

# David North brings fall lecture series to George Mason University

**Our Reporter**  
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held the third meeting of its five-campus lecture series by David North Wednesday evening at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. North, chairman of the international editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and of the Socialist Equality Party (US), delivered the lecture “Capitalist Crisis, Imperialist War, and the World Socialist Revolution,” which opened the series last week at Wayne State and Michigan State universities.

Some 80 people attended, most of them students, along with workers. Attendees bought hundreds of dollars in literature after the event.

North began by stressing the importance of historical knowledge for anyone who seeks to fight for socialism. Decades of political reaction, above all, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, have cut off an entire generation from the experiences of the class struggles of the 20th century.

With the US midterm elections less than a week away, North reviewed the record of the Democratic Party as the principal party of American imperialism and the indispensable partner of the Republicans in the capitalist two-party system.

North then placed the eruption of mass protests and strikes in France and across Europe in the context of the global crisis of capitalism, which is driving the ruling classes toward war and dictatorship. The simultaneity of these struggles, he explained, reflects objective economic forces operating on a world scale.

Drawing on Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, North stressed that the fight for socialism requires Marxist theory, the political independence of the working class and the perspective of socialist internationalism.

As at Wayne State and Michigan State, the discussion that followed was a central feature of the meeting.

Those in attendance asked why anti-Marxist theories had gained such influence, what distinguishes a Marxist conception of history from academic scholarship, how the immediate struggles of workers can be connected to the fight for socialism and how to understand the war in Ukraine.

One student asked about the anti-Marxist theories North had criticized in the lecture, and why, in the century since 1917, the wholesale rejection of Marxism had become plausible to so many. “What you’re really asking,” North replied, “is what was the fate of socialism in the 20th century.”

He traced the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party, the substitution of the Stalinists’ nationalist program of “socialism in one country” for the perspective of world revolution, and the resulting defeats of the working class in the 1930s. These defeats, which Trotsky insisted “were not inevitable,” played “an enormous role in the political disorientation of an intelligentsia,” North said.

“The greatest challenge in building a revolutionary movement,” he added, “is the reconquest of history.”

Another student asked how the call to “reconquer” history differed from simply reading about past events. The task, North replied, is to establish “a historical narrative which is objectively grounded, not a so-called discourse.” “There is a logic to history; we understand it,” he said.

Political leaders, North noted, “in some profound way, must reflect the society from which they arise.” Roosevelt represented “the period of [American imperialism’s] explosive rise to global dominance,” while the last half-century “has been a period of accelerating political, social, economic decay and breakdown.” Trump, he continued, “represents the resort of American capitalism to outright gangsterism

to secure its interests.”

One attendee pointed to the growing struggles of workers and youth over wages, housing, education and inflation and asked how these immediate needs can be connected to the fight against capitalism. An understanding of that connection, North said, “has to be brought into the working class. That’s the role of political leadership.” He added, “We’re not just telling the workers things they know. We’re telling them things they need to know.”

North described the impact of events on the working class: “A red hot poker is being applied to masses of people. They are being radicalized, but what they require is the ability to generalize.” Developing that ability requires “patient and persistent work,” he said. “You have to go to the factories. You have to fight to recruit workers. You have to organize classes.”

Asked about the war in Ukraine, North said, “Every war has reasons. Every war has causes.” The conflict, he explained, cannot be understood from the simplistic claim that Russia fired the first shot.

He reviewed the expansion of NATO after the dissolution of the USSR and the aim of the imperialist powers to break up Russia and seize its resources. “This is not an unprovoked war; this is an imperialist proxy war,” he said.

The SEP opposed Putin’s invasion, North noted, because it “would only play into the hands of imperialism,” and fights for the unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers. He urged those in attendance to join the campaign to free Bogdan Syrotyuk, the young Ukrainian Trotskyist sentenced in August to 15 years in prison on charges of “high treason” for advocating that unity.

Following the meetings at Wayne State and Michigan State, the response at George Mason is a further expression of the profound radicalization of young people and workers now underway internationally. From the mass struggles in France and across Europe to the growing opposition to war and dictatorship in the United States, a new generation is turning toward socialism and seeking the historical and theoretical foundations for the fight against capitalism.

Two lectures remain in the series. We urge all our readers and supporters in the San Francisco Bay Area and across Michigan to attend, help promote the meetings and bring their coworkers, classmates and

friends.

**UC Berkeley:** Monday, Nov. 2, 5:00 p.m. Genetics and Plant Biology Building, Room 100, Bayard Rustin Way, Berkeley, California

**University of Michigan:** Monday, Nov. 9, 7:00 p.m. Michigan League, Vandenberg Room, 2nd floor, 911 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor, Michigan

We call on all students and young people who want to fight for socialism to fill out the form below, and we will contact you to discuss building a chapter of the IYSSE at your school.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**