



Adam Morton
Wednesday
15 March

100 Years That Shook the World

1917. 2017. The Russian Revolution was an example of what one of its participant-witnesses, John Reed, called 'intensified history'. At the same time as *Ten Days That Shook the World* was published, another of the Russian Revolution's witness-chroniclers was documenting the transformations of space in Red Petrograd, its contradictions, and consequences under the name of Victor Serge. By analysing the space of the city and the condition of urban revolution in the writings of Victor Serge we can explore the spatial ordering of state power, geopolitics, and revolution. With a specific focus on *Conquered City* in the context of Red Petrograd and *The Case of Comrade Tulayev* set during the Great Terror in Soviet Russia, my focus will highlight the struggle between revolution and counter-revolution reflected in these works that both address in different and connected ways the struggle for space, the spatial logistics of the state, and how the modern state organises space.

Post-Truth and the Unfinished Communications Revolution

We live in a revolutionary age of communicative abundance. New information platforms, robust muckraking and cross-border publics are among the exciting trends of our time. Yet this seminar shows why the unfinished revolution is dogged by decadent counter-trends, including the drift towards what is called 'post-truth': the burying of 'objective facts' by an avalanche of 'appeals to emotion and personal belief' (OED). The critics of 'post-truth' have a point: government secrecy and lies, corporate spin, media silence, bullshit, 'fake news' and other forms of gaslighting are indeed gaining ground. But there are lingering doubts. How philosophically plausible are calls for recovering 'truth' in our public lives? Might they be the bearer of practical solutions that are just as bad, perhaps worse, than the problem they seek to overcome? Does truth-telling have its limits? Is the political project of bidding 'farewell to truth' really obsolete?



John Keane
Wednesday
29 March



Sofia Näsström
Wednesday
12 April

The Spirit of Democracy

In common usage, modern democracy falls back on a sovereign people. It refers to a form of government where the people has the ultimate authority to decide the direction and substance of democratic law. In the *The Spirit of Democracy*, I argue that this familiar interpretation fails to capture what is radical and promising about the political project set in motion by the revolutions in the late 18th century, and how it may be reinvigorated to counter the corruption of democratic practices and ideals. Modern democracy is not based on a sovereign people. It is a classless form of government animated and sustained by a principle of emancipation, and together these two features make up the unique spirit—in Montesquieu's sense of the term—of modern democracy. By paying attention to this spirit, it is not only possible to prevent the degeneration of democracy into other political forms. We enhance our understanding of what is distinctively democratic about such familiar political institutions as universal suffrage, human rights and the public sphere, and how the radical spirit that animate them may be revived to meet new political crises.



Light lunch will be provided, please register for catering purposes. Scan the QR code or visit <http://bit.ly/DF-seminar>

A Century of Revolution and Counter Revolution

from the Bolshevik Revolution to May '68 and beyond





//////////////////////////////////// The People’s Republic of Amnesia

‘History is the best textbook’ is one of the favourite phrases of China’s President Xi Jinping, yet only one version of history is acceptable in today’s China. Since 2012, the ruling Communist party has made radical efforts to tighten its control over history, even bringing lawsuits against those seen guilty of ‘historical nihilism’. This battle to control historical memory can be clearly seen in attempts to curb even private commemorations of the uprising and bloody crackdown of 1989 and silence public comment on the topic. Over time, the events of June 4th 1989 have become more, not less sensitive. The streets around Tiananmen Square were not the only place that experienced a bloody suppression in 1989. By examining the example of an almost-forgotten crackdown in the city of Chengdu in 1989, we can see a near-perfect case study in the state’s ability to rewrite history. This talk examines the cost of remembering in a society where amnesia is – as author Yan Lianke put it – a ‘state-sponsored sport’, and we look at the efforts required to persist with this policy in the digital age.



Louisa Lim
Wednesday
26 April



Simon Tormey
Wednesday
10 May

Be Realistic: Demand the impossible – the legacy of May ’68 for thinking about political possibility today

The events of May 1968, when France was brought to a standstill by a broad-based insurrection of students and trade unionists, were an extraordinary eruption even by the standards of that momentous year. As well as furnishing new slogans and motifs for imagining the “outside” of capitalism, it also left a legacy of powerful political works with great relevance for understanding our “populist” times. Among these works are Debord’s Society of the Spectacle, Vaneigem’s Revolution in Everyday Life and Lyotard’s Libidinal Economy. This talk examines the intellectual and political legacy of ‘68 and the emergence of concepts such as détournement, the spectacle and simulacra for describing communicative capitalism and the modes of resistance it enables.

Revolutionary Woes: Liberté, égalité and France’s contemporary crisis of fraternité

The late-18th century French republican principles of liberty and equality were born of revolutionary forces that abolished the absolutism and privileges of the ancien régime. They paved the way for a specifically French understanding of citizenship: political membership conferred through the active participation of individuals in forming the general will of ‘the people’. The revolution destroyed differentiated privileges and established egalitarian rights and universal civic obligations. In multicultural France, this notion of republican citizenship as le vivre-ensemble is still very much alive. It prompts some central questions: among France’s three revolutionary values (liberté, égalité, fraternité) is the latter the most tenuous? Doesn’t it force a culturally diverse nation to conform politically to the republican project of living together by democratically overcoming hierarchies through exclusion?



Abi Taylor
Wednesday
24 May



James Der Derian
Wednesday
7 June

Quantum: The next permanent revolution? //////////////////////////////////////

In 1917 the Bolshevik leadership hitched its political platform to what they believed to be an inevitable historical process driven by scientific and industrial transformations: a permanent revolution. Conceived by Marx, elaborated by Trotsky and operationalized by Mao, the concept of permanent revolution has a chequered past. In practice, permanent revolution proved terribly but also creatively destructive, destroying anciens regimes and whole populations as well as producing new modes of warfare and statecraft. A century later, in a moment of great uncertainty, disruption and volatility, the idea of permanent revolution is worth revisiting, to help us anticipate and understand what might possibly come with the next great transformation, a quantum revolution?