



ANARCHISM, PAST AND PRESENT

Spring 2021; PHIL 32091 / CRN: 17068
“Seminar on Philosophical Reflections”
Mondays/Wednesdays, 12:30-1:45pm
Synchronous; Remote Delivery

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This course begins with the history of anarchism in 19th-century Europe, covering figures such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, and Pyotr Kropotkin. These thinkers laid down the foundations of the anarchist philosophy regarding the relationship between an individual and society. Though similar in some respects to the socialism of Karl Marx, we will see that anarchist ideas differ sharply from Marxism, and even more so from the historically disastrous doctrines of V. I. Lenin. We then move our attention to the United States in the early 20th century, where Emma Goldman, Lucy Parsons, and many others made profound contributions to our understanding of both women’s rights and Black rights, and made clear the injustices of the modern-day prison system. Later in the century, a revival of anarchist philosophy was wrought by Noam Chomsky, Murray Bookchin, David Graeber, and Ruth Kinna, this time focusing more heavily on contemporary issues, such as the battle against neo-fascism and neoliberalism, the fight for LGBTQ+ rights, for animal welfare, and for substantive solutions to the ecological and social problems stemming from global anthropogenic climate change. We’ll round out the course with a foray into two related areas—one historical, the other literary. The first of these is Taoist philosophy, which articulated core anarchist themes as early as the 6th century BC. The second is a literary work of futuristic fiction, *The Dispossessed*, by the Taoist and Anarchist author, Ursula K. LeGuin. The book puts aspects of anarchist thought on vivid display—as only literary fiction can—and then scrutinizes them with a sharp critical eye. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to help you reflect on your role in society, your notions of personal liberty, and your vision of a *just* community.