

# THE COLUMBIA CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL THOUGHT

AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

## UTOPIA 13/13

(2022-2023)

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**WEDNESDAYS 6:15 PM TO 8:45 PM**

**13 SESSIONS SPREAD OVER THE 2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR**

### Seminar Description

Each year, this seminar focuses on a different set of topics at the heart of contemporary critical thought. During the 2015-2016 academic year, the seminar focused on Michel Foucault's Collège de France lectures and produced the [Foucault 13/13 series](#). During the 2016-2017 academic year, the seminar focused on critical readings of Friedrich Nietzsche and produced the [Nietzsche 13/13 series](#). During the 2017-2018 academic year, the seminar focused on modalities of uprisings and produced the [Uprising 13/13 series](#). During the 2018-2019 academic year, the seminar focused on the relationship between critical theory and praxis, and produced the [Praxis 13/13 series](#). During the 2019-2020 academic year, the seminar returned to the fundamental texts of critical theory, and produced the [Critique 13/13 series](#). During the 2020-2021 academic year, the seminar went completely virtual due to the pandemic and focused on the history, theory, and future of abolition, and produced the [Abolition Democracy 13/13 series](#). Last year, we focused on the ideas and manifestos of 13 “worldly philosophers” who ignited revolutions, and produced the [Revolution 13/13 series](#).

The seminar this year, [Utopia 13/13](#), focuses on *really-existing, concrete utopias*. Instead of diagnosing crises, we will explore this year the ways out. The fact is, we face today a number of cataclysmic crises—global climate change, increasing pandemics, extractive capitalism, the expository society, violent political polarization and counterrevolutions—and we know what they are. We are past the time for diagnosis. We do not need more theories of *krise und kritik* or *Zeitdiagnose*, we need *praxis and utopia*. But so many of us are so overwhelmed, so depressed.

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We feel so hopeless today, in the face of these seemingly insurmountable crises, that it is hard to even imagine where to start. We desperately need positive constructive thinking. We urgently need to look around, identify, and pursue *concrete utopias*. Solutions to our crises surround us, often hidden in plain sight. We need to see them now and actualize them, support them, grow them, empower them. That is the mission this year. At Utopia 13/13, we will explore different experiments and models to reorganize society to address head on our current crises—really-existing, actually-existing, concrete utopias. There will be no room, this year, for dystopias. We are too familiar with our present. We know its history. This year, we will write together a *history of the future*.

The graduate student seminar will be structured to frame a series of 13 formal seminars at which one or more guests, from different disciplines, will be invited to discuss the readings and present on the themes of the seminar. Each formal seminar will host contemporary critical theorists from across the disciplines. It will also frame and interrelate with a Paris critical theory seminar at the EHESS that will run alongside the seminar. The graduate student seminar thus will serve as the vehicle to enrich the formal 13/13 seminars and support the intellectual apparatus that will accompany those formal seminars. This seminar will function as an advanced graduate research seminar.

We will be holding the formal 13/13 seminars on Wednesday evenings this coming year, generally from 6:15pm to 8:45pm EST, mostly at Columbia University. Students will be expected to be present at the seminars at the seminar table, ready to go at least 5 minutes before the seminars start.

### **Books and Texts**

All reading materials will be posted to the [Utopia 13/13 website](#).

### **Requirements**

Graduate students are expected to read the assigned materials prior to the formal seminar and should be prepared to offer public comments to facilitate seminar discussion. There should be no absences. If a student has an excused absence, please e-mail Fonda Shen ([fws2107@columbia.edu](mailto:fws2107@columbia.edu)) by 10:00 a.m. of the day of the seminar.

Students will conduct their own research and prepare, for each semester, (a) one *ex ante* 5-page book review or pre-seminar blog-post providing guidance on the writings we will be reading that week or on the theories and practices we will discuss, and (b) one *ex post* 5-page blog-post discussing and elaborating on the intellectual discussion at one of the 13/13

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seminars.

Professor Harcourt will hold office hours. Please contact his assistant, Bree Adesanya ([aa4551@columbia.edu](mailto:aa4551@columbia.edu)) to schedule an appointment. Office hours are by appointment only.

### **Laptop Policy**

Please note that you *may only* use your laptop for three purposes: (1) as a *word processor* to take and read notes; (2) as a *reader* to consult assigned course materials that are on-line or saved on your hard drive; or (3) to do any research directly related to our seminar. You *may not* use your laptop during the seminar, ever, to write emails, shop on-line, or for any other purpose that is not seminar related. If you are the kind of person who cannot resist temptation, please leave your laptop at home. It is *very distracting* to one's peers when someone else is shopping on-line. Please respect your peers and this policy.

### **Statement Regarding Academic Integrity**

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Columbia University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work. The complete Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity can be found at: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity-statement> and the Columbia University Undergraduate Guide to Academic Integrity can be found here: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

### **Disability Statement**

Columbia Law School is committed to the full inclusion of students with disabilities in the life of the University. In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), CLS provides accommodations and supports to students with documented disabilities on an individual, case-by-case basis. To request disability accommodations for this course, students must first be registered with Disability Services (DS). Detailed information is available regarding the registration process, drop-in hours schedule, documentation requirements and important deadlines online here at <https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services>.

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## SEMINAR SCHEDULE AND READINGS

**Organizational meeting for all students: Wednesday, September 7, 2022 at 6:20pm in the Jerome Greene Annex.**

**1/13 CRITICAL THEORETIC FOUNDATIONS FOR CONCRETE UTOPIAS  
Wednesday, September 28, 2022 6:15 – 8:45 pm at the Maison Française**

**With Étienne Balibar**

[Étienne Balibar](#) will open the inaugural session of Utopia 1/13 with a lecture titled *“Uncovering lines of escape: towards a concept of concrete utopia in the age of catastrophes.”* In his lecture, Balibar will touch on three dimensions of the urgency of rethinking concrete utopias in these times of crises: first, Balibar will discuss the dilemmas surrounding the concept of utopia and utopian thinking, without which there could be no “radical” politics, but at a time and in an age of at least two major catastrophes (the climate, and the digital); second, Balibar will explore “real” or “concrete” utopias in light of the Foucauldian distinction between “utopias” and “heterotopias,” which could also be interpreted as a conversion of utopia into heterotopias; third, Balibar will then conclude on the transcendental problems of the different modalities of the “possible,” the “impossible,” the “necessary,” the “inevitable,” in their relationship to a concept of time (e.g. Bloch’s time of “not-yet”), as displaced by the questioning of “utopia” in today’s catastrophic circumstances.

Please read:

Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1847), chapter 3 [“Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism”](#)

Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia* (1918), chapter 1.3 “The Shape of the Inconstruable Question”

Michel Foucault, [“Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias”](#) (1967/1984), trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 6, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 22-27 (also available [here](#)); [“Des espaces autres.”](#) in *Dits et Écrits*, vol. IV, 1954-1988, eds. Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Jacques Lagrange, 752-762 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

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Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: the Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (Verso 2005), Chapter 10 : Utopia and Its Antinomies

Zapatista Army of National Liberation, *Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandonia* (2005)  
Erik Olin Wright: *Envisioning Real Utopias* (Verso 2010): Chapter 6. Real Utopias I: Social Empowerment and the State ; Chapter 7. Real Utopias II: Social Empowerment and the Economy

Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek, *Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics* (2013)

**2/13 COOPERATION JACKSON WITH KALI AKUNO**

**Wednesday, October 12, 2022 6:15-8:45 pm**

**With Kali Akuno**

Please read:

Cooperation Jackson (website) at <https://cooperationjackson.org/>.

Akuno, Kali. *The Jackson-Kush Plan: The Struggle for Black Self-Determination and Economic Democracy*. Undated PDF available online at <https://mronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Jackson-KushPlan.pdf>.

Akuno, Kali, and Ajamu Nangwaya. *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi*. Wakefield, QC: Daraja Press, 2017.

Akuno, Kali, and Matt Meyer. *Jackson Rising Redux: Lessons on Building the Future in the Present*. Oakland: PM Press, forthcoming 2023.

Foster, John Bellamy, and Brett Clark. Socialism and ecological survival: An introduction. *Monthly Review* 74, no. 3 (2022): 1-33.

**3/13 Noam Chomsky, Che Gossett, and Vijay Prashad on Practical Utopias.**

**Wednesday, October 26, 2022 6:15-8:45 pm**

**With Noam Chomsky, Che Gossett, and Vijay Prashad**

Please read:

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Chomsky, Noam. Preface to *Practical Utopia*. By Michael Albert. Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2017. Available online at <https://niklasblog.com/?p=20601>.

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### Utopia 13/13 Bibliography

Akuno, Kali. *The Jackson-Kush Plan: The Struggle for Black Self-Determination and Economic Democracy*. Undated PDF available online at <https://mronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Jackson-KushPlan.pdf>.

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Akuno, Kali, and Matt Meyer. *Jackson Rising Redux: Lessons on Building the Future in the Present*. Oakland: PM Press, forthcoming 2023.

Balibar, Étienne. "Régulations, insurrections, utopies: pour un 'socialisme' du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle." In *Histoire interminable. D'un siècle l'autre. Écrits I*, 264-298. Paris: La Découverte, 2020.

Benhabib, Seyla. *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Bloch, Ernst. *The Spirit of Utopia*. Trans. Anthony A. Nassar. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Chomsky, Noam. Preface to *Practical Utopia*. By Michael Albert. Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2017. Available online at <https://niklasblog.com/?p=20601>.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *Economic Co-operation among Negro Americans: Report of a Social Study Made by Atlanta University, under the patronage of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C., together with the proceedings of the 12th Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, held at Atlanta University, on Tuesday, May the 28th, 1907*. Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1907.

Du Bois, W.E.B. "A Negro Nation within the Nation." *Current History* 42, no. 3 (1935): 265-270.

Foster, John Bellamy, and Brett Clark. "Socialism and ecological survival: An introduction." *Monthly Review* 74, no. 3 (2022): 1-33.

Foucault, Michel. "Des espaces autres." In *Dits et Écrits*, vol. IV, 1954-1988. Ed. Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Jacques Lagrange, 752-762. Paris: Gallimard, 1980.

Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." Trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 6, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 22-27.

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Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. Trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. New York: Harcourt, 1936 [1929].

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Ed. Frederick Engels. New York: International Publishers, 1948.

More, Thomas. *Utopia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Trans. Clarence H. Miller. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

*The Oxford Handbook of Mutual, Co-Operative, and Co-Owned Business*. Ed. Jonathan Michie, Joseph R. Blasi, and Carlo Borzaga, 570-584. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Williams, Alex, and Nick Srnicek. [\*Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics\*](#). Critical Legal Thinking. 2013.

Wright, Erik Olin. *Envisioning Real Utopias*. New York: Verso, 2010.

Zapatista Army of National Liberation, [\*Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandonia\*](#) (2005).