

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS – Spring 2019, Issue One

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NOTE FROM THE CHAIR:

Hi. I hope you all are well. Welcome to 2019. Major items in this newsletter include the fast-approaching deadline of 1/31/19 for 2019 Annual Meeting Abstract Submissions and the Graduate Student Paper Competition.

2019 STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION: If you are a qualifying student we encourage you to submit. If you are a faculty member, we encourage you to have any appropriate students to submit.

STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION

Deadline: 1/31/19

The Sociology and Social Welfare Division (SSWD) announces its 2018 Graduate Student Paper Competition for papers that advance our understanding of issues related to sociology and social welfare. Papers may explore and analyze any social welfare policy or institution along any dimension of interest. Qualitative and quantitative empirical analyses and theoretical papers are welcome.

To be eligible for submission, papers must be: 1) written between January 1, 2018 and January 31, 2019 and not yet published or submitted for scholarly review; 2) authored by one or more graduate students and not co-authored by any faculty or non-student colleagues; 3) 25 pages or less, including references and tables; and 4) accompanied by a letter/email from a faculty member at the student's university nominating the paper for the competition; and received by the deadline of JANUARY 31, 2018.

In addition to submitting the above materials, to be considered for the award, students are required to submit their papers to the 2019 SSSP conference, preferably to a Sociology & Social Welfare Division sponsored paper session, through the annual meeting Call for Papers by 1/31/19. The author must make a commitment to present the paper during SSSP annual meeting in August 2018 in Philadelphia. Submission of the same paper to other SSSP award competitions will disqualify the submission.

Send a copy of your paper and the faculty nomination letter as email attachments to: Dr. William Cabin (wcabin@umich.edu), Division Chair, Sociology & Social Welfare Division, Temple University. The 2018 SSWD competition winner will receive a cash prize of \$150 from the Division, one honorary plaque, and payment of one 2019 SSSP membership dues and conference registration.

Book Review Participation:

If you want to do a book review for this newsletter, please contact our book review editor: Ethan Evans at ethan.evans@csus.edu

New Division Chair:

Congrats to Dr. Ethan Evans. He'll take office at the 2019 Annual Meeting. Please communicate with him at ethan.evans@csus.edu

Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare New Editor:

Dr. Hector Diaz of Western Michigan University is the new editor. We encourage you to contact him if you have any questions about the Journal: hector.diaz@wmich.edu We also thank Dr. Robert Leighninger for his many years of service as Journal editor.

Newsletter Contributions Invited

We encourage members to submit news such as publications, new appointments, and other professional accomplishments for inclusion in a future newsletter.

Suggestions and inquiries about less conventional content are also welcome—consider editorials, book reviews, teaching notes, department/program profiles, calls for contributions to journals and edited books, obituaries...

Please direct such inquiries to the current Division Chair, Bill Cabin at:

wcabin@umich.edu

Book Review:

Capitalism: A Short History

Jürgen Kocka. 2016 (English translation). Princeton University Press.

Book review team:

Ethan J. Evans, PhD, MSW, is assistant professor, Division of Social Work, California State University, Sacramento. e-mail: ethan.evans@csus.edu.

Michael O. Johnston, PhD, is assistant professor, Sociology, William Penn University. e-mail: johnstonmo@wmpenn.edu.

Overview

This book provides an account of capitalism as a world-wide phenomenon, chronicling its most important phases, variations, impulses, problems, and consequences as exemplified in different countries and world regions. The author is careful to first provide common footing for readers by providing a useful synopsis of three thinkers on the topic—Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Joseph A. Schumpeter. The bulk of the book then delineates and explores three phases of capitalist evolution—an early stage of merchant capitalism, an expansionary phase from 1500 to 1800, and the Capitalist Era of industrial, managerial, and finance capitalisms.

Contribution

The author provides a comprehensive treatment of the topic that is both concise and readable. Further, the author pushes beyond a simple account. For example, this work advances the effort by Wallerstein and others to move beyond an exclusively western conceptualization of capitalism and its trajectory. Also, despite writing a history, Kocka also poses an important contemporary question: did the international financial crisis since 2008 mark the end of a phase, “revived market capitalism,” and start a fourth phase of modern capitalism? (p. 152).

Strengths

The author manages a concise history with depth in only 169 pages. The author shows great skill, leaving out material that the reader is assumed to know, which is then leveraged against what is included to provide impulse for new thinking on capitalism.

Weaknesses

The section on the capitalist era seems more loaded with statements from ardent critics than previous sections. Up until this point the author presents critique mostly through classic statements from Marx, Weber, and Schumpeter. However, the description of financialization and the shift toward finance capitalism contains many voices, painting the development as predatory, risky, immoral, and problematic. In the author's defense, the final chapter of the book, Analysis and Critique, provides a potential rationale for this turn. Jürgen explains, "The historical overview presented here shows the immense mutability of capitalism across the centuries. The critique of capitalism...has been an important motor driving its changes" (p. 168), and he contends, "the reform of capitalism is a permanent task. In this, the critique of capitalism plays a central role" (p. 169). This emphasis, poignant and insightful, could be better foreshadowed.

Summary

Kocka delivers on the promise in the title; the book provides a concise history of capitalism that is also nuanced and compelling. This volume delivers a lot for multiple audiences. The educated, but not fully versed student of political economy, is provided a thorough telling of the story of capitalism. The advanced student or scholar finds ground for new insights and is encouraged to learn from the past in face of the present, and to focus an eye toward the future. This book could easily be required reading for master level students and current professionals.