

The Capitalist Mode of Power

Second Speaker Series

Organized by the *Forum on Capital as Power* and sponsored by the York Department of Political Science and Graduate Program in SPT

Verney Room, 674 South Ross, Keele Campus (open to all, with refreshments)

Existing theories of capitalism, mainstream as well as heterodox, view capitalism as a mode of production and consumption. The purpose of this speaker series is to interrogate capitalism as a mode of power.

Tuesday, October 20, 2015, 3:00-5:00 PM

The CasP Project: Past, Present, Future. The study of capital as power began when we were students in the 1980s and has since expanded into a broader project, involving a growing number of researchers and new areas of inquiry. The presentation explores what we have learned so far, reviews ongoing research and suggests future trajectories – including the coevolution of concepts and modes of power; the origins of capitalized power; the state of capital; finance as the symbolic *creordering* of capitalism; the role of labour, production and waste; the capitalized environment; and the need for post-capitalist accounting.

Jonathan Nitzan. *Professor of Political Economy, Department of Political Science and the Graduate Program in Social and Political Thought, York University (nitzan@yorku.ca) and Shimshon Bichler, Israel (tookie@barak.net.il)*

Tuesday, October 27, 2015, 3:00-5:00 PM

Economic Growth as a Power Process. Is economic growth a miracle of the free market? According to mainstream theory, growth is best ensured through conditions of ‘perfect competition’. However, economic growth is tightly correlated with the concentration of power in the hands of large corporations. Why? The capital as power framework provides potential answers that turn mainstream theory on its head: growth seems to be intimately related to the formation of hierarchy.

Blair Fix. *PhD student at the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University (blairfix@gmail.com)*

Tuesday, November 3, 2015, 3:00-5:00 PM

Blockbuster Cinema: Hollywood’s Obsession with Low Risk. Hollywood is obsessed with blockbusters – for 20 years the major studios have been making them, and it appears that blockbuster cinema will be with us for many years to come. This presentation will theoretically and empirically explain how blockbusters, and the associated business strategies that surround them, serve Hollywood’s financial goals. The key to blockbusters is that they allow major studios to reduce their risk. The revenues of designed-to-be blockbusters rarely fall below expectations, making the world of cinema increasingly predictable. Moreover, this predictability affects how the film business controls the social creativity of filmmakers and, indirectly, the behaviour of consumers.

James McMahon. *PhD student at the Graduate Program in Social and Political Thought, York University (jmcMahon@yorku.ca)*

Tuesday, November 10, 2015, 3:00-5:00 PM

Global Safe Haven: Bonding Domestic and Foreign Owners of the US Public Debt. What explains the resiliency of the US Treasuries market as a global safe haven for investors? Why doesn’t the US federal government simply inflate away its debt burden now that foreigners own roughly half of it? This presentation explains how the powerful domestic owners of the other half of the public debt help to ensure the continued creditworthiness of the US. Striving to preserve the sanctity of US Treasuries, both domestic and foreign owners have become ‘bonded’ by the same interests.

Sandy Brian Hager. *Postdoctoral Fellow, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University (sanha926@gmail.com)*

Tuesday, November 17, 2015, 3:00-5:00 PM

The Enduring Power of GE. General Electric (GE) has demonstrated extraordinary longevity in the upper echelon of U.S. corporations. From 1925 to 2013, the company has never fallen below 10th in the rankings of firms by market capitalization. The only other firm to match this feat is the oil giant ExxonMobil. GE’s durability is remarkable given the political, cultural, and technological tumult of the 20th century. In this presentation, I will consider possible reasons for GE’s dominance. This study of GE is part of an effort to develop a new field of Accumulation Studies.

D.T. Cochrane. *PhD student at the Graduate Program in Social and Political Thought, York University (dt.cochrane@gmail.com)*