



Center for Popular Economics Summer Workshop Series

June 7- August 9, 2014

All Workshops are held 2-5pm

@ the Pioneer Valley Central Labor Council
640 Page Boulevard, Springfield MA

Saturday June 7

Introduction to CPE's Political Economy Analysis

Teachers: Zhongjin Li and David Eisnitz

Today's economic crisis raises profound questions about the nature of the dominant economic model — free-market capitalism. The struggle for a new world requires many things, and one of them is an understanding of the current economic system. This participatory workshop serves as an introduction to CPE's approach to political economy. We will provide tools for analyzing the structure and dynamics of the U.S. capitalist system, and explore the various ways the pursuit of profit contributes to economic instabilities, inequality, and ecological destruction. We will also identify changes in the dominant economic ideologies and forms of capitalism in 20th century U.S. history, making connections with our own histories and with other major social movements.

Saturday June 14

35 Years of Worsening Labor Conditions- What Can We Do About It?

Teachers: David Kotz and Adrian Wilson

Reviews the ways in which labor's conditions have been getting worse since around 1980 and the roots of these trends. These trends include declining real wages and working conditions; rapidly declining job security; a high average unemployment rate, especially since 2009; loss of reliable retirement pension systems; the expansion of low-wage jobs in which labor laws are often violated; and the big increase in inequality. A key factor lying behind these trends has been the long decrease in the percentage of workers represented by unions. Ways to reverse these trends will be considered, including a rise in the legal minimum wage.

Saturday June 21

Higher Education in Neoliberal America

Teachers: Mark Silverman and Anastasia Wilson

This workshop aims to use CPE's analysis to understand issues in higher education. We will address the role of higher education in a capitalist economy, and how colleges and universities operate as capitalist firms themselves. We will use the analysis to understand issues of student debt, privatization, precarious academic labor, and alternative models of education.

Saturday June 28

Local Food, Good Jobs

Teachers: Helen Scharber and Olivia Geiger

In this participatory workshop, participants will develop tools for analyzing how local food production--from growing to processing to retail--fits into the broader economy. In particular, we will explore reasons why balancing good paying jobs with competitive and affordable food prices is so difficult, along with strategies for increasing the quality of jobs in the food sector and the affordability of local organic food. Appropriate for anyone involved or interested in local food production.

Saturday July 12

Capitalism and the K-12 School System

Teachers: David Eisnitz and Kyla Walters

This workshop will examine the role of the K-12 public education system in American capitalism. We will discuss U.S. public schools as a system for producing worker-citizens and as a system of social control. Topics will include the role of schools in producing and reproducing inequality, in regulating youth labor and the labor market, and in teaching dominant norms and values. We will go on to consider how schools can be a potential site of liberation, community, and progressive social change.

Saturday July 19

Global Political Economy of Trade and Immigration

Teachers: Riko Rosete and Kartik Misra

We will discuss how trade policies and colonial histories create the impetus for immigration to wealthier countries such as the US, the Gulf States and Japan. We will then talk about the experiences of different diasporas here in the US under an immigration policy that divides families and continues to impoverish migrant workers. Finally, we will discuss what immigrant rights struggles have already achieved and how we can continue to organize for more just and equitable trade and immigration policies.

Saturday July 26

National Single Payer Health Insurance: Can We Afford Anything Less?

Teachers: Gerald Friedman and Samantha Sterba

We will discuss the economics of private health insurance system and how to move beyond the current debate over the Affordable Care Act to a real discussion of how to provide quality health care to all Americans.

Saturday August 2

Household Debt, the Foreclosure Crisis, and Resistance

Teachers: Thomas Herndon and Lacey Mower

The collapse of the housing bubble in 2007 triggered a widespread foreclosure crisis and debt overhang, which have slowed economic recovery. This workshop will discuss the housing crisis in terms of larger distributional conflicts between creditors and debtors, policies to forgive debt, and resistance to foreclosure and displacement by social movements..

Saturday August 9

Can We Cooperate Out of This Mess?

Teachers: Olivia Geiger and Jonathan Jenner

We often hear people talk about cooperatives as alternatives to capitalism. In this workshop, we'll place cooperative strategy in the context of various theories on alternatives to capitalism, and then explore how democratic ownership and decision-making may (or may not) respond to failures of capitalism. After classifying types of coops, we'll see what lessons we can draw from the experience of coops and cooperative systems around the world and historically. We'll ask: in what ways can co-ops help us achieve greater equity, justice, ecological sustainability, and stability in our communities and in the economy as a whole, and what challenges and limitations might this strategy encounter?