

# Colloquium

Always free and open to the public. An interdisciplinary forum for the presentation of new research on the important issues of our time.

George Mason University

SPRING 2013

## Arlene Dávila *Culture Works: Consumption & the Business of Shopping Malls in Puerto Rico*

February 7, 4:30 PM  
Mason Hall D005

Cosponsored by University Life, Interdisciplinary Curriculum Collaborative, Latin American Studies, Global Affairs, Center for Global Studies, Film & Media, Sociology & Anthropology

Dávila critiques positions held by enthusiasts of "creative economies": the idea that culture contributes to the GDP, employment, social cohesion, and other forms of neoliberal development. While culture does indeed make important contributions to national economies, the incentives and benefits of participating in this economy are not distributed equally. This is due both to restructurings that neoliberal policies have wrought as well as to long-standing inequalities based on race and class. In short, the cultural economy promises to make life better—particularly in cities—but not everyone can participate in its benefits. In her talk, Dávila examines dynamics of space, value, and mobility, to show how hierarchies of culture-work play out in a local setting with ultimately global implications: shopping malls in Puerto Rico.

Arlene Dávila is Professor of Anthropology and American Studies at NYU. Her research spans urban ethnography, the political economy of culture and media, creative economies and consumption, immigration and geographies of inequality and race. Recent books include *Culture Works* (NYU, 2012) and *Latino Spin* (NYU, 2008), which won the Latin American Studies Association's prize for Best Book in Latino Studies.

## Benjamin Cowan, Rashmi Sandani, & Craig Willse *New Faculty Research*

February 21, 4:30 PM  
Mason Hall D005

New faculty members from History, Anthropology, and Cultural Studies preview recent research of interest to the Cultural Studies community.

## Gar Alperovitz *America Beyond Capitalism*

February 28, 4:30 PM  
Mason Hall D005

Cosponsored by University Life, Interdisciplinary Curriculum Collaborative, & History

Discontent with the status quo mounts in the wake of deep recession and sputtering economic performance. Income and wealth disparities have become severe and corrosive of democratic possibilities. Alperovitz's recent book tracks really-existing alternatives to corporate capitalism: worker-ownership, cooperatives, community land trusts, social enterprises, and more. These "bottom-up" and other related efforts, he argues, are emerging precisely because the larger system offers no solution to increasing numbers of Americans. The new approaches democratize wealth and potentially point the way toward an economy that could be vibrant, sustainable, and more just.

Gar Alperovitz has had a distinguished career as a historian, political economist, activist, writer, and government official. He is the Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland and co-founder of the Democracy Collaborative. Among his most recent books are *America Beyond Capitalism* and (with Lew Daly) *Unjust Deserts*. His *What Then Must We Do?* will be published by Chelsea Green in April 2013.



**The Cultural Studies PhD Program at George Mason University celebrates its eighteenth year of innovative research, interdisciplinary programming, and advanced graduate training.**

## SPECIAL EVENT *An Evening with Barbara Ehrenreich*

March 7, 4:30 PM  
Johnson Center Cinema

Cosponsored by University Life, Interdisciplinary Curriculum Collaborative, Sociology & Anthropology, Global Affairs, Center for Global Studies, English, Film & Media, Women's Studies, & New Century College

Barbara Ehrenreich is the author of 21 books, including the *New York Times* best sellers, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (2001) and *Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking Is Undermining America* (2010). She is a frequent contributor to the *New York Times*, *Harpers*, the *Progressive* and *Time* magazine, and has appeared on *Oprah*, *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report* and *The Joy Behar Show*, to name a few. **Ehrenreich's talk will address new social movements and prospects for a politics of social equality in the age of speed-up capitalism and online social media.**

## Jodi Dean *Communicative Capitalism: This is What Democracy Looks Like*

April 18, 4:30 PM  
Mason Hall D005

Cosponsored by University Life, Interdisciplinary Curriculum Collaborative, Film & Media, Global Affairs, & Center for Global Studies

In her talk, Jodi Dean draws from work she's done in new media and politics over the last decade and a half. She agrees with arguments emphasizing the democratic potential of participation in communicative networks, but notes that claims for that potential are of little use when democracy's horizons have merged so completely with those of capitalism. Rather than enhancing freedom and equality, participatory media entrap us and hence cannot serve as the basis for an egalitarian, emancipatory politics.

Jodi Dean is Professor of Political Science at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Her recent publications include *Blog Theory* (Polity, 2010), *The Communist Horizon* (Verso, 2012), and *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies* (Duke 2009).

# Barbara Ehrenreich

## Political Activist & Author, Nickel and Dimed

*“Impassioned, fascinating, profoundly significant, and wildly entertaining . . . I kept grabbing family members and phoning friends to read passages aloud.”*

— *Frankie Prose, O: The Oprah Magazine, on Nickel and Dimed*

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Before becoming an activist, Ehrenreich studied cell biology and physics, graduating with a degree in physics from Reed College in 1963 and a Ph.D. in cell biology from Rockefeller University in 1968. However, after completing her studies, Ehrenreich became involved in the anti-Vietnam war movement and began to question whether she wanted to spend her life at the laboratory bench. Ultimately, she chose to turn her attention to political and anti-war activism. She joined a tiny non-profit in New York City that advocated for better health care for the city's poor, where part of the job was to put out a monthly bulletin. Before she knew it, she found herself thoroughly enjoying doing investigative journalism.

With the birth of her first child in 1970, Ehrenreich underwent a political, as well as a personal, transformation. The prenatal care she received at a hospital clinic showed how even PH.D.s were not immune from the vilest forms of sexism. Bit by bit, she became involved with the “women’s health movement,” advocating for better health care for women and greater access to health information than existed at that time.

Just a few years later, she quit her teaching job at the State University of NY, Old Westbury to become a full-time writer. Her work life settled into three tracks, which continue to this day: journalism, book-length projects, and activism on such issues as health care, peace, women’s rights, and economic justice.

Each of Ehrenreich’s books changed her life in

different directions. She recently published *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, a scholarly book about festivities and ecstatic rituals. Her latest *New York Times* best seller, *Bright-Sided*, describes what she calls “the cult of cheerfulness,” which requires Americans to “think positively” rather than to take positive action for change. An urgent call for a new commitment to realism, *Bright-Sided* was praised by *Kirkus Reviews* as “brilliant, incisive, provocative thinking from a top-notch nonfiction writer,” and author Christopher Hitchens proclaimed, “Ehrenreich scores again for the independent-minded.”

At the podium, she reflects with biting humor on her journey as a writer and activist, taking audiences inside her *Nickel and Dimed* experience and sharing anecdotes and lessons learned from each of her powerful books. Audiences will be brought to their feet by Ehrenreich’s deep rooted passion, profound ability to spur discussion, and her signature sense of humor that audiences have come to expect.

Acknowledging that though she may have found more stability and financial security in science or teaching, Ehrenreich inspires audiences with the message that her work has been the adventure of a lifetime and one that she has never regretted. Living proof of the power of chasing your dream and doing what you love, audiences will leave unequivocally inspired to embark on their own adventures.



**Suggested  
Speech Topics**  
An Evening with Barbara  
Ehrenreich

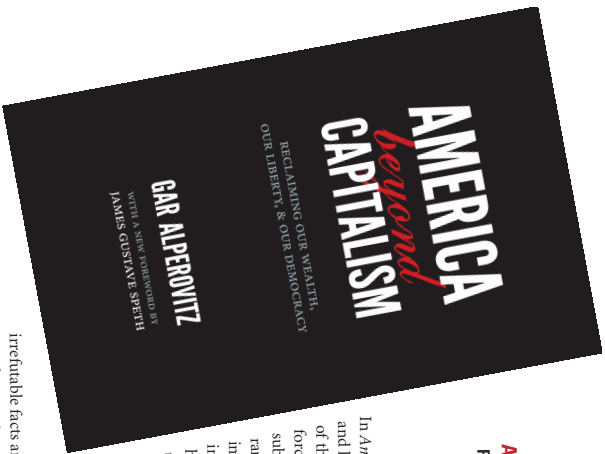
**Nickel and Dimed: On  
(Not) Getting By in  
America**

**Bright-Sided: How Positive  
Thinking Is Undermining  
America**

07-0611

# The Cultural Studies Student/Faculty COLLOQUIUM Spring 2013

## Imagining Alternatives to the Status Quo: Scholars & Public Intellectuals Chart New Horizons



**AMERICA BEYOND CAPITALISM**  
RECLAIMING OUR WEALTH,  
OUR LIBERTY,  
AND OUR DEMOCRACY  
by Gar Alperovitz

In *America Beyond Capitalism*, noted political-economist and historian Gar Alperovitz argues that the first decade of the 21st Century is producing conditions that will force the United States to undergo historic changes. The subversion of America’s democracy is clearly visible in rampant inequities in the distribution of wealth and the immense power corporations and special interests wield in Washington. Neither Democrats nor Republicans have coherent responses to these challenges. What is ultimately needed and possible amounts to a radically different economic and political system.

Though times may get worse before they get better, major political realignments are the rule, not the exception, in American history, Alperovitz argues. Eloquently reasoned and grounded in a wealth of irrefutable facts and data, *America Beyond Capitalism* is not simply another indictment of our national ills. It builds upon the latest scholarship, theoretical and empirical—as well as practical developments at the state and local level—to produce systematic proposals for the progressive rebuilding of a democratic America.

**ADVANCE PRAISE FOR AMERICA BEYOND CAPITALISM**

[T]he kind of careful, well-researched, and practical alternative progressives have been seeking. And it’s more—visionary, hopeful, even inspirational. I highly recommend it.  
—Juliet Schor, author of *The Overpriced American: Why We Want What We Don’t Need*

A compelling and convincing story of the future.

—William Greider, author of *The Soul of Capitalism: Opening Paths to a Moral Economy*  
*America Beyond Capitalism* comes at a critical time in our history—when we all know our system isn’t working but we are not sure what can be done about it. The book takes us outside the confines of orthodox thinking, imagines a new way of firing together, and then brings that vision back into reality with a set of eminently practical ideas that promise a truly democratic society.  
—Howard Zinn, author of *A People’s History of the United States*

Succeeds brilliantly in taking the Jeffersonian spirit into the last bastion of privilege in America, offering workable solutions for making the American economy one that is truly of, by, and for the people.  
—Jeremy Kiffin, author of *The End of Work*

AVAILABLE IN BOOKSTORES EVERYWHERE  
to learn more, visit  
[www.americabeyondcapitalism.com](http://www.americabeyondcapitalism.com)

*The Cultural Studies Program at George Mason University is the first stand-alone, interdisciplinary doctoral program in the field in the US. For more information, visit our web site at:*  
<http://culturalstudies.gmu.edu>