



Le prochain séminaire de sociologie du CREST aura lieu le

Jeudi 17 septembre 2009 – de 16h30 à 18h

en amphi 2 à l'ENSAE, 3, avenue Pierre Larousse à Malakoff, métro ou tram : Porte de Vanves

(En raison de l'application du plan Vigipirate, se munir d'une pièce d'identité, qui sera demandée à l'entrée du bâtiment de l'ENSAE)

«Farewell to the leftist working class»

Intervenants : **Dick HOUTMAN et Peter ACHTERBERG**,
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Discutant : **Vincent TIBERJ**, Chercheur au Centre d'Études Européennes,
Sciences-Po

Résumé :

A specter is haunting the long-standing class theory of politics - the specter of the rightist working class. Social conflicts and voting patterns in Western nations indicate a gradual erosion of working-class support for the left, a process that class theory itself cannot adequately explain. Farewell to the Leftist Working Class aims to fill this gap by developing, testing and confirming an alternative explanation of rightist tendencies among the underprivileged.

The authors challenge the widely held assumption that weakening working-class support for leftist parties indicates first of all a decline in class voting and a breakdown of class politics. Instead, they argue, cultural issues that revolve around individual liberty and maintenance of social order have become much more significant since World War II. Due to high levels of authoritarianism, stemming from limited cultural capital rather than a weak economic position, this increasing salience of cultural issues cross-pressures the working class to vote for rightist parties. The declining alignment of the working class with the leftist parties does not so much indicate a breakdown of class politics, then, but rather a dramatic increase of cultural politics.

In this new political culture, the obligation to work and strict notions of deservingness have become central to the debate about the welfare state. Under these circumstances authoritarianism undermines solidarity with the unemployed, so that the latter is no longer guaranteed by working-class economic egalitarianism. Indeed, although economic egalitarianism is more typically found among the working class, it is only firmly connected to a universalistic and inclusionary progressive political ideology among the middle class.

Farewell to the Leftist Working Class reports cutting-edge research into the withering away of working-class support for the left and the welfare state, drawing mostly on survey data collected in Western Europe, the United States and other western countries. Although it is based on large-scale quantitative analyses of survey data, great pains have been taken to safeguard accessibility and to present the material in as reader-friendly a way as possible. The book will be of interest to researchers in political sociology, political science, and social stratification.

Houtman, Dick, Peter Achterberg, and Anton Derks. 2008. Farewell to the Leftist Working Class. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction