

URPE Newsletter

2010 URPE Summer Conference

Global Climate Change & Capitalism

Friday, July 30—Monday, August 2
Epworth Camp and Retreat Center,
High Falls, New York
(registration info pp. 6-7)

Plenaries

Friday evening: David Gordon Lecture

Climate Change: Barbarism or Socialism?
Minqi Li, University of Utah

Saturday evening: Causes and Consequences of Climate Change

Joel Kovel, Editor, *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, author, *The Enemy of Nature*, “Climate Change: The Legacy of Capital.”

Brian Tokar, Director, Institute for Social Ecology, “Apocalypse and Utopia in Today’s Climate Movement.”

Diana Wu, Amherst College, “A New Environmentalism: U.S. Grassroots Approaches to Justice and Ecology”

Sunday evening: Confronting Climate Change—What Works and What Doesn’t

Michael Dorsey, Assistant Professor and Director of Climate Justice Project, Dartmouth College, “A Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Carbon Market Galaxy and the Sagas of Climate Justice.”

Helen Scharber, UMass Amherst; Economists for Equity and the Environment, “Cap and Dividend: Climate Policy for the People.”

Rachel Smolker, Co-director, Biofuelwatch; Organizer, Climate SOS, “Renewable Energy: False Solutions and Real Potential.”

More on the Summer Conference

Every year URPE invites you to join us at a family and child-friendly summer camp mixing radical academics and activists in formal and informal discussion, with plenaries and workshops on political economy, as well as socializing, recreation, evening entertainment and activities for children and families. We

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URPE

The **Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE)** is a membership organization of academics and activists who share an interest in a radical analysis of political and economic topics. Founded in 1968, URPE's members use this analysis to advance various progressive political and social agendas. URPE publishes the *Review of Radical Political Economics*, runs a set of presentations at the academic professional meetings of the Allied Social Science Associations, sponsors a resource/speakers bureau called Economy Connection, and holds a Summer Conference on political and economic topics at a family-friendly summer camp. Its members are active in a wide array of professional and activist projects.

The URPE Newsletter

The **URPE Newsletter** is published quarterly by the Union for Radical Political Economics. The Newsletter is a place for URPE members to publish shorter articles and speeches as well as make announcements of upcoming events that might be of interest to members. Articles and announcements can be sent to the Newsletter Editor in the body of an e-mail message, or as an attached file; send to jbrown72073@cs.com, or by regular mail to: *Jenny Brown, 1701 NE 75th St., Gainesville, FL 32641.*

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The URPE Newsletter is a good place to publish advertisements for new books! Rates are \$300 per full page (7.5 inches wide by 9.3 inches high); \$160 for a half page, and \$85 for a quarter page. Exchange ads are also considered. Please write or call the National Office for more information on this.

Deadlines for submission to Newsletter are January 7 for winter issue; April 7 for spring issue; June 20 for summer issue, and October 7 for fall issue.

also provide childcare for all who request it by July 15, at no additional cost. (Please see registration form and fees on pages 6-7.)

Location

This year we will meet at the Epworth Camp and Retreat Center in High Falls, NY, Friday, July 30 through Monday, August 2. Epworth functions as both a day camp and a conference center. You can take a look at photos on their website, www.epworthcenter.com. The layout is ideal for accessibility: everything is on the ground floor and the grounds are flat. Special features are a pool, canoeing on the Rondout River, several campfire sites, and a cave which was part of the underground railroad!

Epworth is about 10 minutes away from the Adirondack Trailways bus station in Rosendale, NY (next stop after New Paltz), between the Catskill and Shawangunk Mountains. Nearby towns of Rosendale, High Falls, and Stone Ridge are also lovely, historic destinations in the Hudson Valley.

Accommodations

We will be accommodated in four lodges that include bunk rooms, common space, and kitchenettes. All rooms have access to bathrooms and showers. Please note: linens are *NOT* provided. You will need to bring pillows, towels, and sleeping bags or sheets and blankets. Please contact the URPE office at 413-577-0806 or urpe@labornet.org if your mode of travel makes this a hardship for you. There is also an attractive tenting area with available bathroom facilities.

Allocation of rooms will be made on the basis of need for those whose registration is received by July 15, and otherwise on a first-come, first-served basis. Rooms will be categorized in many ways to accommodate all the people who attend. The needs of most people with physical disabilities can be accommodated. Those who have special needs are asked to contact the URPE National Office. All meals will include a vegetarian option.

Child care

URPE is proud to provide free child care; please register and notify the National Office of your specific needs (number of children, age) by July 15th. We welcome families, and the camp and surrounding area have many child-oriented activities. However, we need time to plan, so we can't promise free childcare unless we

are notified of childcare needs by July 15th.

Registration

Registrations received by July 15 will enjoy a discounted fee. Later registration will be charged our regular fee (see rates and registration form on pages 6-7). Refunds minus processing fee are available if you must change your plans. Arrival time begins after 4 p.m. on Friday, July 30. The conference ends after lunch on Monday, August 2.

Summer Conference Workshops

(Check the website at www.urpe.org for updates)

Radical Analysis of Climate Change I

Alex Julca (UNDP), *Uneven Economic and Social Impacts of Climate Change*

Jacqueline Patterson (NAACP), *The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Climate Change*

Political Economy and Crises of Capitalism

Mohamad Shaaf (Univ. of Central Oklahoma), *The Link between Over-Expanded-Concentrated Capital, Oligarchy, and Political Crisis*

Thomas Volscho, *The Revenge of the Capitalist Class: The Rise and Crisis of Neoliberalism*

Alternative Perspectives on Social Security and Health Care

Robert Kemp, *Healthcare in the USA: Two Steps Backward*

Brent Kramer, *The Class War Against Social Security and the "Liberal" Agenda*

Radical Analysis of Climate Change II

Tom Walker and Gene Coyle, *Climate Change and Working Time – Beyond Business as Usual*

Mariano Torras, *Climate Change, the Capitalist Crisis, and the Relevance of E.F. Schumacher's Ideas*

Queer Pedagogy and Teaching Climate Change from a Heterodox Perspective

Kristin Munro (Univ. of Illinois, Chicago), *Homo-economicus: Queer Pedagogy for Introductory Economics*

Anita Dancs (Western New England College) and Helen Sharber (Univ. of Massachusetts-Amherst), *Teaching Climate Change and Environmental Economics (from Continued on back cover...*

Update on Economy Connection, URPE's Resource/Speakers Bureau

by Ruthie Indeck, Coordinator (201-792-7459 or soapbox@urpe.org)

Today's Corporation:

More Like a Country than a Person

On May 5 MoveOn.Org sponsored over 150 community forums around the U.S. to inform people about how corporations affect their daily lives, and to encourage them to come up with strategies to fight back. One such meeting, held at Hostos Community College in the Bronx, featured Economy Connection members Eric Laursen and Renee Toback as speakers and workshop facilitators. Eric focused on corporate political power, and Renee talked about economic power.

Journalist Eric Laursen began his description of corporate influence with a discussion of elections, focusing on the January Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Commission*. Although “wealthy people have tried to influence elections as long as there’s been an independent United States,” the *Citizens United* decision was a major reversal of *McCain-Feingold*, which, despite its imperfections, did place limits on corporate spending in elections. And Justice Kennedy, who wrote the majority opinion, asserted a controversial doctrine called “corporate personhood”—“the notion that except where it’s very obviously not the case, like voting, corporations have all the same rights as individuals. And that includes free speech. Any attempt to restrict their use of their money to express a point of view, by implication, is an attack on the First Amendment.”

Eric listed many current legislative proposals that attempt to undo some of the damage caused by this decision. And he warned of the dangers of a related corporate effort to allow corporate campaign contributors to keep their contributions anonymous. “When a group of Wall Street firms in the late 90s and again in 2005 under George W. Bush was contributing large sums to public-relations campaigns to privatize Social Security, the AFL-CIO was able to persuade them to stop by going to their top executives and threatening to pull the union pension money that those firms managed. Without readily knowing who was contributing to that campaign, they couldn’t have done this.”

Eric went on to describe another way corporations drive public policy in the U.S. today: joint activities by the private and public sectors, such as the Pentagon’s revolving door between military officials and defense suppliers, and government attempts to privatize Social

Security. The latter would result in “a steady, ongoing stream of fees that would help to balance out the huge losses that Wall Street sometimes takes on its trading operations, as we’ve seen recently. The ultimate bailout.”

Eric also talked about corporate influence on regulation (“when Enron needed a rule changed or a regulation tweaked, [Kenneth] Lay always knew where to go and who to talk to”); government promotion of corporate interests abroad, on a much larger scale than ever before; and a “political bailout” that has accompanied the financial bailout, ensuring that many of the architects of the financial crisis would be able to retain their positions of power. Eric summed up the situation: “It’s not that corporations have too strong an influence over government. It’s that corporations and government—corporations and the State—are one. There’s no separation.” Eric concluded with suggestions for action: a new round of trust-busting, nurturing co-ops and worker-owned entities, and looking to countries like Bolivia and Venezuela for inspiration.

Continuing with the theme of corporate personhood, labor economist Renee Toback said: “Corporations are not people or persons. They are more like countries. Their size and concentrated power is greater than any person I know. It is probably greater than any person anywhere. Of the world’s largest 150 economic entities, 95 are corporations (63.3%) according to World Bank data released by *Fortune Magazine*. Walmart, BP, Exxon Mobil, and Royal Dutch/Shell Group all rank in the 25 largest entities in the world, above some countries, including Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Norway, Denmark, Poland, South Africa, and Greece.”

Renee gave a passionate description of the power of corporations in our daily lives, focusing on the food industry. Although we see a huge number of brand names and products, most of this industry is dominated by a handful of corporations, giving consumers little real choice. “If you eat meat, chances are you will consume the product of one of four companies: Tyson, Cargill, Swift or National Beef Packing Co. They control about 85 percent of U.S. beef. Cargill is also the fourth largest pork packer, third largest turkey producer... on and on.”

Consolidation is increasing. “In the 1980s mergers and acquisitions were valued at \$1.4 trillion, growing to \$11 trillion during the 1990s, then between 2000 and

2003 to \$7.6 trillion in only 3 years. ...The world's ten largest companies garnered 12 percent of the total revenue of the largest 500 companies; they also had 15 percent of the total profits of these behemoths."

These companies operate world-wide. And in addition to affecting consumption, they employ (and unemploy) millions of people.

"Yes, the corporations are so big and so intertwined that their problems become our problems, magnified a thousand fold." Since the 70s, corporations have increasingly shifted their problems to us, culminating in the recent bailout of companies that are "too big to fail."

After the presentations, the audience broke into three smaller groups. One focused on policy—how to "rewrite the rules." Members talked about reviving usury laws, passing living wage laws, keeping Walmart out of their neighborhoods, keeping lobbyists out of elections, repealing corporate tax breaks, passing single payer health care, passing the Employee Free Choice Act, and strengthening regulation of corporations. Another group talked about how to confront corporations—boycotts, national "buy nothing" days, targeting specific corporations like Walmart and BP, recycling, etc. And a third group talked about movement building tactics: slide shows, cultural events, phone banks, movie nights, newsletters, and blogs.

Eric Laursen recently co-wrote Understanding the Crash, an illustrated book about the economic crisis, with Seth Tobocman, Jessica Wehrle and Doug Henwood.

"The National Security State, Unemployment, Rising Deficits & Climate Change: Connecting the Dots"

Sheila Collins, professor of political science at William Paterson University, presented her updated and expanded slide show at a May event in Bridgewater, NJ, sponsored by the NJ Chapter of Democratic Socialists of America. You can download pdfs of the slideshow and the accompanying script from the URPE website:
www.urpe.org/res/reslists/PermWarClimSmall.pdf
www.urpe.org/res/reslists/PermWarClimScript.pdf

Sheila introduced the slide show by noting that "in all of the public talk about shrinking budgets and rising deficits, unemployment and the threat of climate change, there is hardly ever a mention of the linkage between all these things and military spending. Yet when the dots are connected, the evidence becomes overwhelming."

The slides cover many aspects of U.S. military spending, including size, growth, share of the budget,

deceptive reporting, and comparison to other countries. A major focus of the show is the human suffering caused both by the violence of wars and by the social service spending that does not take place because the money is being spent on the military. "The political implication of our commitment to spending such a large part of our discretionary budget on defense spending is that we have less and less to spend on those parts of the budget that produce both needed revenues and provide the kinds of public goods and services that are absolutely necessary for any kind of viable economy at home, while also contributing to the growing inequality that feeds violence across the world." Sheila also points out that civilian spending would create more jobs than military spending.

Sheila gives a lot of attention in this slide show to the dangers of climate change—another issue that receives little funding because of military expenditures. Climate change is also exacerbated by the military: fossil fuels hurt the environment, and the U.S. military is the largest single user of oil in the world. Many wars are related to oil, and as oil becomes harder to find, incidents like the recent BP disaster become more likely.

The presentation sparked a lively discussion; New Jersey's budget cuts provided an emotional backdrop. One audience member whose public school job is on the line urged us all to attend a union-supported rally against budget cuts that was to take place in Trenton later in the month. (A few weeks later NJ.com reported that "the final crowd estimate was between 30,000 and 35,000 people, making it the largest protest ever staged in Trenton.")

One audience member talked about the role of military spending as a market in an economic system where those with power resist social spending. Another said, "We don't make anything—the military IS our economy." Others talked about the need to develop environmentally-friendly energy sources. One man noted that our culture fosters individualism, keeping people isolated rather than encouraging them to unite to create change.

Resource Requests & Upcoming Talks

EC recommended specialists on China to a journalist working on an article about trade policies. Stay tuned for reports on talks that will be coming up this summer on the European financial crisis, the general economic crisis, the world food and agricultural crisis, and the Chinese state and capitalism.

URPE SUMMER CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES
(See below for suggested income ranges)

	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income /Institution
ADULTS			
Entire 3 days/3 nights:	180	280	400
Daily Rate:	80	105	145
SPECIAL RATE for STUDENTS : (Entire 3 days)	90		
CHILDREN ages 3-18 (There is no fee for children under age 3.)			
Entire 3 days/3 nights:	85	130	190
Daily Rate:	40	50	70
MAXIMUM FAMILY RATE	370	540	780

**REGISTRATION FEES
FOR THOSE REGISTERING AFTER JULY 15**

	Low Income	Middle Income	High Income /Institution
ADULTS			
Entire 3 days/3 nights:	210	310	430
Daily Rate:	90	115	155
SPECIAL RATE for STUDENTS : (Entire 3 days)	110		
CHILDREN ages 3-18 (There is no fee for children under age 3.)			
Entire 3 days/3 nights:	100	145	205
Daily Rate:	45	55	75
MAXIMUM FAMILY RATE	410	600	840

TRAVEL SUBSIDY

This subsidy will be paid at the conference to those registering for the entire conference who submit plane ticket receipts showing travel within two weeks of either starting or ending date of conference. Subsidy will be based on air fares only. The form of the subsidy will be: 30% of air fare over \$150, with a maximum subsidy of \$150. Thus subsidy = (air fare – \$150) x .3

Suggested Ranges for Determination of Income Level

Number of household members	Low income*	Middle Income	High Income/ Institutional
1	Less than \$18,000	\$18-38,000	More than \$38,000
2	Less than \$24,000	\$24-48,000	More than \$48,000
3	Less than \$28,000	\$28-56,000	More than \$56,000
4 or more	Less than \$32,000	\$32-64,000	More than \$64,000

*Those registering at the low income rate are subsidized by URPE, since these registration fees are below the actual cost of the conference.

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Summer conference workshops... cont. from page 3

a Heterodox Perspective)

Capitalism and the Environment

Rana Odeh (Univ. of Dayton), *Capitalism and the War on the Environment*

Fadhel Kaboub (Denison University), *The Urgency of Green Jobs for All*

Plus:

Paul Cooney and Sérgio Rivero (Ufpa Brazil), *The Amazon as a Frontier of Capital Accumulation and Deforestation*

Irwin Sperber (SUNY New Paltz), *The Corporatization of Environmental NGOs and the Acceleration of Global Warming: How Tools for Protecting the Planet Are Cooking It*

Laura Ebert, *Corporate Behavior Front and Center: The Macroeconomic Policy Conundrum in South Africa*

Thomas Masterson (Levy Institute, Bard College), *What Progress Has Been Made in Alleviating Racial Inequality?*

Omar S. Dahi (Hampshire College), *Is South-South Regionalism a Progressive Alternative? Evidence from MERCOSUR*

Perry Bezanis, *How We Came to 'Democracy, The Best Form of Government' Why It Isn't—And Where It's Going*

Patrick Bigger (Univ. of Kentucky), *To Its Logical Extreme: Carbon Trading as Commodified Nature*

Paul Clement and Paddy Quick (St. Francis College), *Faculty Unionization—Adjuncts Succeed, Full-timers Hesitate*

Paul Cooney, *An Empirical Evaluation of the Significance of Fictitious Capital and Unproductive Labor in the Current Crisis*

Al Campbell (Univ. of Utah) *Mondragon and the U.S.*

URPE on the Web

In addition to our website at <<http://www.urpe.org>>, we have a blog hub at Wordpress, <<http://urpe.wordpress.com>>. We are also on Facebook—join the URPE group “Union for Radical Political Economics” (just use ‘search’ on Facebook to find our group). And, if you want to join—or post to—our low-volume, moderated announcement listserve, go to:

<<http://lists.econ.utah.edu/mailman/listinfo/urpe-announcements>>.