Abolish the Fed! No taxation without representation! Tax the rich! Corporations are people! Eliminate student debt! Stop global warming! Drill, baby, drill! We are the 99 per cent!

What are the sources and implications of today's political slogans? To orient ourselves in a world of political passion we often try to differentiate such slogans into "liberal," "conservative," and "radical." This course is concerned with the tradition of radical thinking, meaning thinking that addresses the fundamental issues of social order and change. All political thought focuses on questions of liberty, equality, and social solidarity, but radical thinking highlights the way historical change affects our political values. If change is a constant in radical thought, what kinds of change do radicals support? What can or ought an individual do to bring about or resist change? To learn how to think about social change and its limits, we start with the emergence of modern liberalism out of the feudal despotism. Liberalism is the first body of thought to contrast human government to the state of nature. After characterizing the range of liberalism's achievements, we turn to its problems. Our guide is liberalism's greatest critic, Karl Marx. If liberalism inquires into the nature of liberty, then Marx asks whether there can be liberty without equality and solidarity. In the confrontation between Marx and liberal thought, we encounter the unstable nature of private property. Property - in forms like taxes, tuition, debt, corporations, patents, and common goods - is then theme that propels us into thinking radically about contemporary political issues. How is the African-American freedom struggle related to the forms of private property in the US? How does taxing the rich promote liberty differently than abolishing the Fed? How is student debt related to public ownership of education? What role do unions play in a world of global competition?

The course develops analytic, research, and argumentative skills through individual and team projects. Early on you will pick a slogan that motivates you, and analyze it in different contexts over the course of the semester. A final group presentation will allow you to connect these contexts analytically.