



Artwork by Judy Duarte for the MST's 40th anniversary

MST 40 ANOS LIBERTANDO A TERRA E O CAMPONÊS



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Artwork by Eduardo Antunes for the MST's 40th anniversary

We'll be meeting every week at this zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87904296104>

Paulo Freire and the Landless Workers' Movement (MST)

"Dreams are projects to fight for." This is how Brazilian educator Paulo Freire described dreams or utopias in one of his last essays, "On the Right and the Duty to Change the World" (1997).

In 17 April 1996 the military police of the state of Pará had murdered nineteen members of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in what became known as the Eldorado dos Carajás Massacre. Exactly one year later around a hundred thousand landless people and supporters of the movement took over the federal capital of Brasília in the historic National March for Jobs, Justice, and Agrarian Reform. Freire finished "On the Right and the Duty to Change the World" on the very next day, deeply moved by what he described as "the hopeful march of those who know that change is possible," those who "would never surrender to the ideological falsity of the claim: 'reality is the way it is, it is useless to fight.'"

How do Freire and the MST help us think about the importance of dreams or utopias? And how do they help us think about the central role of education in the fight for them?

To address these questions, this course starts with Freire's pedagogical writings, paying particular attention to interrelated concepts such as "problem-posing education," "history as possibility," "the future as a problem," and "dreams [as] projects to fight for." This last concept in particular serves as a bridge to the more than forty-years long fight of the MST for land, agrarian reform, and the transformation of Brazilian society, inviting us to turn to the movement for powerful examples of utopia. Without a doubt, the main one is the Program of Popular Agrarian Reform elaborated in the early 2000s, which replaced the traditional notion of agrarian reform that guided the struggle of the movement in its first decades with a much broader one, encompassing access to land and other means of subsistence as well as to education and culture. As we will see, the fight for this utopia includes the creation of what scholar Rebecca Tarlau calls "educational utopias," spaces like the Josué de Castro Educational Institute (IEJC) established in 1995 in the state of Rio Grande do Sul and the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF) established in 2005 in the state of São Paulo.

Lastly, we will see how the fight for Popular Agrarian Reform also fundamentally includes what the MST calls *místicas*, artistic performances of various kinds that express the unique utopianism of one of the most important popular movements in the history of Latin America and the world.

Main books (participants are *not* required to buy them):

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation: Pedagogical Letters and Other Writings* (2000)
- Sue Branford and Jan Rocha, *Cutting The Wire: The Story of the Landless Movement in Brazil* (2002)
- Rebecca Tarlau, *Occupying Schools, Occupying Land: How the Landless Workers Movement Transformed Brazilian Education* (2019)

Schedule:

Paulo Freire's Utopian Pedagogy

April 15: Session 1

Main reading: MST, "Paulo Freire: the People's Educator and Political Education" (2021);
<https://mst.org.br/2021/07/13/paulo-freire-the-peoples-educator-and-political-education/>

Main reading: Paulo Freire, Chapter 2 (pp. 71-75; 83-86), and Chapter 3 (pp. 95-103),
Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968)

Further reading: Dan Chodorkoff, "Education for Social Change," *The Anthropology of Utopia* (2014)

April 22: Session 2

Main reading: Paulo Freire, "First Letter: On the Spirit of This Book" and "Denouncing, Announcing, Prophecy, Utopia, and Dreams," *Pedagogy of Indignation: Pedagogical Letters and Other Writings* (2000)

Further reading: Paulo Freire, "Literacy and Destitution" and "Education and Hope,"
Pedagogy of Indignation

Further reading: Darren Webb, "Process, Orientation, and System: The Pedagogical Operation of Utopia in the Work of Paulo Freire" (2012)

Further reading: Tom Moylan, "Chapter 3: Denunciation/Annunciation: Utopian Method,"
Becoming Utopian: The Culture and Politics of Radical Transformation (2020)

Utopias Are Projects to Fight for

April 29: Session 3

Main reading: Paulo Freire, "On the Right and the Duty to Change the World," *Pedagogy of Indignation*

Main reading: Isabela Camini, "Paulo Freire's Meeting with the MST" (2021)

Further reading: Sue Branford and Jan Rocha, "Chapter 7: Massacre in the Amazon" and "Chapter 11: The Government's Counter-Offensive," *Cutting The Wire: The Story of the Landless Movement in Brazil* (2002)

Further reading: Rebecca Tarlau, "Rural Violence and State Concessions in an Era of Conflict (1995–2002)," *Occupying Schools, Occupying Land: How the Landless Workers Movement Transformed Brazilian Education* (2019)

May 6: Session 4

Main reading: Tricontinental ISR, "Popular Agrarian Reform and the Struggle for Land in Brazil" (2020)

Further reading: Sue Branford and Jan Rocha, "Chapter 14: The MST in Historical Perspective," *Cutting the Wire*

May 13: Session 5

Main reading: Tricontinental ISR, "The Political Organisation of Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement (MST)" (2024)

Further reading: Sue Branford and Jan Rocha, "Chapter 5: The Settlements," *Cutting The Wire*

The Educational Utopias of the MST

May 20: Session 6

Main reading: Rebecca Tarlau, "Chapter 1: Pedagogical Experiments in the Brazilian Countryside," *Occupying Schools, Occupying Land*

Further reading: Sue Branford and Jan Rocha, "Chapter 6: Education in the MST," *Cutting The Wire*

May 27: Session 7

Main reading: Fernandes and Trindade, "The Conditions for Building Popular Hegemony: Paulo Freire's 'Inédito Viável' and the Experience of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST)" (2024)

Further reading: Ana Maria Araújo Freire, "Afterword," *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1992)

The Utopian Practice of *Mística*

June 3: Session 8

Main reading: Daniela Issa, "Praxis of Empowerment: Mística and Mobilization in Brazil's Landless Rural Workers' Movement" (2007)

Main reading: MST, video of 6th National Congress of the MST (2014);
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcPhrGPktJc&list=PLs_FebLgno7adfMX4Os7oh82Y_rw7aQ5d

Further reading: Alex Ungprateeb Flynn, "Chapter 9: The Culture Sector," and "Chapter 10: Mística, Light on Your Feet" (2025)

Further reading: John L. Hammond, "Mística, Meaning and Popular Education in the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement" (2014)