

Stephen Ferguson
North Carolina State University

“Another World is Possible”: the Marxist Philosophy of Revolution

Professor Ferguson will explore the conceptual and methodological limitations of contemporary political philosophy as it has developed in the aftermath of John Rawls. One of these conceptual limitations is the absence of a substantive discussion of revolution.

The talk will challenge the normative presuppositions of contemporary political philosophy, for example, its commitment to either Rawlsian liberalism or Nozick’s libertarianism. If Rawls or Nozick are the presumptive context for doing contemporary political philosophy, then capitalism—despite being the material cause of slavery, racism, Jim Crow segregation, gentrification, and poverty—functions as a presumptive context for the solution to any and all social and political problems. Therefore, political philosophers— particularly in the African American tradition—will never attempt to develop a philosophy of revolution which sees the need to go beyond capitalism.

Professor Ferguson will argue that revolutions are (1) a historical process driven by class antagonism, (2) in which one ruling class is displaced by another, and (3) which produces a social transformation in the “productive capacities” and “social progressive potentialities” of society at large. Moreover, the justification for revolution cannot be based on moral outrage. Moral concepts and judgments play an explanatory role, but they are subordinate to social theory. Only a concrete analysis of concrete conditions can provide the rationale or justification for revolution.

Friday, April 19, 2024
at 5:00 pm,
COE, Room 164
An Informal Reception to Follow