

Call for papers
Labor, Democracy and Global Capital
XXXVI Annual Conference on The Political Economy of the World System
Clark University
April 19-21, 2012

Crisis and stagnation, growth and industrialization; upward mobility among the hierarchy of nations and growing inequality within nations: all these are part of the world scene. In the core nations of the world system laborers and the labor movement were able to attain a modicum of social inclusion during the middle of the 20th Century. Can this be regained or duplicated on a world scale? In the course of the 19th and Twentieth Centuries, again among the rich countries, many previously excluded or marginalized groups obtained both the formal franchise and the promise of social inclusion. Under the institutional conditions of global capitalism can democratic aspirations once again be realized? This conference will focus on Labor and Democracy for the coming era.

1. The Race to the Bottom: Labor, Environmental and Social standards in the global market. What is the evidence for geographical/political shift of investments from higher wage/ social standards jurisdictions to lower ones? What are the consequences? What should be done?
2. The Fate of the “Welfare State.” In the Era of Neoliberalism and Globalised Capital can high wage, high benefit social regimes survive? Long term trends seem to indicate rising inequality and erosion of social benefits even among the more generous of the welfare capitalist nations. Is this temporary or reversible? Can workers in peripheral social formations enjoy the fruits of growth under conditions of neoliberal competition? What can be learned from the Chinese case?
3. Democracy for Whom? Global Governance and International Financial Institutions (IFIs). The World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund have been subject to long term criticism as agents for the rich in the rich countries. But now they claim to have reformed. Have they changed, and if so how? Are the IFIs a skeleton of world governance? If so, are the Enlightenment ideals of republican and democratic government relevant to the global future? If not, how are they to be governed and by whom?
4. Formal/ informal: globalization, gender, and livelihood strategies. The flows of people from countryside to city or from poor or crisis regions to richer or growing regions highlight the challenges individuals, families, and communities face as they are incorporated into the global wage worker economy. How are formal and informal economies being (re)integrated in Northern and Southern contexts through migrations and livelihood strategies among the poor and disenfranchised? How are marginalized or subordinated groups, such as workers, women, and migrants, experiencing the global market and how are the forces of global capitalism supporting or neglecting these groups in new (or old) ways?

Submissions should be sent to pewsconference36@clarku.edu. Abstracts of 250 words on the general theme or on one of the specific subthemes, including full contact information for all authors should be sent by December 23, 2011. Accepted will be considered for a planned edited volume. Send other inquiries to Robert J.S. Ross (rjsross@clarku.edu). The Conference will be hosted at historic Clark University in Worcester, MA.