

URPE Panels at the Left Forum – 2013

1) Primitive Accumulation in Light of the Current Onslaught of Austerity

Session 2. Saturday 12 noon , Room W613

Michael Perelman • David McNally • Michael Hudson

This panel addresses the damage austerity is doing to the economy and society. Its backdrop will be Karl Marx's analysis of the role of classical primitive accumulation. For all its brutality, classical political accumulation may deserve some credit in promoting the development of capitalism's productive capacity. In contrast to classical primitive accumulation, the modern variant seems to be almost entirely extractive, feeding the voracious appetite of finance capital, by consuming what might otherwise nourish the lives of the people, including those parts of the public sector that serve human needs.

2) The Wealth Gap for Women – Have We Really Come a Long Way?

Session 2. Saturday 12 noon, Room E304

Peg Rapp • Susan Pashkoff • Diana Zavala • Barbara Garson • Irene Ortiz Rosen

The wage gap between women's and men's individual wages is the most standard indicator used to define women's march toward equality. The wealth gap for women, in contrast, is defined as the total wealth a woman has obtained, minus any wealth contributed by inheritance or a spouse. In the overall wealth gap, women have 8% of the wealth of men, a much greater degree of inequality than indicated by the wage gap. Since the wealth gap is also based on many more variables, we will show how the wealth gap is a much more effective indicator of women's oppression since it can approach the analysis not only in terms of the individual wage, but in relation to the patriarchal institutions of marriage and the family, as well as class, race and imperialism. We will show how the patriarchal system under capitalism has not provided an adequate alternative structure to deal with social needs provided outside the capitalist market and how excluding women, people of color and subsistence workers in imperialized countries from the capitalist wage labor paradigm creates a group of super-oppressed predominantly women workers. We will discuss how women have fought for the social safety nets provided by society to support unpaid caretaking work – free public education, public health clinics, childcare and eldercare – only to see them being cut worldwide in an effort to “re-privatize” women's labor so that capitalist society will not be held responsible for the cost of women's work outside the market.

3) The Political Economy of US Healthcare, the Medical Industrial Complex and the Affordable Care Act

Session 2. Saturday 12 noon, Room W511

Robert Chernomas • Robert Kemp • Matt Anderson • Francesca Lo Basso

The US healthcare system is the most expensive (as a percent of GDP) of all the advanced industrial countries, and despite that produces healthcare outcomes that rank among the lowest. This difference is both a result and cause of the extraordinarily high profits in the industry, and more broadly of being a healthcare for profit system. This panel looks carefully at the political economy of the US Medical Industrial Complex, the current Affordable Healthcare Act, and what would be necessary to create an acceptable alternative.

4) Eco-Capitalism and the Myths of the "Green Economy"

Session 3. Saturday 3:40 pm, Room E304

Brian Tokar • Les Levidow • Rachel Smolker • Carlos Marentes

— Cosponsored by the Global Justice Ecology Project and URPE —

The goal of “greening” the economy, once promoted by environmental activists worldwide, is now increasingly co-opted by those who seek to control, plunder and commodify all of nature. This agenda has played out at several recent international gatherings, in an aggressive “green economy” development agenda, in economic assessments of natural resources, and in new financial instruments to create markets for them. Proponents suggest that economic growth and current consumption levels can be made environmentally sustainable by shifting to more resource-efficient modes and more flexible resource allocations without challenging capitalism. This panel will offer diverse critical perspectives on the new eco-capitalism, as well as how people are organizing globally to challenge this agenda and advance alternative development models.

5) Climate Justice: Challenges and Prospects for an Emerging Movement

Session 4. Saturday 5:30 pm, Room E303

Brian Tokar • Patrick Bond • Chris Williams • Marcela Olivera • Jacqui Patterson

"Climate justice" has become a unifying call for movements for indigenous rights, racial justice, alternatives to capitalism, and more. The overarching aims are to highlight the social dimensions and underlying inequities of the global climate crisis, press for genuine, justice-centered solutions, and influence the broader climate movement in a more countersystemic direction. This

panel will offer a variety of US and international perspectives on the current state of climate justice, and the potential for a more unified and radical movement to challenge the root causes of global climate disruptions.

6) Iran: The Presidential Election of June 2013

Session 4. Saturday 5:30 pm, Room E330

G. Reza Ghorashi • Hamideh Sedghi • Mohammad Soleymani • Hamid Zangeneh

On June 15th Iran will elect a new president. Some have suggested this is the most crucial election that the Islamic Republic has faced. In this panel the major candidates and their chances for being elected will be evaluated. Furthermore, potential socioeconomic and political consequences of their election will be explained.

7) Electoral Politics: Demobilizing Swamp or Tactic for Social Transformation?

Session 5. Sunday 10 am, Room W211

Al Campbell • David Laibman • Stephan Edel

From its earliest days, the working-class movement has debated the nature of the representative state in capitalist societies and the desirability of participation in national electoral processes as a means to contest for political power and lay foundations for revolutionary transition. This panel has several goals: to bring systematic political-economic thinking to bear on this issue; to consider whether capitalist evolution, from mid-19th century to the present, requires new perspectives on the electoral state; and to broaden the framework for this discussion to include present-day globalizing capitalism, the Global South, the BRIC countries, and the impact of transnationalization and neoliberalism.

8) The Revolutionary Project of Social Ecology

Session 6. Sunday 12 noon, Room E307

Brian Tokar • Dan Chodorkoff • Chaia Heller • Eleanor Finley

Since the 1960s, social ecologists have advanced a revolutionary outlook that examines the problematic relationships between society, capitalism, social hierarchy and the natural world. Three generations of social ecologists will discuss social ecology in historical, philosophical, and political terms, focusing significantly on social ecology's political strategy, which is rooted in confederated direct democracy. We will also trace the role that social ecology has played in informing movements from the anti-nuclear movement and ecofeminism, to the alter-globalization movement (Seattle, 1999), and Occupy and its many offshoots.