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From Hollywood to diamonds: New lecture series explores capitalism as a mode of power

Existing theories of capitalism, both orthodox and unorthodox, view capitalism as a mode of production and consumption. But what about a different view, one that espouses capitalism as a mode of power, a force large enough to have a role in the 2008 global economic crash or steer Hollywood away from innovative filmmaking into an industry focused solely on formula films.

A new speaker series explores the concept of capitalism as a mode of power and its role in the current global crisis; its impact on the distribution of income and corporate concentration; its influence in Hollywood filmmaking; and its role in romance and the diamond trade. The talks, starting Oct. 29 and continuing until Nov. 19, are organized by [The Forum on Capital as Power](#) and sponsored by the York Department of Political Science and the Graduate Program in Social & Political Thought. All talks take place Tuesdays or Wednesday from 2:30 to 4:30pm in **Room 305 York Lanes** and are open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

 **Jonathan Nitzan** On **Tuesday, Oct 29**, from 2:30 to 4:30pm, **Jonathan Nitzan (left)**, professor of political economy, Department of Political Science and the Graduate Program in Social and Political Thought, will give the inaugural lecture in this series. His presentation, titled, “Can Capitalist Afford Recovery? Economic Policy When Capital Is Power”, explores how theorists and policymakers from all directions and persuasions remain obsessed with the prospect of recovery. For mainstream economists, the key question is how to bring about such a recovery. For Marxist and heterodox critics, the main issue is whether sustained growth is possible to start with. But there is a prior question, says Nitzan that neither seems to ask: can capitalists afford recovery in the first place?

 **Jordan Brennan**

In the second lecture, on **Tuesday, Nov 5**, from 2:30 to 4:30pm, **Jordan Brennan (right)**, a PhD student in the Department of Political Science at York University and an economist with Unifor will give a talk titled, “A Shrinking Universe: How Corporate Power Shapes Inequality”. In it, Brennan explores the concept of economic inequality, which has recently appeared on the public radar in North America. Much of the attention has been confined to its ominously high level and its socially corrosive impact. The long-term drivers of inequality, by contrast, have attracted less attention. Brennan’s presentation will explore the linkages between corporate power and inequality, arguing that both the level and pattern of inequality in Canada closely shadows the differential power of capital.

 **James McMahon** Why does Hollywood lack originality? Why is Hollywood cinema so repetitive? These are two key questions that **James McMahon (left)**, a PhD student in York’s Graduate Program in Social & Political Thought, will explore in the third Capitalism as a Mode of Power lecture on **Wednesday, Nov 13**, from 2:30 to 4:30pm. McMahon’s talk, titled “I’ve Seen This Movie A Thousand Times: Risk and the Hollywood Film Business”, will theoretically and empirically explain why Hollywood’s so-called risk-aversion is strategic. The decline in risk is a sign of how the major distributors have been able to exercise greater and greater control over the social relations of cinema.

 **D.T. Cochrane**

On **Tuesday, Nov 19**, from 2:30 to 4:30pm, **D.T. Cochrane (right)**, a PhD student at the Graduate Program in Social & Political Thought at York University, will deliver a talk titled, “The Power of Love: Diamonds and Accumulation of De Beers”. Through the early 20th century, the power of the De Beers’ diamond cartel was dwindling. Its resurrection came with the Second World War. The company’s reversal of fortune required the construction and maintenance of relations with romantic couples, industrial diamond users, multiple government agencies and diamonds themselves. This presentation will examine De Beers’ accumulation and the translation of these qualitative relationships into capital.

For more information on any of the talks or the work done through [The Forum on Capital as Power](#), contact Jonathan Nitzan by e-mail: nitzan@yorku.ca.

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