom and liberation are an unending task. *The New York Review of Books*, June 22 issue.
2. Robinson, W. I. and Barrera, M. (2012). Global capitalism and twenty-first century fascism: a US case study. *Race & Class*, 53(3), 4–29.
3. [OPTIONAL] Cox, R. W. and Skidmore-Hess, D. (2022). How neofascism emerges from neoliberal capitalism. *New Political Science*, 44, 590–606.
4. [OPTIONAL] DiMaggio, A. (2021). The enablers — “liberal” democratic institutions and neofascistic politics. In A. DiMaggio, editor, *Rising Fascism in America: It Can Happen Here*, chapter 1. Routledge, New York, NY.

- (October 9) [Fall break — no class]

- **(October 16) FREEDOM IN THE U.S.**

1. Weaver, V. M. and Prowse, G. (2020). Racial authoritarianism in U.S. democracy. *Science*, 369, 1176–1178.
2. Khan, A. (2022). The carceral state: An american story. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 51, 49–66.
3. Akbar, A. A. (2023). The fight against Cop City. *Dissent*, 70(2), 62–70.

- **(October 23) THEORETICAL ANARCHISM AND DIALECTICS OF FREEDOM.**

1. Wolff, R. P. (1970). *In Defense of Anarchism*. Harper and Row, New York, NY. Available online at <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/robert-paul-wolff-in-defense-of-anarchism.pdf>.
2. Kovel, J. (1998). Dialectic as praxis. *Science & Society*, 62(3), 474–482.
3. Khurana, T. (2013). Paradoxes of autonomy: on the dialectics of freedom and normativity. *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, 17(1), 50–74.

- **(October 30) FREEDOM, PREFIGURATION, AND EDUCATION.**

1. Franks, B. (2018). Prefiguration. In B. Franks, N. Jun, and L. Williams, editors, *Anarchism: A Conceptual Approach*, chapter 2, pages 28–43. Routledge, New York, NY.
2. Suissa, J. (2001). Anarchism, utopias and philosophy of education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 35(4), 627–646.
3. [OPTIONAL] Suissa, J. (2019). Anarchist education. In C. Levy and M. S. Adams, editors, *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, chapter 29, pages 511–529. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland.

- **(November 6) THE DAWN OF EVERYTHING.**

1. Graeber, D. (2004). *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*. Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago, IL. Available online at <https://www.prickly-paradigm.com/titles/fragments-anarchist-anthropology.html>.

2. Graeber, D. and Wengrow, D. (2018). How to change the course of human history (at least, the part that's already happened). Eurozine. Available online at <https://www.eurozine.com/change-course-human-history/>.
3. Wengrow, D. (2022). For an anthropology and archaeology of freedom. *Journal of the British Academy*, 10, 55–65.
4. Çilingiroğlu, Ç. (2022). A daring quest for the kairos: reflections on Graeber and Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything*. *Current Anthropology*, 63, 612–614.

• **(November 13) FREEDOM AND CULTURE.**

1. Lee, D. (1963). Freedom and social constraint. In D. Bidney, editor, *The Concept of Freedom in Anthropology*, Studies in General Anthropology, 1, pages 61–73. De Gruyter Mouton, The Hague.
2. Lee, D. (1949). Being and value in a primitive culture. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 46, 401–415.
3. Lee, D. (1950). Notes on the conception of the self among the Wintu Indians. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 45, 538–543.
4. Lee, D. (1958). What kind of freedom? *The Humanist*, 18(4), 207–212.
5. [OPTIONAL] Moore, K. D., Peters, K., Jojola, T., and Lacy, A., editors (2007). *How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ.

• **(November 20) ANARCHIST PRAXIS: ROJAVA.**

1. Dirik, D. (2022). Stateless citizenship: 'radical democracy as consciousness-raising' in the Rojava revolution. *Identities*, 29(1), 27–44.
2. Piccardi, E. G. and Barca, S. (2022). Jin-jîyan-azadi. Matristic culture and Democratic Confederalism in Rojava. *Sustainability Science*, 17, 1273–1285.
3. [OPTIONAL] Fischer, D. (2023). An ambiguous paradise built in hell. Review of Dilar Dirik, *The Kurdish Women's Movement: History, Theory, Practice* (London: Pluto Press, 2022). Published in *New Politics*. Available online at <https://newpol.org/an-ambiguous-paradise-built-in-hell/>.

• **(November 27) ANARCHIST PRAXIS: CHIAPAS**

1. Anderson, J. K. and Springer, N. J. (2018). Zapatismo as a resonant public pedagogy. *Latin American Perspectives*, 45(3), 151–170.
2. Maldonado-Villalpando, E., Paneque-Gálvez, J., Demaria, F., and Napoletano, B. M. (2022). Grassroots innovation for the pluriverse: evidence from Zapatismo and autonomous Zapatista education. *Sustainability Science*, 17, 1301–1316.

• **(December 4) CLOSING GENERAL DISCUSSION.**

1. [OPTIONAL] Le Guin, U. K. (1974). *The Dispossessed*. Harper & Row, New York, NY.
2. [OPTIONAL] Doctorow, C. (2017). *Walkaway*. Tor Books, New York, NY.
3. [OPTIONAL] Graeber, D. and Wengrow, D. (2021). *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. Macmillan, London, UK.

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References

- Akbar, A. A. (2023). The fight against Cop City. *Dissent*, 70(2), 62–70.
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- Dirik, D. (2022). Stateless citizenship: ‘radical democracy as consciousness-raising’ in the Rojava revolution. *Identities*, 29(1), 27–44.
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- Robinson, W. I. and Barrera, M. (2012). Global capitalism and twenty-first century fascism: a US case study. *Race & Class*, 53(3), 4–29.
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- Spafford, J. (2020). An anarchist interpretation of Marx’s “Ability to Needs” principle. *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 54, 325–343.
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- Suissa, J. (2019). Anarchist education. In C. Levy and M. S. Adams, editors, *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, chapter 29, pages 511–529. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland.
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- Wengrow, D. (2022). For an anthropology and archaeology of freedom. *Journal of the British Academy*, 10, 55–65.
- Wiśniewski, J. B. (2020). Is statism an amoral philosophy? *Studia Humana*, 9(2), 121–126.
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- Wright, E. O. (2013). Transforming capitalism through real utopias. *American Sociological Review*, 78, 1–25.