

Empire and Social Movements

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Social Sciences
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When viewed against the realities of a highly-institutionalized state-capitalist system, with its concentrated forms of corporate, government, and military power, the term “democracy” has collapsed into something of a rhetorical flourish, ritualized language that tells us less and less about living social and authority relations in a complex industrial society. Close investigation of the constituent elements of a thriving democratic polity nowadays seems almost taboo among politicians, the media, even academics who usually balk at taking labels at face value. Even some of the harshest critics of American politics are often inclined, with few second thoughts, to accept existing signposts of “democracy” - consent of the governed, will of the people, popular sovereignty, self-governance - that are weak on empirical substance. Such facile references have grown largely stale and meaningless, emptied of content - if in fact they ever had much resonance across so much of U.S. history. The same is true of familiar contentions equating democratic politics with the presence of a constitution, open elections, “pluralism”, a capitalist economy, or certain legally-protected rights and freedoms. None of these conditions is sufficient to establish or maintain a dynamic system of democratic governance.

About the Presenter

Professor Carl E. Boggs is a professor of social sciences at National University in Los Angeles. After receiving his Ph.D. in political science at U.C., Berkeley, he taught at Washington University in St. Louis, UCLA, USC, UC, Irvine, and Carleton University in Ottawa. He is also the author of numerous books in the fields of contemporary social and political theory, European politics, American politics, U.S. foreign and military policy, and film studies, including *The Impasse of European Communism* (1982), *The Two Revolutions: Gramsci and the Dilemmas of Western Marxism* (1984), *Social Movements and Political Power* (1986), *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Modernity* (1993), *The Socialist Tradition* (1996), and *The End of Politics: Corporate Power and the Decline of the Public Sphere* (2000). With Tom Pollard, he authored a book titled *A World in Chaos: Social Crisis and the Rise of Postmodern Cinema*, in 2003. He edited an anthology, *Masters of War: Militarism and Blowback in an Era of American Empire* (2003). More recently, he wrote *Imperial Delusions: American Militarism and Endless War* (2005), *The Hollywood War Machine: Militarism and American Popular Culture* (co-authored with Tom Pollard, 2006) and his latest books is *The Crimes of Empire: Rogue Superpower, World Domination* (2010).

He is on the editorial board of journals, *Theory and Society* and *New Political Science*. From 1999 to 2000 he was Chair of the Caucus for a New Political Science within the American Political Science Association. In 2007 he was recipient of the Charles McCoy Career Achievement Award from the APSA.

