



SOCIALIST REGISTER

2021

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23

6:00 to 8:00 PM (NYC EST)

11:00 PM to 1:00 AM (GMT)

SOCIALISTS ON
SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS:

Communicating within and Against Digital Capitalism

TANNER MIRRLEES

Bertolt Brecht, in the 1932 essay ‘The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication’, made a ‘positive suggestion’ to transform radio into a dialogical medium for many-to-many communications ‘Radio is one-sided when it should be two’ said Brecht. Brecht saw the state as the only entity capable of remaking radio in this way, but because radio’s ‘proper application’ might make it a ‘revolutionary’ medium, Brecht concluded the bourgeois state would have ‘no interest in sponsoring such exercises’.

It would seem that Brecht’s ‘positive suggestion’ for a many-to-many communications system has come to fruition with the internet, and more recently, with the spread of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Socialists around the world are now using these platforms to produce, distribute, exhibit, and consume socialist media and cultural works, and they are openly building events, movements, and organizations within digital capitalism, to go beyond it. That said, the internet and social media platforms are surrounded by all kinds of deterministic, optimistic, and pessimistic rhetorics that cloud a clear view of what they give to and take from socialist communicators, especially as compared to the 20th century’s mass media industries, whose state and corporate owners tended to filter out and vilify socialist ideas. While digital platforms are enabling socialists to communicate in ways that were not possible in the pre-digital world of mass media, they are supplements to – not substitutes for – building democratic and sustainable socialist organizations and militant working-class movements.

TANNER MIRRLEES is Associate Professor of Communication and Digital Media Studies at Ontario Tech University

IMAGING
PLATFORM SOCIALISM

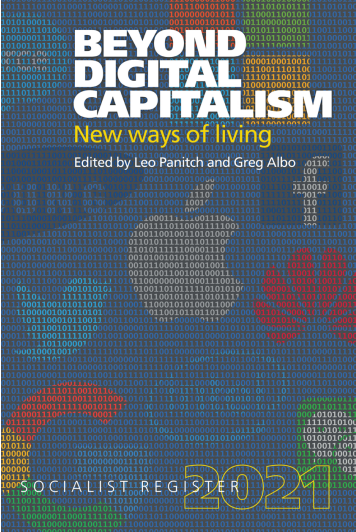
DEREK HRYNYSHYN

Investigations have demonstrated the ways that the operations of the algorithmic processes that select and sort information for users of YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter not only distribute such malicious content, but also amplify its effects.

At the same time, the monopolistic digital platforms are of great use to activists working for a more democratic world, including socialists. Social media empowers individuals to participate in the distribution of their own ideas, although this empowerment is limited by the mediation of the flow of information by the owners of the platforms in ways that can have direct effects on how mobilizations are informed.

This makes it very necessary to explore the contradictions between our expectations of social media and the reality of its use, and determine if there are ways to avoid the harms done to democracy while preserving the benefits. The purpose of this presentation is to inquire whether and how social media could be organized more democratically, so that our expressive capacities are allowed to be developed freely and not under conditions determined by capital.

DEREK HRYNYSHYN teaches in the Department of Communication Studies at York University in Toronto, Ontario.



Sliding Scale Schedule

Individual Sessions: \$7 / \$9 / \$11

This talk + copy of **Socialist Register 2021** (including shipping [US/Puerto Rico only])
\$28 / \$30 / \$32

- All events and classes are sliding scale. No one is ever turned away for inability to pay.

(If you are unable to pay the amount, please email to info@marxedproject.org to request the URL of the Zoom session for this or other classes or events.)

LEO PANITCH

• 1945-2020

All of us at The Marxist Education Project appreciate all that Leo did and is continuing to do following his untimely death this past December. Both this series and the *Class, Party, Revolution* Socialist Register series beginning in March are being presented in his memory; these represent but a few of the many fruits that still spring from the myriad seeds that Leo has planted.