

School for Politics and Critique 2022

# AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE LEFT:

The Future of Democracy  
in Southeast Europe



INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
AND HUMANITIES  
SKOPJE

ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG  
SOUTHEAST EUROPE



10-12th of September 2022  
Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities – Skopje  
North Macedonia

#SPC2022

# **AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE LEFT: The Future of Democracy in Southeast Europe**

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The SCHOOL FOR POLITICS AND CRITIQUE 2022 is dedicated to current political and activist issues in the region and abroad, focusing on Marxist and socialist responses and analyses of authoritarianism, nationalism, and illiberal politics as they relate to capitalist structures, and the state and future of democracy, especially as it pertains to both Southeast Europe, and Europe as a whole. Through a multi-disciplinary approach, both feminist and environmentalist perspectives will be put forward. Likewise, a special focus for this year's School will be placed on the Non-Copyriot platform where lines of thinking that are not only anti-authoritarian but also lean toward new realisms will also be explored, with a heavy emphasis placed on issues directly related to: radical (re)conceptions of liberalism, the issue of what both Joshua Clover and Frank Engster

refer to as "surplus population" in relation to an era of digitalized economy, the potential benefits and pitfalls of digital democracy (as digitalization is not beyond ideology), the intrinsic link between capitalism and authoritarianism, and the rise of illiberal politics, governments, and various forms of right-wing populisms across Europe, as well as varying ways of combatting them.

By bringing together activists and scholars, the school aims to open a substantial discussion which is not merely theoretical or abstract, but concerns political practice as such. Our goal is to create an inclusive and interactive environment in which participants, as well as the keynote speakers play a pivotal role. This year, the School will offer a three-day program of keynote lectures accompanied by student presentations in the afternoon.

## HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

The “School for Politics and Critique” is an educational and emancipatory platform of the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities – Skopje supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southeastern Europe. The School started in 2014 with the aim of strengthening Marxist and social critique in North Macedonia through a series of workshops and lectures dedicated to activists and theorists. In total, until 2022, there have been 24 workshops organized with more than 670 participating activists and 44 lecturers including theorists, philosophers, political activists, journalists and public intellectuals.



# DAY 1

10TH OF SEPTEMBER 2022

[9:45-10:15]  
Registration

[10:15-10:30]  
Welcome address

[10:30-11:30]  
Lecture by Frank Engster:  
**"TIME, CRITIQUE, AND REVOLUTION"**

[11:30-11:45] Coffee break

[11:45-12:15]  
Discussion/Reflection on lecture

[12:15-14:15] Lunch break

[14:15-15:15]  
Lecture by Katerina Kolozova:  
**AFTER LIBERALISM:  
WHAT IS TO BE DONE WITH THE EMPTY PLACE OF THE  
SIGNIFIER "FREEDOM"?**

[15:15-15:30] Coffee break

[15:30-17:30]  
Discussion/Reflection on the lecture/student presentations

[17:30-18:00] Coffee break

[18:00] Dinner

FRANK ENGSTER

## TIME, CRITIQUE, AND REVOLUTION

Abstract: This talk will confront the authoritarian time we currently live in with the different conceptions of time, progress and revolution in the history of radical critique, starting with classical Marxism and his linear chronological Newtonian Time, and the self-critique of its determinism by Lenin, Luxemburg, Gramsci and Lukács, which all introduced a “subjective factor” which was simultaneously a temporal factor. I follow with Benjamin’s intervention into chronological time by introducing Einstein’s space-time, which eventually was taken up by Adorno, Bloch and others in the realm of Western Marxism and Critical Theory, although in quite different and even opposed ways. I will conclude with the time conceptions of post-structuralist and post-Marxist critique, which correlate to the effects and paradoxes of time and space in quantum physics. What’s left to be discussed remains what the current authoritarian use of time looks like and what our present conceptions should look like

Bio: Frank Engster wrote his PhD thesis on the subject of time, money and measure. He is interested in the different — (post-)operaist, (post-)structuralist, form-analytic, (queer-)feminist etc. — readings of Marx’s critique, especially in money as a technique and its connection with measurement, quantification, time and (natural) science. He is also affiliated with the Non-Copyriot platform and you can find some of his publications on academia.edu

Katerina Kolozova

## **AFTER LIBERALISM: WHAT IS TO BE DONE WITH THE EMPTY PLACE OF THE SIGNIFIER “FREEDOM”?**

Abstract: We, the “failed communist societies,” admitted our moral defeat and conceded to the call-out of the Post-Marxists, such as Alasdair MacIntyre – “Marxism had failed morally,” apparently more so than the West. MacIntyre’s critical project seems to rely on all but Marxism: Aristotle, Nietzsche, and very little – if any – Marx or Marxism, whereas his main charge against it is that it has remained “too liberal.” Therefore, when it comes to the admission of Marxism’s failure, there is an overlooked misunderstanding between us in the East and the “post”-Marxists of the West. Whereas, we in the East, have believed for so long we had failed because of the “bureaucratized and alienated state” and its suppression of the freedom of expression, its totalitarianism put simply, MacIntyre and his acolytes accuse our former political system/s of the opposite – of being too liberal. Let us note that MacIntyre’s entire premise is not derived from the assumption that the mode of production had not moved away substantially from the liberal model (through wage labor and commodity production, for example). His reprimand is that the underlying reason for the failure is the ethos of the former communist states, its morality which has “remained too liberal.” Apparently, insufficient totalitarianism has led communism to its “moral failure” (rather than a historic failure related to the mode of production.) Sadly, the Anglo-American interpretation of Marxism’s failure, declared almost simultaneously with Fukuyama’s declaration of the end of history, has become the paradigm of the global “radical left” critique of liberalism – based on very little Marx and lots of Aristotle, as well as very little political economy and lots of ethics and morality.

Bio: Dr. Katerina Kolozova is Executive Director, senior researcher and full professor at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities, Skopje, and a professor of



political philosophy at FMK-Belgrade. She has published many influential articles in a number of international journals, as well as several books. These include her most recent monograph, *Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals: A Non-Marxist Critique of Capital, Philosophy and Patriarchy* (Bloomsbury Academic), as well as *Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy* (Columbia University Press).



# DAY 2

11TH OF SEPTEMBER 2022

[10:30-11:30]

Lecture by Amalia Louisson:

**"SENDING THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO THERAPY:  
AFFIRMING NIHILISM IN THE NAME OF PROGRESS"**

[11:30-11:45] Coffee break

[11:45-12:15]

Discussion/Reflection on lecture

[12:15-14:15] Lunch break

[14:15-15:45]

Student Presentations

[15:45-16:00] Coffee break

[16:00-17:00]

Lecture by Joshua Clover:

**"PARTIES OF ORDER"**

[17:00-17:30]

Discussion/Reflection on lecture

[17:30-18:00] Coffee break

[18:00] Dinner

Amalia Louisson

## **SENDING THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO THERAPY: AFFIRMING NIHILISM IN THE NAME OF PROGRESS**

Abstract: The dialectic of enlightenment remains as relevant as ever: while modern progress pushes forward, we continue to see regression to destruction and myth in its various forms, undermining its own projects of freedom, democracy, truth and innovation. This talk resurrects and reconstructs Gillian Rose's unusual and forgotten notion of progress, to see if it can enable enlightenment thought to progress past its own limits. Writing in the 80s - 90s, Rose warned of the devastating political effects of postmodernism's desertion of enlightenment metaphysics for left political capability, long before more recent critiques of its still-present ineptitude. Rose showed how, in a move of unreflexive resentment, postmodernism internalised and flipped the transcendental structure of enlightenment philosophy, reinstating its authoritarian structure in inverted form, while stripping the left of the resources to exploit or challenge enlightenment progress. To shed this lasting resignation, Rose returns philosophy to the repressed space between the breakdown of enlightenment ideals and its violent actuality, to work through the inevitable diremption between the abstract and the real. What we find in working through the violence of enlightenment practice is a radical progress that transforms the abstract through coming to terms with its imperfections, which nonetheless has the resolve to risk society into the unknown.

Bio: Amalia Louisson is a teacher, researcher, and Political Science PhD student at the University of Melbourne. Her research focuses on the relationship between psychoanalytic fantasies and environmental degradation, and how confronting the nihilism of the real can spur the conceptual and technological innovation needed to address that degradation. She advocates reconnecting philosophy with real politics and the future.

Joshua Clover

## **PARTIES OF ORDER**

Abstract: This lecture takes the right-authoritarian turn (particularly in Central Europe) as an opportunity to reflect on the left-authoritarian turn elsewhere in Europe and “the West” more broadly. The talk pays special attention to the shared faith in policy imposition as the necessary and sufficient mechanism to address social volatility, notably the volatility both expressed and borne by surplus populations and climate refugees. The presupposition of policy solutions even in times of social catastrophe is traced through two parallel texts, Andreas Malm’s *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* and Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Ministry for the Future*, concluding with a discussion regarding the declining descriptive capacity of the left-right spectrum and the need to replace banalities like “liberalism” and “democracy” with the political sine qua non of a non-economic internationalism.

Bio: Joshua Clover teaches critical and political theory in the departments of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California Davis. He is also affiliated faculty in the French and Italian Department, Film Studies Program and the Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory. His recent book *Riot.Strike.Riot: The New Era of Uprisings* (Verso), which foresaw a series of dramatic global and national events, theorizes riot as historically concrete form of class struggle, and uses the dialectic of riot and strike to develop a revised history of capital accumulation. He has also contributed articles to journals from *Representations* to *Critical Inquiry*.



# DAY 3

12TH OF SEPTEMBER 2022

[10:30-12:00]

Lecture/reflection by Zachary De Jong:  
**"THE WITHERING AWAY OF WHICH STATE?"**

[12:00-12:15] Coffee break

[12:15- 14:15]

**NETWORK MEETING COORDINATED BY ZDRAVKO SAVESKI  
IN DIALOGUE WITH KATERINA KOLOZOVA**

[14:15-16:15] Lunch break

[16:15]

Informal networking activities

Zachary De Jong

## **THE WITHERING AWAY OF WHICH STATE?**

Abstract: Communism and the state share, historically, an intrinsic link, so much so that, at least in North America, state control, totalitarianism, and communism have become practically synonymous with each other in general parlance. Marx, and countless Marxists after him, however, advocated for the disappearance of the state, taking aim at the state's role, and complicity in, forwarding and perpetuating class inequalities, and the entire structure of capital itself. In this same sense, the state can be seen as a form of meta-structure, reinforcing through law, force, and ideology, the internal logic of capitalism itself. Thus, while also exploring what the state as such is, this lecture will ask: what then does the disappearance of the state mean today, how do these forms of hegemonic control function across a wide range of variegated contexts, and through what modes can we resist them?

Bio: Zachary De Jong is a researcher and graduate student at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities, Skopje. His research is focused on examining Marxist and materialist conceptions of what a post-capitalist or communist society could look like going forward. He has published an article on this topic entitled: "Reimagining the Oikos" (Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture).







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