



Graduate Workshop
Materialist Perspectives on Hope and Utopia

11.-12.04. 2024
Free University Berlin

*"We are trying to theorise hope-against-hope.
This is surely the only subject matter of theory that is left."*

John Holloway, 'Crack Capitalism'

What is the power, value, and function of hope and utopia for Critical Theory and emancipatory practice today? Do we need, as Ernst Bloch argued, 'the strongest telescope, that of the sharpened utopian consciousness' to understand our present situation, its falsity and destructiveness, but also its emancipatory possibilities? Or should we avoid grand speculations about uncertain futures, sticking to concrete struggles and determinate negation?

With the climate catastrophe inflicting misery and suffering on millions of people, the far-right ascending to power, and capital's grip on humans and nature seemingly unbroken, we want to ask emancipatory intellectual traditions from Marxism and Critical Theory to Black Radical Thought, Feminism, and Queer Theory:

What is the role of alternative visions, ideals, dreams, desires, imagination, hope, and utopianism for emancipatory movements and for Critical Theory today?

The workshop will take place at **Free University Berlin** from **Thursday, 11.04., to Friday, 12.04.2024**. We welcome contributions from any field of critical social theory, from the humanities as well as from social science.





Examples of topics we are interested in:

Hope as Critical Epistemology; Histories of Utopianism from below; Marx on Utopia; Affect Theory and the Climate Crisis; Revisiting Utopian Socialism; Materialist Perspectives on Religious Hope and Imaginary; The 'Ban on Graven Images'; Ideology Critique of Hope; Imagination in the Black Radical Tradition and Black Marxism; Speculative Materialism; Feminist Utopianism; Queer Futurity; Critical Perspectives on Progress; Marxism and Emancipation; Teleological and Materialist Conceptions of History...

Keynote-Speaker

Søren Mau. Mau is a self-described communist philosopher, board member of the Danish Society for Marxist Studies, and postdoctoral fellow at Aarhus University. Most notably, he is the author of *Mute Compulsion: A Marxist Theory of the Economic Power of Capital* (Verso, 2023) which has been hailed as 'an instant classic' of Marxist studies.

Application

Applications are open for PhD students and recent PhD graduates as well as for Master students in the later stages of their degree. Please send your **abstract** (max. 500 words) to jonathan.roessler@fu-berlin.de or manuela.peitz@fu-berlin.de by **12th of November**. Full papers (max. 6000 words) will need to be submitted by **1st of March 2024**.

Funding, Travelling, Accommodation

There is a minimum of 200€ of funding available for participants who do not receive (sufficient) financial support from their respective institution for travelling and accommodation. Please state in your application whether you require such funding. In a spirit of solidarity please refrain from doing so if you are sufficiently supported by your home institution. Snacks, lunch, and dinner on Thursday will be covered.

We are looking forward to your applications.

Manuela Peitz, Jonathan Roessler, Jakob Huber
Democratic Hope Research Group at FU Berlin

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