

Diversifying Syllabi 2015 Text Summary and Teaching Tips

SECTION ONE: to be completed by presenter

Article/Essay Title: The Seven Loose Pieces of the Global Jigsaw Puzzle

Author: Subcomandante Marcos

Readability: Easy/**Moderate**/Difficult

Thesis: The end of the Cold War has given rise to a new geopolitical reality called “neoliberalism.” This article aims to describe the main features of neoliberalism. It argues that neoliberalism is best understood as a new world war—a war that pits corporations and financial centers against the poor and institutions of democratic governance.

Key Definitions:

Neoliberalism—an economic policy that advocates using state and international institutions to enforce economic liberalization (free trade), deregulation, privatization, and reduction of government spending.

Brief Summary:

Marcos begins by defending the claim that: “The end of the III World War or “Cold War” does not mean that the world has overcome the polarity and finds its stability under the hegemony of the victor.” In doing so, he takes himself to be resisting a view that has become ascendant or even dogmatic in among economists, historians, and others in the West.

Marcos begins to telegraph one of the most important and interesting claims in the text: That neoliberalism is destructive of state institutions. For example, he notes: “One of the first casualties of this new war was the national market.” “Do the megalopolis substitute the nations? No, or not only. They also include them and reassign their functions, limits and possibilities. Entire nations are converted into departments of the neoliberal megacompany.” For this reason, Marcos argues that those who wish to resist neoliberalism should not necessarily resist the state (and indeed, the Zapatistas did not seek to overthrow the Mexican government and often carried the Mexican flag).

Marcos then outlines the following seven features of the world under neoliberalism:

1. The concentration of wealth and distribution of poverty
2. The globalization of exploitation
3. Migration, the errant nightmare
4. Financial globalization and the globalization of corruption and crime

5. Legitimate violence on behalf of an illegitimate power?—[the new reality does not happen automatically, but requires a great deal of military force]
6. Megapolitics and the dwarfs—[the “dwarfs” are states, who are being dominated by international political and economic forces]
7. The pockets of resistance

Marcos concludes: “If humanity still has hope of survival, of being better, that hope is in the pockets formed by the excluded ones, the leftovers, the ones who are disposable.”

Then he proceeds with a long postscript that describes a memory of Old Man Antonio that seems to be a fable illustrating a lesson about how to resist neoliberalism.

SECTION TWO: to be completed by note taker during discussion

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Possible Applications:

- Way of framing a political philosophy course (distributive justice, exploitation, migration/borders, exclusion, nature of the state, disobedience, etc.). Provides a view that is prescriptive and a way that people can measure their own views.
- Background/introduction to Latin American philosophy and its perspective on colonialism
- Way of introducing different ways of philosophy
- Pair breaking out of political regimes with breaking out of dominant styles of philosophy
- In a class on Plato: the role of myths in philosophy and how myths can be convincing
- Critiques of standard views of global justice (e.g., Rawls)
- Integration into discussions of harm in global justice

Complementary Texts/Resources:

- Texts on transnational feminism
- Comparison to Eastern philosophy in terms of style
- Comandanta Esther’s testimony to congress

Possible Class Activities:

- Write your own propaganda for whatever political view you want to advance
- Split into groups with each group taking a piece of the puzzle and discussing it or presenting it to the rest of the class

What traditional texts might this text replace?

- Some bits of Marx (or other Marxists)