

POLITICAL ECONOMY PROJECT

Statement of Purpose

Political Economy Project

1) The Great Recession of 2007-08, the uprisings which swept the Middle East and North Africa, the revolts against austerity in Spain and Greece, and the rebellions in Ferguson and Baltimore all demonstrate the need for a critical political economy that transcends static analytical categories and traditional disciplinary boundaries. We do not, in their place, offer a unified intellectual or political program. We are committed to seeking radical alternatives that challenge conventional intellectual frameworks and structures of power and wealth.

2) We take as our point of reference the intellectual tradition of political economy from Karl Marx to the present, embracing both its methodological pluralism and its fundamental critique of capital and empire.

3) Political economy addresses the mutual constitution of states, markets, and classes, the co-constitution of class, race, gender, and other forms of identity, varying modes of capital accumulation and the legal, political, and cultural forms of their regulation, relations among local, national, and global forms of capital, class, and culture, the construction of forms of knowledge and hegemony; techno-politics; water and the environment as resources and fields of contestation; the role of war in the constitution of states and classes; and practices and cultures of domination and resistance.

4) Political economy is not simply the intersection of previously existing disciplinary boundaries (politics and economics). Our political economy is based on a critique of disciplinary, geographical, ethnic, and religious boundaries. Those disciplines and boundaries, constructed from the late 19th through the mid-20th centuries, obscure imperial interests and social hierarchies, the unity of society as an object of investigation, and the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. They direct our attention to limited problems and partial solutions, divide the world into units conducive to imperial rule, construct mythologized national and communal histories, and establish standards of common sense and normality that criminalize or marginalize ideas and behaviors that challenge the existing order. Against the widespread current mystification of “globalization” we assert that capitalism has always been global. Its historical development is inextricably intertwined with genocides, slavery and other forms of unfree labor, racism, patriarchy, and empire commonly justified by ideologies of advancing “civilization” and exceptionalism.

5) We deeply believe in our common humanity and in the potential for a common language, through which we can share our experiences, study our histories, and establish bonds of solidarity. We reject the view that the strength of so-called primordial identities of the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa makes this any less possible than in any other global region.