

## HISTORY 12B

### HISTORY OF INEQUALITY: THE ERA OF NEOLIBERALISM

**INSTRUCTOR:** Professor Robin D. G. Kelley

**Office:** Bunche 5383

**CONTACT:** [rdkelley@ss.ucla.edu](mailto:rdkelley@ss.ucla.edu)

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 2:30 – 4:00, Wednesdays, 2:30 – 4:00

**TIME:** Tues – Thurs. 12:30 – 1:45

**PLACE:** Haines 39

#### TEACHING ASSISTANTS:

Sunny Chen, [sunnymchen@g.ucla.edu](mailto:sunnymchen@g.ucla.edu)

Aardash Chunkath, [aardashchunkath@gmail.com](mailto:aardashchunkath@gmail.com)

Dana Kopel, [dana.a.kopel@gmail.com](mailto:dana.a.kopel@gmail.com)

Meg Spaulding, [spauldingmeg@gmail.com](mailto:spauldingmeg@gmail.com)

Aisha Zaman, [ishzaman@gmail.com](mailto:ishzaman@gmail.com)

This course examines the origins, ideas, operations, and consequences of neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberalism refers roughly to the theory that society is best organized on the principles of free trade, deregulation, privatization, and market fundamentalism. I say “roughly” because there is no single, agreed-upon definition of neoliberalism. Its intellectual and political roots are varied and consist of a variety of contending “schools” of thought. We will only briefly examine the intellectual history of neoliberal thought, constructing a genealogy of “neoliberal thinking” going back to 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism, colonialism, imperialism, social Darwinism in the so-called “Gilded Age,” the rise of social democracy and its recasting of “liberal” as the welfare state, the ascendancy of military Keynesianism, and the ways in which fascism and the Cold War provided the context for the emergence neoliberal thinkers.

Most of the course examines the history of the economy during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries with a special emphasis on the restructuring of the political economy, politics, the state, and culture over the course of the last fifty years. While we focus on the U.S., the course considers the broader international context, especially as it pertains to the Global South. We will pay special attention to issues of debt; trade, fiscal, and monetary policy; austerity and structural adjustment policies, environmental destruction; military intervention; the shifting role of the state, and the conditions and struggles of labor. By taking a longer view of the effects of colonialism, neo-colonialism and neoliberalism on the Global South (as well as on indigenous communities in North America), we reveal how neoliberal policies represent a longer process of “accumulation by dispossession”—a long history of enclosure and destruction of the commons—rather than a sudden radical break from the Keynesian model. The readings interrogate neoliberalism’s roots, its impact on the changing character of capitalism, state functions, politics, culture, the environment, security, insecurity, precarity, foreign policy, as well as social movements resisting neoliberalism.

**REQUIREMENTS:** (1) You are expected to attend (or watch) all lectures and participate in discussion sections. If you cannot attend, BruinCast will be recording all of my lectures. In a couple of instances, we will not be meeting in person and the lectures will be recorded and

posted ahead of time, or you will be watching a film which you can do at home. You are not required to come to office hours (though you might find it useful), but you *must* attend discussion section and participate meaningfully. Regular contact will constitute 25% of your grade.

(2) Weekly reading responses beginning week 2 and ending week 9. That means eight very short posts on the discussion board or written during discussion section (“free writes”). Each response should be about a page long (not more than two pages) and should discuss the key points you took away from the readings and lectures. The point is not to summarize all of the readings but to think on the page, ruminate on what the author(s) might be doing, share revelations, connections you might see between different readings and lectures, ask questions about things you may not understand, etc. They are due each week—your TA will decide when they are due and when you will do an in-section “free write” instead. These short responses will make up 40% of your grade. Attendance and participation in discussion section will account for 20% of your final grade.

(3) The remaining 40% of your final grade will be based on a collaborative research project involving your *entire section*. You will create a digital project that explores in depth some movements, thinkers, policy initiatives challenging neoliberalism *not covered in the course*. All projects must be approved by me before you begin. As a group, you will research and gather materials (written documents, media, digital forms, etc.), organize them either into digital archive, a website, or a film. Somewhere in the project you must provide a list of sources and a clear explanation of how these movements, think-tanks, etc., understand and analyze the problem and what they are doing to roll back or dismantle neoliberal capitalism. Everyone must participate. Your TA will monitor participation and deduct points from the final collective grade for those who don’t do their share of the work. *The projects need to be posted on Monday, November 27.* I’ll say more about this later.

## History Writing Center

Students struggling with their essays may want to visit the History Writing Center. The Center is staffed by writing consultants who History graduate students trained to help undergraduates at any stage in the writing process and with writing assignments from any history course. Graduate writing consultants tailor appointments to the concerns of each writer. For more information, go to:

<https://history.ucla.edu/academics/undergraduate/history-writing-center>

<https://uclalibrary.github.io/research-tips/>

## Acknowledgments

As a land grant institution, UCLA acknowledges the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (Los Angeles Basin, Southern Channel Islands).

## Diversity and Inclusivity

Among UCLA’s core values are diversity and inclusion. We expect all instructors and students to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment. We instructors are committed to a public university that advances racial justice for all. For more information about UCLA’s Equity, Diversity & Inclusivity Office:

<https://equity.ucla.edu>

If there are aspects of the instruction or course design that result in barriers to your inclusion, engagement, assessment and/or achievement, please notify your TA or professor. Students with different learning abilities are also welcome to contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or go to Murphy Hall A255 to discuss options and accommodations.

### **Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Integrity**

University protocols require that cases of plagiarism be sent for review to the Dean of Students. If you have any questions about academic integrity related to citing quotes and other matters, speak with your professor and/or TA. You might also consult the *Student Guide to Academic Integrity*. Other useful resources include:

UCLA Library Citation Guide: <https://guides.library.ucla.edu/citing/plagiarism>

UCLA Registrar Office on Plagiarism and Student Copyright:  
<https://registrar.ucla.edu/registration-classes/enrollment-policies/class-policies/plagiarism-and-student-copyright>

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Center for Accessible Education:** Students seeking academic accommodations based on different learning abilities and/or disabilities should contact CAE at (310) 825-1501 or at Murphy Hall A255. <https://www.cae.ucla.edu/>

**Counseling and Psychological Services:** CAPS supports students' mental health needs, including short-term individual and/or group treatment, urgent services and referrals when needed. Counselors available by phone at (310) 825-0768 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In case of an emergency, however, please call 911. Learn more at <http://www.counseling.ucla.edu>

**Sexual Harassment Prevention:** UCLA fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as a UCLA student, the course instructor is required to notify the Dean of Students. If you wish to make a confidential disclosure, a CARE Advocate can explain your options and answer questions. Talking to the CARE Advocate doesn't constitute filing an official report about sexual violence. The details of your experience won't be shared with anyone without your permission. Confidential advocacy and consultations can be reached by calling CARE Advocates at (310) 206-2465 during office hours (Weekdays 8-5) or by email: [advocate@careprogram.ucla.edu](mailto:advocate@careprogram.ucla.edu)

Also, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can be reached 24 hours daily at (310) 825-0768

For more information regarding UCLA sexual assault, harassment, and other gender informed related policies visit: <https://www.sexualharassment.ucla.edu/>

**Students in Crisis:** Case Managers are available to assist students struggling with mental or physical health or facing an unexpected challenge or crisis. The Economic Crisis Response Team also provides financial support and guidance to students. <https://studentincrisis.ucla.edu/>

**Food Security:** UCLA and the Los Angeles region provide several resources for students who have limited financial means to purchase nutritious food. More information about these resources: <https://eatwell.healthy.ucla.edu/2018/03/16/food-security-on-uclas-campus/>

**Financial Wellness:** Find low-cost and affordable resources including employment, printing, food security, housing assistance (including shelters and emergency housing), and health and well-being services: <https://www.financialwellness.ucla.edu/Campus-Resources>

## REQUIRED READING

Harsha Walia, *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021) link on BruinLearn website to Inclusive Access edition

Articles, documents, links posted on BruinLearn

## LECTURES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

### September 28: What is Neoliberalism?

Walia, *Border and Rule*, Foreword and Introduction

### October 3: What is Liberalism?

Walia, *Border and Rule*, Chapter 1

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Chaps 1-5, and 16 PDF

Lisa Lowe, "The Ruses of Liberty," [abridged] PDF

### October 5: Colonial Racial Capitalism and Border Imperialism: Haiti and Beyond

[NOTE: Lecture posted on BruinLearn - please watch film]

Walia, *Border and Rule*, chapters 1 and 4

**FILM:** "The Immigration Paradox: Encore,"

<https://ucla.kanopy.com/video/immigration-paradox-0>

### October 10: The Great Transformation: Liberalism, Social Democracy, and the U.S. Warfare State

Vijay Prashad, "Introduction," *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South*, PDF

## **October 12: The Origins of Neoliberal Thought**

Frederich Hayek, "The Road to Serfdom – *Reader's Digest* Version" PDF  
Milton Friedman, "Neo-Liberalism and its Prospects," (1951) PDF  
Quinn Slobodian, "The World Economy and the Color Line: Wilhelm Röpke, Apartheid, and the White Atlantic," PDF

## **October 17: Wars, Welfare, and the Struggle for the Social Wage**

"A Freedom Budget for All Americans: A Summary" (1967) PDF  
Johnnie Tillmon, "Welfare Is a Women's Issue," *Ms. Magazine* (Spring 1972) PDF  
David P. Stein, "This Nation Has Never Honestly Dealt with the Question of a Peacetime Economy": Coretta Scott King and the Struggle for a Nonviolent Economy in the 1970s," *Souls* (2016) PDF

## **October 19: First World Shockwaves**

David McNally, "Debt Discipline, and Dispossession: Race, Class, and the Global Slump," from *Global Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance* PDF

## **October 24: Third World Shockwaves**

Walia, *Border and Rule*, Chapter 3

## **October 26: States of War: Free Trade, Unfree Labor, and the New Global Order**

Walia, *Border and Rule*, Chapter 2, 5 and 6

## **October 31: New Slavery?: Temporary Migrant Labor Regimes**

Walia, *Border and Rule*, Chapters 7 – 8

## **November 2: Neoliberal Reason**

Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neo-conservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory* 34, no. 6 (December 2006), 690-714 PDF

## **November 7: Debt, Punishment, and the New Precariat**

Walia, *Border and Rule*, chapter 9  
Karen Dolan with Jodi Carr, *The Poor Get Prison: The Alarming Spread of the Criminalization of Poverty* (Washington, D. C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 2015) PDF

[NO CLASS – Lecture posted on BruinLearn]

## **November 9: A New Global Order I: The 2008 Financial Collapse**

William I. Robinson "The Great Recession" of 2008 and the Continuing Crisis: A Global Capitalism Perspective," *International Review of Modern Sociology* 38 no. 2 (Autumn 2012), 169-198. PDF

[NO LECTURE/NO CLASS – please watch film “Inside Job”]

## **November 14: A New Global Order II: Neoliberalism from the Global South**

Alf Gunvald Nilsen and Karl von Holdt, “Rising powers, people rising: neo-liberalization and its discontents in the BRICS countries,” *Globalizations* (2018), PDF

## **November 16: The Price of Fashion**

Annelise Orleck, “*We Are All Fast-Food Workers Now*”: *The Global Uprising Against Poverty Wages* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), chapters 21 – 29 PDF

Hester Eisenstein, “Sweatshop Feminists,” *Jacobin* (June 17, 2015), <http://jacobinmag.com/2015/06/kristof-globalization-development-third-world/>

## **November 21 – 23: NO CLASS - BREAK**

***NOTE: YOU MUST POST/COMPLETE YOUR GROUP PROJECT BY MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27<sup>TH</sup>, BEFORE MIDNIGHT.***

## **November 28: Never Let a Good Catastrophe Go to Waste: Disaster Capitalism in Three Acts**

Megan French-Marcelin, “Gentrification Ground Zero,” *Jacobin* (August 28, 2015), <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/katrina-new-orleans-arne-duncan-charters/>

Laura Gottesdiener, “Detroit is Ground Zero in the New Fight for Water Rights,” *Nation* (July 15, 2015), PDF

Robert Brenner, “Escalating Plunder,” *New Left Review* 123 (May/June 2020) PDF

## **November 30: Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism, Authoritarianism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism**

Walia, *Border and Rule*, Chapter 10

Wendy Brown, “Neoliberalism’s Frankenstein: Authoritarian Freedom in Twenty-First Century “Democracies,” *Critical Times* 1, no. 1 (December 2017)PDF

## December 5: Neo-Fascism or New Commons?: Paths to a Post-Neoliberal World

Walia, *Border and Rule*, Chapter 11, Conclusion, Afterword

Silvia Federici, "Feminism and the Politics of the Commons," from *The Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market & State* PDF

## December 7: GROUP PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

### SUGGESTED READING

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy, *Neoliberalism: Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Harvard University Press, 2018)

\_\_\_\_\_, *Crack-Up Capitalism: Market Radicals and the Dream of a World Without Democracy* (Metropolitan Books, 2023)

Fred Block and Margaret Somers, *The Power of Market Fundamentalism* (Harvard 2014)

David Kotz, *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberal Capitalism* (Harvard 2015)

Philip Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown* (New York and London: Verso, 2013)

Vijay Prashad, *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* (New York and London: Verso, 2012)

Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012)

Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America* (Penguin Books, 2017)

Christian Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence* (New York: Nation Books, 2011)

Stuart Hall, "The Neoliberal Revolution," *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture* 48 (Summer 2011), 9-27

Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History* (New York: Verso Books, 2011).

Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Zone Books, 2015)

\_\_\_\_\_, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West* (Columbia University Press, 2019)

Colin Barker, Gareth Dale, and Neil Davidson, *Revolutionary Rehearsals in the Neoliberal Age: 1989-2019* (Haymarket Books, 2021)

Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, "The Neoliberal (Counter-) Revolution," in Saad-Filho, Alfredo and Johnston, Deborah, eds., *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*

Richard Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution, 1951-1983* (London: Harper Collins, 1995)

Mirowski, P. and D. Plehwe (eds), *The Road from Mont Pelerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

- Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade against the New Deal* (New York: Norton, 2009)
- Wolfgang Streeck, *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2014).
- Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Times* 2nd Edition (Boston: Beacon, 2001 [1944]).
- Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2008)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Changes the Climate* (Simon and Schuster, 2014).
- Greta R. Krippner, *Capitalizing on Crisis: The Political Origins of the Rise of Finance* (Harvard University Press, 2011).
- Frederick A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011 [orig. 1960])
- Dave Zirin, *Dance with the Devil: The World Cup, the Olympics, and the Fight for Democracy* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014).
- Jordan T. Camp, *Incarcerating the Crisis: Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neoliberal State* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016)
- Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order* (Oxford, 2022)
- Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (Verso, 2006)
- Mark Blyth, *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (Oxford, 2013)
- John Weeks, *Economics of the 1%: How Mainstream Economics Serves the Rich, Obscures Reality and Distorts Policy* (Anthem Press, 2014)
- Marc Weisbrot, *Failed: What the "Experts" Got Wrong about the Global Economy* (Oxford, 2015)
- Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: NYU Press, 2012)
- Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004)
- Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
- Ben Jackson, "At the Origins of Neo-Liberalism: The Free Economy and the Strong State, 1930– 1947," *Historical Journal* 53, no. 1 (2010): 129– 151.
- Nicholas Gane, "The Emergence of Neoliberalism: Thinking Through and Beyond Michel Foucault's Lectures on Biopolitics," *Theory, Culture & Society* (2013), p. 1–25.
- Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, "Reclaiming Feminist Futures: Co-opted and Progressive Politics in a Neo-liberal Age," *Political Studies* 62 (2014), 634–651.