Socialist and Marxist Speaker Series
Fall 2026

Thursdays

12:30-1:45 P.M.

Bangor Room, Memorial Union

The University of Maine

Zoom link for those who cannot attend in person:
https://maine.zoom.us/j/86720888983

Nov 19: MAKING AI FIT THE WAY LIFE SHOULD BE: BUILDING DIGITAL COMMONS WHERE PRODUCERS AND USERS OF DATA OWN IT IN MAINE

Gray Cox teaches Philosophy, Peace Studies, and Artificial Intelligence at the College of the Atlantic. He is a member of Acadia Friends Meeting and is a cofounder and lead officer of the Quaker Institute for the Future. His writings on AI include his book ***Smarter Planet or Wiser Earth? How Dialogue Can Transform Artificial Intelligence into Collaborative Wisdom***.

Developing his Human Ecological and Peace Studies Approach to AI, the aim of this book is to advance socio-technical systems of AI which are wiser, not just more efficient and "smarter". They should balance all the relevant values to make life more just, convivial, ecologically sustainable, and spiritually nourishing. This requires an expansion of the conceptions of rationality used in AI technology as well as in mainstream economics, politics, and ethics by drawing on contemporary research on negotiation, conflict transformation, peacemaking, and other traditions of collaborative reasoning for ethical choice. To respond effectively to threats from ecological collapse, climate change, wars of mutually assured destruction, and out of control technology, we need systematically wiser ways to reason in our daily lives and collectively transform our dominant institutions.

Professor Cox is the author of the recently published technical article entitled "From Control to Relationship: A Peace Studies Approach to AI Alignment, with Evidence from Multi-Model Dialogue" in the *AI Magazine*, the professional journal of the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence. The AI alignment problem has resisted a wide range of technical approaches developed to address it, and Dr. Cox argues this persistence reflects shortcomings in the dominant paradigm itself rather than in any particular technical approach within it. He proposes an alternative: alignment as a problem of negotiating relationships between intelligences operating from different perspectives, addressable through the dialogical reasoning methodology that branches of Peace Studies have developed over the past fifty years, by institutionalized nonviolent sanctions.

In his talk, Gray Cox will describe ways of applying these ideas to develop digital commons here in Maine in our management of education, food production, health care and other life systems.

This Series, offered since the mid-1980s as the academic Socialist and Marxist Studies Series, is coordinated by Doug Allen, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy. The series is co-sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Education and others. Speakers do not necessarily present socialist or Marxist viewpoints. For additional information, contact Doug Allen at dallen@maine.edu.

PLEASE ANNOUNCE TO CLASSES AND INTERESTED GROUPS AND LIST IN CALENDARS

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