

Concept Document and Calendar: Socialism and Culture: Stuart Hall Reading Group
Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America, Summer 2024



“We have to do something for ourselves, we have to discover what the class struggle is {now}, we have to discover what the relationship is between the peace movement and the working class, and we have to accept that there isn’t actually any secret lost page of the notebooks that will tell us where to go next.”

-Stuart Hall, [For a Marxism Without Guarantees](#)

Summary: The Socialism and Culture: Stuart Hall Reading Group is a reading group starting in June 2024, with the purpose of reading and discussing classic essays from Stuart Hall on socialism, culture, racism, and more. Based in the DC area, the Reading Group hopes to read key works from the social theorist Stuart Hall about how to understand how capitalism shapes culture and the ways a socialist movement can make inroads to make its values common sense. The group will meet weekly in a virtual setting on Tuesday nights, with 2 in-person social events around the DMV and the option to continue future socials or continue readings and discussions. No experience or knowledge level is required to join. Online text is available for all essays. The group will use a Notes document during and before meetings to gather members’ thoughts and questions.

Origin: The idea for the group came from three factors: 1) The importance of understanding the ways socialist values are and aren’t already part of popular consciousness; 2) The importance of media and cultural topics to shaping our world; and 3) the need for Metro DC DSA and the rest of the socialist movement to build hegemony to bring its values into the world. The group intends to meet interest in socialism and culture by reading core works on the topic.

Details: The group is based with Metro DC DSA’s Political Education Workgroup and welcomes members from outside of the organization. The group will primarily consist of reading and then holding online meetings to discuss essays from Stuart Hall. The reading schedule will be able to continue after if the group decides. Those group discussions will be interspersed with occasional guest presentations from authors or experts.

Structure: The group will have 2 coordinators that take responsibility for administrative elements of the group. The group will pass facilitation duties and other conversational responsibilities between members meeting-by-meeting unless the group determines otherwise.

Timeline and Location: The group is intended to start readings and discussion just after Memorial Day in 2024. The group will meet ~every week until late July, with meetings held all or mostly online and with 2 dedicated group social meet ups. The reading group may hold some meetings outside of the reading structure if prompted by anyone.

Feel free to add questions/points to discuss from the readings to our shared [discussion document](#).

Draft Calendar - all times at 7:30 pm unless modified

Meeting #1 (Tues. June 4): Introductions and overview of Reading Group format, online

- Optional Reading/Listening: [The Stuart Hall Project](#) (biographical film), John Akomfrah; and [“Colonial Landscapes, Colonial Subjects”](#), Pages 3-24, *Familiar Stranger* (biography)

Meeting #2 (Tues., June 11): *Social Get-Together, Socialism and Culture: Stuart Hall Reading Group*, Sonny’s Pizza (3120 Georgia Ave. NW, Washington, DC)

Meeting #3 (Tues. June 18): *Socialist Values in Culture*, online.

- Reading: [“The Battle for Socialist Ideas in the 1980s”](#), *Socialist Register*

Meeting #4 (Tues. June 25): *Politics and Crisis*, online, and presentation/visit from Metro DC DSA Steering

- Reading: [“The Great Moving Right Show”](#), Pages 39-56, *The Hard Road to Renewal*
- Optional Reading: [“Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left”](#), Pages 1-16, *The Hard Road to Renewal*

Meeting #5 (Tues. July 2): *The Politics of “Crime”*, online

- Reading: [“The Social History of a Moral Panic”](#), Chapter 1, Pages 7-31, *Policing the Crisis*
- Optional Reading: [“The Politics of Mugging”](#), Chapter 10, Pages 321-389, *Policing the Crisis*

Meeting #6 (Tues. July 16), *Social Get Together, Lyman’s Tavern, 3720 14 St NW, Wash. DC 20010*

Meeting #7 (Tues. July 23): *Racism and Culture*, online

- Reading: [“Race, the Floating Signifier”](#), Pages 359-373, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*
- Optional Viewing: [“Race: The Floating Signifier”](#), lecture (this is a video of Hall giving the above piece as a talk)

Meeting #8 (Tues. July 30): *Theory and Strategy*, online

- Reading: [“For a Marxism Without Guarantees”](#), reprinted in *Salvage*
- Optional Reading: [“Learning from Thatcherism”](#), *The Hard Road to Renewal*, Pages 271-283