

Union for Radical Political Economics 2017 Annual Report

Membership

At the close of 2017, we have 494 active members in the organization with 1,017 people in our network. While we have struggled to expand our dues-paying membership in recent years, we know that the reach and impact of our work extends far beyond our membership rolls. We are committed to remaining a dues-paying organization driven by the participation of its membership.

In the fall of 2017 we transitioned to a new and far more sophisticated member database, which will allow us to keep better track of member involvement, donations, and communication. This new database will also greater account access for our members, making subscriptions and member renewals much more streamlined and straightforward. We will be rolling out the public version of this database in the spring of 2018.

It is important to stress the need for formal membership (which costs \$20 per year at minimum). As a small professional association within our discipline, we are only truly stronger when we are together, and our growth as an organization can only serve to increase our influence within our field. As a network of radical political economists who are organized, we offer alternative solutions to social and economic problems. We encourage everyone who is engaged with URPE but are not currently members to join today.

For specific questions about your membership, please email Steve Theberge directly at urpe@urpe.org.

Review of Radical Political Economics

In 2017, the RRPE received 99 manuscripts submissions for regular articles, 30 book review submissions and 13 papers from the URPE Sessions at the 2017 Chicago ASSA and the New York EEA meetings. As of January 1, 2018, 8 of the regular articles, 9 of the book reviews and 12 of the conference proceedings submissions have been accepted. The remaining manuscripts are either rejected, still under review or awaiting revision and resubmission by the author. The fourth issue of the volume year, 49(4), Winter 2017, is the Conference Proceedings issue, where 12 papers were published along with the David Gordon Memorial Lecture, which is delivered at the ASSA meetings and, in 2017 by Eileen Appelbaum with comments by John Schmitt. In 2017, the RRPE continued its practice of publishing special issues: volume 49, issue #3 (Fall 2017) carried the special issue on Crisis in the European Union, edited by Special Issue Collective members Brigitte Bechthold, Davide Gualerzi, Dorene Isenberg, and Paddy Quick.

The Editorial Board continued its practice of selecting a paper from the previous volume year (in this case, volume 48, 2016) for the RRPE Best Paper award—this year there was a tie and the award went to two recipients: “Korea’s Post-1997 Restructuring: An Analysis of Capital as Power” by Hyeng-Joon Park, published in 48(2): 287–309, and “Can Public Policies Bring about the Democratization of the Outsourcing of Household Tasks?” by François-Xavier Devetter, published in 48(3): 365–393. Both papers are available for free download from the SAGE website <http://journals.sagepub.com/home/rrp>.

The RRPE is currently preparing two special issues. First, a call for papers is currently being circulated for a special issue on Precarious and Informal Work with a paper submission deadline of November 30, 2018. Second, RRPE is preparing a special issue on the Past, Present & Future of Radical Economics: URPE at 50 to celebrate RRPE’s/URPE’s 50th anniversary. The special issue will be published in Fall 2018 as volume 50, number 3, which will coincide with the URPE conference and celebration at UMass Amherst.

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Book Review Editor: Fletcher Baragar

RRPE Editorial Board

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URPE Brooklyn Conference

URPE sponsored an April conference entitled "Left-Wing Economics in a Right-Wing Political Climate" at St. Francis College, Brooklyn. The conference was organized to maximize participation with workshops led by facilitators, rather than consisting of presentations by speakers.

URPE at ASSA

ASSA 2017 conference was held in Chicago, in January 6-8 2017 and URPE organized 16 sessions including the David Gordon Lecture delivered by Eileen Appelbaum. Our regular sessions included a joint URPE-AEA panel, along with three joint sessions with IAFFE. URPE continues to be allotted 16 sessions at the ASSA convention, and there does not seem to be any threat of a reduction in the foreseeable future.

URPE at EEA

The Eastern Economic Association (EEA) 2017 Conference was February 23- 26 in New York. URPE had 16 sessions at the meetings. The "Easterns" are an excellent venue for URPE presentations in that the EEA is much more open to "other-than-mainstream" approaches to economics than the American Economic Association (AEA), which runs the ASSA meetings each January. The papers presented were again of high quality, and covered a wide spectrum of topics typical (and some not so typical) for heterodox economics. Among the topics were the Chinese economy, finance, Radical Institutionalism, gender, race, class, designing Heterodox curriculum, undergraduate research in Political Economy, transformations in capitalism, trade theory, capital theory, exchange rate theory, classical economics, productivity, food insecurity, poverty, time deficits, Marxist monetary theory, profit rate studies, Keynesian and Post-Keynesian analysis, and Caribbean development.

URPE at ICAPE

Under the leadership of Geoff Schneider, the Executive Director of ICAPE, who is also an URPE Steering Committee member, URPE's visibility at the annual ICAPE conference has been on the rise. The ICAPE Conference was held at Roosevelt University on January 5, 2017, the day before the ASSA meetings in Chicago. More than 120 people attended the conference, with a nice mix of participants from URPE, IAFFE, AFEE and ASE. In general terms, it was extremely successful and served as a significant benefit to URPE members. In addition to traditional scholarly sessions, the program also included teaching workshops, a session on publishing in heterodox journals, and other non-traditional sessions (e.g., "Doing and teaching Feminist Economics"). 10 articles were published in a proceedings issue of the American Review of Political Economy.

There were 4 panels at ICAPE consisting of URPE members and numerous other panels in which URPE members were participants. Discussions with participants indicated that many people were able to obtain funding to go to Chicago due to their participation on the ICAPE program. Thus, the ICAPE conference increased attendance at URPE sessions above what it would have been otherwise. At the ICAPE in Philadelphia, 2018, URPE has 7 complete sessions at ICAPE. ICAPE also has a booth at the ASSA meetings, to distribute URPE materials and materials from other heterodox groups. URPE contributed funds for the booth, as did the other heterodox associations.

URPE at Southern Economic Association (SEA)

This year URPE had the 3rd Annual URPE@SEA Conference, held November 17-19 at the Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel and Marina in Tampa, Florida. We had a total of 8 sessions and over 21 participants. The topics included the political economy of racism especially regarding health and income disparities, radical political economy of China, Sraffian and Austrian capital theory, and a Roundtable on preparing young URPE members for the upcoming job market.

The participation was lively and the profundity of the presentations and discussion created in their wake tremendous. Also of note is the interest non-URPE members as well that came in attendance. Clearly our program is being read more widely as people become increasingly frustrated with the theoretical paucity of mainstream economics and the destructive policy implications that result.

URPE at Left Forum

URPE is an interdisciplinary association of both academics and activists (not exclusive categories!) devoted to the study, development, and application of radical political economic analysis to social problems. While many of our presentations in the ASSAs, Easterns and Southernns have important implications for activism, they are mostly academic in form. The Left Forum is the largest yearly conference we take part in that is mostly activists (again, many of those also being academics), and whose presentations are often non-academic in form. It is a major gathering of the activist left in the U.S. Recent Conferences have drawn about 4,000 participants, over 1,300 speakers and hundreds of panels and workshops. URPE contributes from 2 or 3 up to 10 panels to the Left Forum in a given year. We sponsored and cosponsored 7 panels at the 2017 Left Forum, May 20 – 22, at John Jay College (CUNY), New York. Because of the size of this conference, every year those URPE members who go, beyond making our small contribution to this broad collective effort, are immersed in the broad spectrum of fights going on today for a radical political economy and a human-centered social transformation.

URPE Reader

To celebrate the 50th anniversary URPE is bringing out a Reader, *Imperiled Economies 2018: An URPE Reader*. With twenty contributors, the reader consists of a set of articles that introduce people to current work in the field of radical political economics. While the Reader does not provide a comprehensive picture of the work of radical political economics, the articles selected for inclusion illustrate the wide range of both theoretical, political, and methodological perspectives within the Union for Radical Political Economics. They address some of the major problems of contemporary capitalism in non-technical language that is accessible to a wide audience. The authors' theoretical perspectives vary, but they share a common understanding that mainstream economic theory cannot provide the necessary challenge to the status quo. The articles are intended to contribute to the dialogue that is necessary in these difficult times, and thus promote the activity necessary to address the major challenges we confront today. The Reader is being published by Dollars and Sense Collective and should be available in time for the Spring catalogue.

URPE Doctoral Fellowship

The Steering Committee of the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE) awarded 2017 URPE Dissertation Fellowship to Ilias Alami, Ph.D. candidate, Politics, The University of Manchester, UK. Mr. Alami is awarded this Fellowship and \$5,000 (USD) in support of his dissertation "Post-crisis capital account policies in emerging capitalisms: regaining policy space? A comparison between Brazil and South Africa." His dissertation is being supervised by Dr. Stuart Shields (Manchester), and Dr. Adrienne Roberts (Manchester).

Mr. Alami's dissertation provides a Marxist political economy analysis of capital-account policies used in Brazil and South Africa since the beginning of the recent global financial crisis, with particular attention to the specificity of capital accumulation and class configurations prevailing in these countries. He argues that understanding the uneven and conflict-ridden processes of policy-making is crucially important for developing progressive and sustainable forms of financial governance in emerging countries. Mr. Alami's research makes contributions to the literatures on financialization, the political economy of financial statecraft and regulation, Marxian theories of the state and money, and the debates about more progressive forms of financial governance in emerging countries.

Newsletter

Newsletter

The newsletter is now in its 49th year! It continues to be a vehicle for short articles, abstracts, and announcements relevant to the interest of our membership. It is now primarily available in electronic format (via email), though a paper copy via USPS can be requested. We are always soliciting submissions from members about their research, opinions, books, and activism. We are currently working on a project to have all issues of the newsletter from the past 48 years scanned and available online. You can access the last 13 years of the newsletter at urpe.org.

Website

The URPE website continues to be an important part of our outreach, communication, and organizing strategies. Content contributed by members is a central component of the site, and we appreciate the ongoing contributions. The course syllabi pages, the new books page, and the newsletters are among the most popular website pages. The course syllabi page is the second most popular page after the homepage. URPE's Political Economy Books page is on the second page for a Google search for "Political Economy Books," increasing the number of people who are aware of URPE members' books. We began the opinion page last year to provide a place where URPE members' opinion articles expressed in different venues can be brought together so that members and others can conveniently access these articles. We hope that these pages will become an increasingly important way of disseminating information about radical political economy. Visitors to the site have dropped about 8 percent this year, possibly attributable in part to the great increase in URPE blog traffic. We will be making some significant changes to our web presence in 2018. We have partnered with Design Action Collective in Oakland, CA to execute a full redesign of the site. This new website will have increased functionality, a user friendly and intuitive design, and a modern aesthetic. We plan to launch the site by the summer of 2018.

Social Media

On the URPE blog currently has 502 people following the blog. The total number of views reached 99,391 views in 2017. Top 3 posts were the following: International Conference: Marx's Capital after 150 Years – Critique and Alternative to Capitalism; Some Remarks on MMT & Marxism in Light of David Harvey's "Marx, Capital, and the Madness of Economic Reason"; and The Far Right's New Offensive Against Academia. On Twitter, URPE account currently has 1,610 followers, with most of our audience being attracted to our twitter feed via the topics of business, politics, and current events. As for our facebook page, we currently have 6,380 members.

Listserve

The URPE list serve is used for any sort of internal communication of information related to political economy that would be of interest to a significant number of URPE members, for example, job announcements, calls for papers, and announcements of conferences, and sharing resources such as syllabi or teaching methods. It is the best way to connect with more than 1,500 people in the URPE community via email.

URPE 50th Anniversary Conference and Celebration

URPE's 50th Anniversary Celebration will take place on September 27-30, 2018 at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The celebration will include sessions and panels devoted to the past, present and future of URPE and RRPE, as well as music events and a celebratory dinner/party. We are aiming for maximum participation, from founding URPE members (68'ers) to current graduate students wondering what URPE is all about and everyone in between. Child care will be provided.

Financial

At the close of 2017 URPE is in good financial health and we continue to operate with a surplus. While there were some modest additional expenses this year related to staff transitions and new hires, organizational expenses have not substantially increased over the past year. Although we will not have a full picture for 2017 until we receive our final RRPE profit sharing figure in Q1 of 2018, we anticipate that this year's surplus means that we will not have to dip too far into the reserves in order to accomplish our goals for initiatives and programs in 2018.

Our largest expenses continue to be the salaries and health insurance for our two paid staff people (URPE Coordinator and Managing Editor of the RRPE). In addition to salaries, travel expenses make up a significant part of our budgeted expenses. We provide travel subsidies to Editorial Board and Steering Committee members to participate in regular annual or semiannual meetings. We are also planning for some costly special projects in 2018, specifically our 50th anniversary conference and a complete overhaul of our website. As for investments and assets, URPE has reserves available in a savings account as well as \$100,982 invested in a 48-month CD. Unfortunately, the CD does not offer more than 1.5% interest. We continue to keep around \$38,000 invested in Equal Exchange shares and this investment has returned an average of 6% each year. Given the success of this investment we are open to the opportunity to increase our shares and would discuss that if Equal Exchange were to make that option available to us. The breakdown of URPE assets are: \$139,720.76 in investments, and approximately \$83,000 in liquid reserves.

People

We would like to acknowledge the following people whose efforts make URPE possible.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is made up of twelve members serving staggered three-year terms, so that every year four members' terms expire.

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URPE Coordinators

In June of 2017 URPE welcomed Steve Theberge to the National Office staff. Steve is the new Organizational Coordinator, filling the position that Frances Boyes has held for many years. Frances has been a key figure in the organization and she will be missed! While Frances is no longer on staff, she is still very involved in URPE and is serving on a number of administrative committees. We wish Frances all the best in her work at the New England Joint Board of UNITE HERE.

David Fields will continue in his roll as Social Media Coordinator for URPE.

URPE members willing to make a significant but manageable commitment of time and talent are urged to consider running for election to the RRPE Editorial Board or the URPE Steering Committee.

Comments by members on the Annual Report and URPE activities are welcome and may be sent to at the URPE National Office.