

**ESSA SPRING SCHOOL "NEW FORMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE  
21ST CENTURY"**

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**Social Rights in the Era of Globalization**

Social rights are presently being eroded by two processes: by restrictions upon public systems of social welfare, imposed in the name of the national competitiveness upon the global market; and by privatisation of public services. Huge public welfare systems of the past nowadays seem irrational for two main reasons: they withdraw a large part of socially produced value from the process of capitalisation and immobilise it in a sterile off-side where it does not produce profit; they prevent capital from entering into extensive dimensions of social life where important profits can be made.

And yet, it has not always been this way: general security, guaranteed by the systems of public welfare, was viewed as a solid foundation for a successful national economy. Why and when did the change of view occur? Was it only an ideological change of interpretation – or was it a sound response to new historical conditions?

To answer this question, we have to take a larger and a longer look: we have to consider processes beyond the horizon of national economies, and to analyse long-term processes that extend not over decades, but over centuries.

We shall examine the history of the modern world-system, i.e., the history of capitalism. We shall try to trace general trends and discontinuities in the history of capitalism, with the view to grasp the transformation that is going on right now.

We shall then attempt an interpretation of the withering away of the welfare state, and will try to understand the reduction of social rights.

Our main goal will be to present theoretical tools that can help us to understand – and eventually to engage in socially relevant activities.

*Some recommended literature*

**Althusser, Louis:** look for texts on the theory of ideology and the theory of law

- Amable, Bruno:** *The Diversity of Modern Capitalism*, Oxford UP, Oxford, 2003.
- Amable, Bruno:** *Les cinq capitalismes. Diversité des systèmes économiques et sociaux dans la mondialisation*, Seuil, Paris, 2005.
- Arrighi, Giovanni:** *The Long Twentieth Century. Money, Power, and the Origins of our Times*, Verso, London-New York, 1994 (1996).
- Bourdieu, Pierre:** look for texts on the theory of "social fields", on the theory of the social field of politics; etc.
- Callinicos, Alex:** *Anticapitalist Manifesto*.
- Cordellier, Serge, ed.:** *La mondialisation au-delà des mythes*, La Découverte, Paris, 1997 (new edition: 2000).
- Canfora, Luciano:** *La democrazia. Storia di un'ideologia* – published in the international collection "The making of Europe – Faire l'Europe".
- Cohen, Daniel:** *Trois leçons sur la société post-industrielle*, Seuil, Paris, 2006.
- Frank, André Gunder:** *ReOrient. Global Economy in the Asian Age*, University of California Press, Berkeley etc., 1998.
- Giraud, Pierre Noël:** *L'inégalité du monde. Economie du monde contemporain*, Gallimard, Paris, 1996.
- Hobsbawn, Eric J.:** *Nations and nationalism since 1780*.
- Sennett, Richard:** *The Culture of the New Capitalism*, Yale UP, New Haven & London, 2006.
- Vercellone, Carlo (ur.):** *Sommes-nous sortis du capitalisme industriel?*, La Dispute, Paris, 2002.
- Vercellone, Carlo (ur.):** *Capitalismo cognitivo*, manifestolibri, Roma, 2006.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel:** *Unthinking Social Science*.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel:** *Utopistics*.