Designing Real Utopias
Law 973, January 2021
Professor Noah Zatz

Course Description
This seminar imagines the legal realization of radical hope. Contemporary social movements are insisting that another world is possible, and necessary. Complementing urgent efforts to resist or mitigate intense injustice in the present, bold visions for the future are on the table, if not yet around the corner: abolishing police and prisons, universal basic income, a decarbonized economy, open borders, reparations, a jobs guarantee, the decolonization of North America, and more. Rather than centering the critique of existing institutions and the limits or dangers of law, this seminar will embrace the affirmative project of designing the legal frameworks—unfamiliar as they might need to be—that would help instantiate a hopeful future. Due attention will be paid to the serious challenges such transformations would face, but we will treat these as problems to be solved rather than as reasons to accept the status quo.

Each student will write a research paper developing a real utopian project. Class sessions will be during J-term, and research papers will be due at the end of the spring semester. The first week of class will focus on readings envisioning “real utopias” and the role of legal institutions in them. The second week of class will be organized around student-led sessions designed in consultation with the professor to advance the student's research project. Students are required to begin developing their research topic and identifying relevant readings after course registration and before the first day of class.

Reading Assignments

WEEK ONE
Monday, January 4: Abolition and Reform
Book: Angela Y. Davis, Are Prisons Obsolete? (Seven Stories Press 2003)
Assigned: Chapters 1-3 & 6

Reader:
Allega M. McLeod, Envisioning Abolition Democracy, 132 Harv. L. Rev. 1613 (2019)
People’s Budget LA Coalition, The People’s Budget: Los Angeles 2020-21 (2nd ed. June 2020)
UCLA Criminal Justice Project, What Happens After We Defund Police? (June 2020)
Tuesday, January 5: Reparation, Decolonization, and History

Reader:


Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò, “Reconsidering Reparations: The Movement for Black Lives and Self-Determination” (m.s. 2019)


Elizabeth Ellis, The Border(s) Crossed Us Too: The Intersections of Native American and Immigrant Fights for Justice, 14 EMISFÉRICA no. 1 (2018)

Lakota People’s Law Project, #LandBack is Climate Justice (Aug. 14, 2020)

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Wednesday, January 6: Climate & Connectedness

Book: KATE ARONOFF, ALYSSA BATTISTONI, DANIEL ALDANA COHEN & THEA RIOFRANCOS, A PLANET TO WIN: WHY WE NEED A GREEN NEW DEAL (Verso 2019)

Assigned: Intro (from p. 17 “The Practical Case for Radicalism”), Chs. 1-2, 4, Conclusion

Reader:

Red Nation, Heal Our Planet, in THE RED DEAL: INDIGENOUS ACTION TO SAVE OUR EARTH (2020)

Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò & Beba Cibralic, The Case for Climate Reparations, FOREIGN POLICY, Oct. 20, 2020

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Thursday, January 7: Work, Family & Care


Assigned: Introduction, Ch. 2 (from p. 104 “Better Work or Less Work?”), Chs. 3-4, Ch. 5 (until p. 177 “Utopia’s Critics” and from p. 202 at “There are two points I want to draw…”) & Epilogue

Reader:

Noah Zatz, Care Work In & Beyond the Labor Market, LAW & POLITICAL ECONOMY blog, Dec. 6, 2019


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Friday, January 8: Socialism and the State

Book: ERIK OLIN WRIGHT, HOW TO BE AN ANTICAPITALIST IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY (Verso Books 2019)

Assigned: Ch.1 (until p. 8 “Normative Foundations), Chs. 3-5

Reader:

Dean Spade, Solidarity Not Charity: Mutual Aid for Mobilization and Survival, 38 SOCIAL TEXT 131 (2020)
WEEK TWO: Student projects

Day 6 (Tuesday)
AKS: “Uncoding the Nuclear Family”
Discussant: KS

KS: “Hawaiian (Kanaka Maoli) Sovereignty, Indigeneity, and Decolonization”
Discussant: AlK

AlK: “Beyond a Racial Caste System in the U.S.”
Discussant: JB

JB: “Can There Be A Racial Future Without Racism?”
Discussant: AKS

Day 7 (Wednesday)
AH: “Community Control over the Police”
Olúfẹ́mi O Táíwò, *Power Over the Police*, DISSERT (June 12, 2020).
Discussant: MB

AnK: “Collective Power”
Discussant: AH

JG: “Why We Need CoRoNA: How a Comprehensive Rights of Nature Act will Protect Natural Resources”
Discussant: AnK

MB: “Utopian Democracy”
Discussant: JG

Day 8 (Thursday)
KS: “Render unto the People: Distributing Universal Basic Income as Dividends”
Peter Barnes, *With Liberty and Dividends for All: How to Save Our Middle Class When Jobs Don’t Pay Enough* (2014).

Discussant: LN

MG: “Responsible to the Future: Imagining Life Without Debt”

Discussant: KS

JP: “Imagining A 21st Century Co-op Movement”

Discussant: MG

LN: “Imagining Community Control of Land”
Agathe Cortes, *Lo que la pandemia nos enseña sobre la lucha por una vivienda social digna en América Latina*, El Pais (October 4, 2020) (trans)
Olivia R. Williams, *The Problem With Community Land Trusts*, Jacobin (July 7, 2019)

Discussant: JP

**Day 9 (Friday)**

AT: “Deviant Prisons and their Social Removal”

Discussant: SH

HV: “Utopian Prison System”

Discussant: AT

JW: “Beyond Imperialism”

Discussant: HV

SH: “Abolition: Imagining a World Without Police”

Discussant: JW