

## Seminars

### Seminar 1

#### **State and Stasis** (Desmond Manderson)

Monday 5 June, 9.30-12.30



This seminar might be subtitled a short course of study in Unconstitutional Law. It draws on contemporary theories of the relationship between law, state and aesthetics, as well as distinctions between ‘constituted’ and ‘constituent’ power, drawn from legal and political theory. It does so in order to introduce participants to an idea of the social contract and of citizenship that goes beyond the orthodox and limited frameworks of the modernist legal system. What role do aesthetics play in the legitimacy of the State and in the development of movements aimed at political and social change?

- How does the State see itself? How are we encouraged to imagine ourselves in relation to it?
- What is the role of imagery and aesthetics in this organization of legality, authority and power?
- How might artistic expression, aesthetic action, and the visibility of public protest help build a movement to radically transform the relationship between state and society?

We will begin by exploring the importance of image and visibility in the construction of ideas of statehood in the modern world. We will then look at the ways that contemporary protest movements deploy similar ideas to claim active citizenship in transforming law and the state in the modern world. Finally, we will consider the implications of neoliberalism for the possibility of engaging public space and community action to reshape or challenge the social contract.

These ideas and arguments will be developed through a highly interactive seminar with an unusual methodology: our discussions will focus on a close reading of visual resources. We will work together on drawing out the implications and connections of a wide range of paintings and photographs from the early modern State to the twenty-first century.

## Readings

- Alberto Toscano, ‘Images of State and Stasis’, talk delivered at the *Historical Materialism* conference in Sydney 2015
- Chiara Bottici, *Imaginal Politics: Images Beyond Imagination and the Imaginary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 90-105
- Paul Blokker, ‘The Imaginary Constitution of Constitutions’, *Social Imaginaries* 3 (1) (2017), 167-193
- Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments: Enacting the People in Postrevolutionary America* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 209-237
- Paul Muldoon and Andrew Schaap, ‘Aboriginal Sovereignty and the Politics of Reconciliation: The Constituent Power of the Aboriginal Embassy in Australia’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30 (3) (2012), 534-550
- Desmond Manderson, ‘Here & Now’ in Mark Antaki et al. (eds.), *Sensing the Nation's Law* (New York: Springer, 2018), pp. 175-190
- Arielle Azoulay, *Civil Contract of Photography* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2008), Chapter 1
- Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge MA: Zone Books, 2015), Chapter 1