



2017

2017-18 Evolution of Revolution Annual Theme

Illinois Wesleyan University

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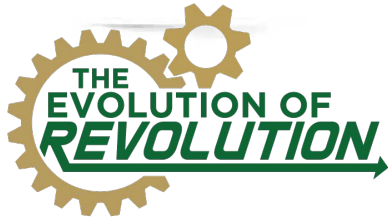
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The Evolution of Revolution

Everything evolves: people, living things, the environment, cultures, religions, and technologies. Change is a normal part of growth. Reform describes actions or process changes (typically incremental and systematic) made in order to improve something. However, when change is sudden, fundamental, and often subversive or dramatic, we experience a complete shift in our conception of life, and we call it revolution. A hallmark of Western learning has often been to study forces of change, as those factors that question tradition are those that are the most significant.

During the next few years, we will experience anniversaries of several of the most significant revolutions in history—the 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia; the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, ensuring fair housing treatment regardless of race, religion, national origin and sex; and the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment in 2020, granting women the right to vote. Additionally, we seem to continually grapple with ongoing technological revolution in our work, home, and social lives.

Scholars, activists, politicians, writers, and artists recognize the importance of revolution in our lived experiences. Inventor Albert Einstein noted, “The Revolution introduced me to art, and in turn, art introduced me to the Revolution.” President Thomas Jefferson stated, “Every generation needs a revolution.” Japanese author Osamu Dazai said, “This I want to believe implicitly: Man was born for love and revolution.” American novelist Ursula K. Le Guin wrote, “You cannot buy the revolution. You cannot make the revolution. You can only be the revolution. It is in your spirit, or it is nowhere.” Activist Angela Davis declared, “I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change ... I’m changing the things I cannot accept.” Avant-garde artist Paul Gauguin said, “Art is either plagiarism or revolution.”

Whether political, social, scientific, industrial, or aesthetic, revolutions have deeply affected the lived human experience as they challenge traditions of the past in favor of future possibilities. Accordingly, revolutions necessarily espouse the goal of bringing about change—sometimes radical and violent change, while at other times subtle and peaceful change. This theme invites us to think about the dynamics of change, reform, and revolution. What are the most significant revolutions of our time and in our disciplines? How have our ideas of revolution changed over time? How has our way of questioning the status quo evolved? What are the modern tools and strategies of revolution? Is technology a “revolution” or “revolutionary,” and what is the difference?

“You say you want a revolution/ Well, you know/ We all want to change the world/ You tell that me that it’s evolution”-- John Lennon (1940-1980) and Paul McCartney (1942-)

The theme of *The Evolution of Revolution* invites us to think broadly about dramatic societal, technological, and personal change that propels us to new ways of being, individually and as communities. We encourage you to think about how this theme can be a part of the programs that your department, class, or student organization may sponsor in the 2017-18 year.