Dr. Sandra Rein

Associate Professor, Political Studies

Augustana Campus

University of Alberta

Canada

srein@ualberta.ca

“Re-reading Rosa Luxemburg’s *Theory and Practice* as a feminist text”

Abstract:

It is often the case that Rosa Luxemburg is viewed as an important figure and martyr in the historical accounts of revolutionary politics in the early 20th century. More recent scholarly engagements of Luxemburg’s various works have begun to take her seriously as a theorist and some even give weight to the broader philosophical implications of her extensive *oeuvre*. This paper proposes to tread into more controversial waters, suggesting that Rosa Luxemburg’s theory and practice are inherently feminist and that her writings have much to contribute to the necessary re-engagement between feminist and Marxist thought. At stake in this engagement is a renewed discussion of organization, democratic practice within and after the revolution, and a deeply embedded philosophical notion of what it means to be free.

In order to begin to re-think Rosa Luxemburg as a feminist theorist and thinker, the paper proposes a re-reading of Luxemburg’s essay *Theory and Practice.* In this work, Luxemburg is speaking both to the immediate questions posed by Kautsky and drawing together her own work on mass mobilization/strikes and spontaneity. Although Luxemburg does not write the essay as a “feminist text”, it will be argued that embedded in her discussion of organizational philosophy and the need to engage in the consciousness-raising of masses while respecting their spontaneous response to forms of social exclusion (historically, suffrage was the focal point at the time of the essay) are, in fact, deeply feminist. The paper concludes by suggesting that we are only now in a position to realize the full, radical potential of Luxemburg’s call for a practice informed by theory and a theory informed by practice.