

Center for a Stateless Society

Foundational Certificate in Anarchist Theory and Practice

ATP 110 Market Anarchist Praxis

Summer 2010

“The organization we try to build is the kind of society our revolution will create.” – Murray Bookchin,
“Listen, Marxist!”

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Meeting Times Class discussions and presentations will take place through the online forums provided by C4SS, with one-on-one engagement and feedback through e-mail or live chat.

Weekly class discussion, Mondays 6-7pm Pacific time / 9-10pm ET.

I will be available during regular “office hours” for one-on-one discussions about the course material, or any other questions or concerns you may want to talk about, by e-mail, online chat, or phone call:

- Monday 4-6pm PT / 7-9pm ET
- Wednesday 7-9pm PT / 10-12pm ET
- Friday 4-6pm PT / 7-9pm ET

Class presentations, discussions, and one-on-one feedback on student responses and research projects ongoing throughout the week.

Course Description This course is about Anarchist *praxis* – the art of bringing Anarchistic theory into real-world practice. We will discuss not only how to select from a predefined collection of practical means in light of a readymade intellectual theory, but also how Anarchistic principles and analysis inform the kinds of political practice to adopt, and how the experience of political struggle might inform Anarchist theory. Our focus will be on Market Anarchism – on the family of approaches to Anarchism that envision a free society encompassing individual property ownership, entrepreneurial innovation, and consensual trade. But we will consider Market Anarchism as one part of a broad, evolving, and continually cross-fertilizing Anarchist tradition; and, indeed, as part of an history of world-wide interconnected social struggles. We will spend a lot of time not only with material on Market Anarchist strategy, but also with material on the history and tradition of many varieties of Anarchism and of other liberation movements.

By the conclusion of this course you should be able to:

- Identify, articulate, and critically discuss several key historical and contemporary Anarchistic approaches to the problem of bringing about a flourishing stateless society, and to maintaining freedom once it has been won;
- Critically assess claims about “practicality” in radical and Anarchist politics, considering ethical, political, strategic, and other dimensions of practical reasoning.

- Explore and explain the relationships between theory and practice in different schools of Anarchistic thought;
- Show how different strategies for change would respond to specific practical problems (like war, institutional racism, cultural conflicts, taxation, environmental responsibility, etc.), articulating the advantages and disadvantages of each approach from an Anarchistic standpoint.
- Creatively craft and articulately defend a workable radical approach to a clearly delimited practical problem likely to confront Anarchist practitioners, Anarchist social movements, or a future anarchic society,
- Further explore, develop and extend practical proposals through critical dialogue

Text The principal texts for the course will be:

Konkin, Sam, *An Agorist Primer*. 1st ed. KoPubCo. 978-0-9777649-7-6.

Gordin, Uri. *Anarchy Alive! Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory*. Pluto Press. 978-0-7453268-3-2.

These texts will be supplemented with a number of short readings from many sources to be selected by the instructor, including works by Henry David Thoreau, William Lloyd Garrison, Albert Jay Nock, Ralph Chaplin, Martin Luther King Jr., Murray Rothbard, Murray Bookchin, Jo Freeman, and others. As the class progresses, a selection of supplementary readings will be selected by students. All readings will be available online on the open web or through the class e-reserve.

This course will be an *introduction* to the subject of Anarchist praxis but not a *survey* of approaches. There are many books and many more articles on libertarian strategy than what we could possibly cover in a semester-long course. Instead, we will focus on carefully detailing some of the major issues that reveal themselves through the elaboration of two specific approaches to Anarchist politics, and using supplementary readings, together with our own discussion and criticism, to explore these issues in greater depth.

Evaluation Your grade for the course will be based on your contribution to ongoing class discussion, your engagement with the material and the work of your peers, and by your display of careful analysis, critique, and thoughtful development of ideas in your written assignments.

Weekly discussion questions and critiques: Before each live class session, you will prepare 1-3 discussion questions for the week's topic, and a one-page (roughly 500-700 words) critical response to an issue raised in the week's readings. Any question that is relevant to the topic, and likely to produce fruitful discussion, or greater understanding of difficult puzzles, is a good discussion-starter. In the responses, from week to week, you will be asked either for a response to a specific question on the readings, an analysis and critical response to a single argument of your choice from one of the readings for the week, or an analysis and adjudication of a point of an interesting point of disagreement between two of the week's readings. (Note that critical responses to arguments need not be negative responses; but you should clearly explain the structure of the argument, and consider possible objections and counter-arguments.) You can write the critique however you want, but you should turn it in to me in an electronic copy, in OpenDocument Text, Word .doc, PDF, or HTML format, uploaded to the course website.

Class discussion: Class discussion will begin with a live online class meeting for between half an hour and an hour at the beginning of each week of the course.

(Participation in the live meeting is strongly encouraged but not absolutely mandatory.) Discussion will continue throughout the week in an online discussion forum, through optional student chats, and through one-on-one conferences with the instructor during office hours. You will be expected to participate actively and civilly in each week's discussion, offering thoughtful responses to comments made and questions asked by the instructor and other class members.

Seminar presentation: your participation in class discussion will include taking responsibility for one extended written presentation on one of the weekly readings considered during the course, analyzing the important points in the assigned week's readings, examining how the suggestions about political practice relate to problems discussed elsewhere in the course, and how they fit (or fail to fit) into an individualistic and Anarchistic framework.

Commentary on presentation: you will also be responsible for one extended commentary on a fellow student's seminar presentation, highlighting what you take to be the most important points, offering suggestions about points that should be filled in at greater length, offering a civil critique of any points on which you are unconvinced by the arguments given, or an extension of points which you are convinced can be applied more broadly. The commentary can include rebuttals and definite counter-arguments, but should focus on putting questions to the presenter for further discussion – on starting conversation, not on closing it.

Position paper: You will complete a position paper of roughly 3,000-4,000 as a capstone project for the course. In the project, you should examine possible approaches to a practical question to be addressed by Anarchists or broader liberation movements, either as a matter of *internal* organization (how Anarchists should relate, organize, and behave amongst ourselves) or of *external* engagement with/struggle against groups and institutions within the state or the broader society. Your position paper should consider ethical, political, and strategic dimensions of the practical question, and of the approach or approaches that advocates of one or more of the key approaches covered in class discussions would recommend tackling the problem. You should consider advantages, disadvantages, and possible objections to the traditional approaches considered, and then articulate and defend a proposal of your own – after all is said and done, how *should* Anarchists set about tackling the practical problem you've discussed?

Your position papers should cite primary sources as evidence – using either footnotes or inline citation to indicate sources – for its interpretation of existing practical approaches to the problem. The first draft of your project should be turned in within two weeks of the final class session. You will receive detailed feedback on your paper, and will be expected to turn in a revised and expanded draft that further develops the ideas presented in the paper in light of suggestions and questions provided in the feedback.

Grading You may receive a grade of Honors, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory in the course. Your grade will reflect an overall assessment of your performance on all course-related exercises.

Schedule The course will include eight weeks of regular class meetings, and three weeks of optional enrichment discussions while working on final papers. Topics to be discussed will include the relationship between theory and practice, conceptual questions about “practicality,” different dimensions of practical reasoning, motives and forms of organization, radicalism and reformism, gradualism and immediatism, libertarian electioneering, third-party politics, small groups and mass movements, alliances with

the right and left, nonviolent methods and the use of force, mass education, moral agitation, civil disobedience, direct action, insurrection, Anarcho-Zionism, counter-economics, and historical connections between approaches from Market Anarchist, Social Anarchist, and other social movements.

A week-by-week schedule of readings and discussion topics will be provided at the beginning of the class.

About the Foundational Certificate This course is the third in a sequence of four classes leading to the Foundational Certificate in Anarchist Theory and Practice offered by the Center for a Stateless Society. Students considering this course should have at least some prior background in Anarchist thought, either through independent study or through having completed the previous course, ATP 101: Introduction to Anarchism. You must earn a grade of Satisfactory in each course to obtain the Foundational Certificate; if you obtain three Honors grades, you will receive the Foundational Certificate with Honors.

About the Instructor Charles Johnson is an individualist Anarchist writer and activist living in Las Vegas, Nevada. He is the author of the *Rad Geek People's Daily* weblog at <<http://radgeek.com/>> and a frequent columnist and public speaker on Anarchism, radicalism, free-market anti-capitalism, and grassroots alternatives to electoral politics. He a B.A. in Philosophy from Auburn University, and is a founding member of the Alliance of the Libertarian Left and the Molinari Institute.