

POS 453 Marxist Theory

Spring 2009
Class #8968 and 10813 Honors
TuTh 9:35-10:50
SBS 237
Credit Hours: 3

Dr. Joel Olson, instructor
joel.olson@nau.edu
Office phone: 523-8514
Office: SBS 236
Office Hours: TTh 11:00-12:15, T 4:00-6:00,
& by appt.

Description of the course

Official description: "Critically examines key concepts and arguments in the political theory of Karl Marx, as well as other important Marxists such as Engels, Lenin, Mao, and C.L.R. James." Along with Darwin, Einstein and Freud, Marx is one of the most important thinkers in the last two centuries. At one point, one-third of the world lived under regimes that called themselves Marxist. With the fall of communism in the 1990s, Marx's influence waned. But ironically, the death of Stalinism and the spread of globalization have led many people to take a fresh look at Marx. This course studies Marx's own writings as well as those of some of the most influential Marxist thinkers. One emphasis of the class will be the relevance of Marxian analyses to the United States. The aim of the class is not to convert people to Marxism — Marx once said he was no Marxist — but to study the ideas of a challenging and sometimes difficult thinker, whose interests spanned the range of human activity.

Books

The following books are required for the course:

1. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edition, edited by Robert C. Tucker (W.W. Norton 1978)
2. V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (International 1939)
3. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (International 1971)
4. Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor* (Zed 1999)

assign Empire a Multitude next time?

The total cost of the required books is about \$75 new. (I do *not* recommend getting these books online.) There are also a number of articles assigned, which are available on Vista.

Course web site: <http://vista.nau.edu>

Much of the course content (assignments, syllabus, roundtable teams, readings, links for further study, etc.) is available on Blackboard Vista. This course will show up when you go to <http://vista.nau.edu> and log on. You will be checking this site regularly.

Attendance policy

Political theory is a participatory subject. It is learned not only by reading and writing but also through discussion and debate. For this reason, attendance is important. As you would with any other missed appointment, call or email me if you will be absent for a class. You are responsible for all material missed due to absences.

- **Ruthless criticisms:** Twice during the semester you will make a very brief (5 minutes tops) analysis of a current political, social, or cultural event. This could include things such as newspaper clippings, magazine articles, TV shows, movies, popular music, sports, etc. (I encourage you to bring the item to class if possible.) Each critique will interpret the event through a Marxian framework and argue whether the interpretation is persuasive. You can do a criticism at any time during the semester and you don't have to schedule it in advance; just let me know at the beginning of class that you have something to present. I welcome partnered or group criticisms. You can post *one* of your ruthless criticisms on the discussion boards on Vista rather than present it in class. To get full credit for the Vista posting, at least two students must post a comment on it. Each materialist moment is worth 5 points, for a total of 10 points. Note: by "ruthless criticism" I do *not* mean a malicious attack on something or somebody. Rather, I mean it in the spirit in which Marx used the term: a careful criticism that gets to the root of a matter and that does not shrink from the implications it raises.
- Course content may vary from this outline to meet the needs of this particular group.
- Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices when in class. Laptops are permitted for note taking and other classroom uses, but *not* for surfing the web or multitasking. If you use your laptop for purposes outside of this course, I will prohibit you from bringing it to class.
- **Safe Working and Learning Environment Policy:** Safe Working and Learning Environment, Students with Disabilities, Institutional Review Board, and Academic Integrity policies all apply to this course. These policies are available at <http://www4.nau.edu/diversity/swale.asp>.
- **Evacuation Notice:** In the event of an alarm, you must leave the building immediately by the nearest exit, and move away from the building. Do not use the elevators. Please help those who may need assistance in exiting.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Please have the day's assignment read *before* class. Your ability to participate and do well in the class depends on staying caught up on the readings.

* Unless noted otherwise, all Marx texts are in Tucker's *Marx-Engels Reader* 2nd edition. Page numbers refer to this edition.

* (V) = Available on Vista. (Click on the "Course readings" link.)

Date	Topic	Reading
	I. Reading Marx politically	
January 13		
15		<i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (1848) (pp. 469-500)
20		"For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing" (1843) (pp. 12-15) "On the Jewish Question" (1843) (pp. 26-52)

RP1

Date	Topic	Reading
		(V) "Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 11/29/1869" 2 pp (V) "Marx to Engels, 12/10/1869" 2 pp (V) "Marx to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt, 4/9/1870" 4 pp Roundtable
February 24		FIRST PAPER DUE "Class Struggle and Mode of Production" (1852) (p. 220) <i>The Civil War in France</i> (1871) (pp. 618-652) 618-642
26		"The Possibility of Non-Violent Revolution" (1872) (pp. 522-524) "Critique of the Gotha Program" (1875) (pp. 525-541) "Marginal Notes on Bakunin's <i>Statism and Anarchy</i> " (1875) (pp. 542-548) x Roundtable
V. Lenin, imperialism, and the party		
March 3		Marx "On Imperialism in India" (1853) (pp. 653-664) (V) Marx, "Letter to Vera Zasulich" (1881) Marx, Preface to the Russian Edition of the <i>Communist Manifesto</i> (1882) (pp. 471-472) Lenin, <i>Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism</i> prefaces, chaps. 1 and 2 (pp. 7-46)
5		Lenin, <i>Imperialism</i> chaps. 3-7 (pp. 47-98)
10		Lenin, <i>Imperialism</i> chaps. 8-10 (pp. 99-128) (V) Rosa Luxemburg, <i>The Russian Revolution</i> chaps. 1 & 2
12		(V) Luxemburg, <i>The Russian Revolution</i> chaps. 3-8 Roundtable 1, 5, 6, 8
March 16-20	SPRING BREAK	
VI. The totalitarian turn		
24		(V) Joseph Stalin, <i>Concerning Questions of Leninism</i> , chaps. 1, 2, 5, 6 (1926) 2-2 pp + 17 + 9
26		SECOND PAPER DUE (days to 2/3) (V) Mao Zedong, "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan" (1927) ✓ (V) Mao Zedong, "Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership" (1943) <i>(Continued on next page -->)</i>

T2

P1

T3

RP6 →
↓

RP7
TB4

P2

- EAP CAP

POS 453 Marxist Theory

Spring 2009

Joel Olson, instructor

REVISED COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Please have the day's assignment read *before* class. Your ability to participate and do well in the class depends on staying caught up on the readings.

◦ Unless noted otherwise, all Marx texts are in Tucker's *Marx-Engels Reader* 2nd edition. Page numbers refer to this edition.

◦ (V) = Available on Vista. (Click on the "Course readings" link.)

Date	Topic	Reading
	III. The critique of capitalism	
<i>RP4</i> 17		<i>Capital</i> (1867) chap. 32 (pp. 436-438), chap. 1 (pp. 294-328), chap. 4 (329-336)
19		<i>Capital</i> chap. 6 (336-343), chap. 10 (pp. 361-376), chap. 13 (pp. 384-388), chap. 14 sections 4-5 (pp. 392-403)
<i>RP5</i> 24		<i>Capital</i> chap. 15 (pp. 403-417), chap. 25 (pp. 419-431), chap. 26 (431-434), chap. 27 (434-435), chap. 31 (435-436), chap. 32 (pp. 436-438) (V) <i>Capital</i> , chap. 33 ← <i>probably not</i>
	IV. Communism, political strategy, radical democracy	
<i>FE</i> <i>P1</i> 26		"The Possibility of Non-Violent Revolution" (1872) (pp. 522-524) <i>Marx on the U.S. Civil War</i> ✓ (V) "The North American Civil War" (1861) ✓ (V) "The Civil War in the United States" (1861) ✓ (V) "Address of the IWMA to President Lincoln" (1864) <i>Marx on Ireland</i> ✓ (V) "Confidential Communications with the General Council of the IWMA" (1870) ✓ (V) "Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 11/29/1869" ✓ (V) "Marx to Engels, 12/10/1869" ✓ (V) "Marx to Sigfrid Meyer and August Vogt, 4/9/1870" Roundtable FIRST PAPER DUE

Date	Topic	Reading
March 3		"Class Struggle and Mode of Production" (1852) (p. 220) <i>The Civil War in France</i> (1871) (pp. 618-642) "Critique of the Gotha Program" (1875) (pp. 528-532, 537-539) Roundtable [??]
V. Lenin, imperialism, and the party		
5		Marx "On Imperialism in India" (1853) (pp. 653-664) (V) Marx, "Letter to Vera Zasulich" (1881) Marx, Preface to the Russian Edition of the <i>Communist Manifesto</i> (1882) (pp. 471-472) Lenin, <i>Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism</i> prefaces, chaps. 1 and 2 (pp. 7-46)
10		Lenin, <i>Imperialism</i> chaps. 3-7 (pp. 47-98)
12		Lenin, <i>Imperialism</i> chaps. 8-10 (pp. 99-128) (V) Rosa Luxemburg, <i>The Russian Revolution</i> chaps. 1 & 2 Roundtable
March 16-20	SPRING BREAK	
24		(V) Luxemburg, <i>The Russian Revolution</i> chaps. 3-8
VI. The totalitarian turn		
26		(V) Joseph Stalin, <i>Concerning Questions of Leninism</i> , chaps. 1, 2, 5 (1926) (V) Mao Zedong, "Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership" (1943) (V) CCP, "Decision Concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (1966) Roundtable [??] SECOND PAPER DUE
VII. Hegemony and politics		
31		Gramsci, <i>Selections from the Prison Notebooks</i> pp. 5-23, 123-168
April 2		Gramsci, <i>Prison Notebooks</i> pp. 169-173, 192-205, 206-218, 229-253
7		Gramsci, <i>Prison Notebooks</i> pp. 257-264, 275-276, 277-306, 316-318
9		RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE Gramsci, <i>Prison Notebooks</i> pp. 321-357 Roundtable

T2

RP6
 RP7
 T3

RP8
 RP9
 T4

?2
 RP10
 RP9
 T5
 RP10

hand at
 2nd
 may
 offign

you could
 not be
 still in
 control
 to the
 st + i.c.s
 5x2
 see you
 lectu
 notes

Date	Topic	Reading
VIII. C.L.R. James and an American Communism		
April 14		(V) C.L.R. James, <i>Every Cook Can Govern</i> (1956) (V) James, "Introductory" and "Individuality 1776-1876," from <i>American Civilization</i> (1950)
16		(V) James, "The Americanization of Bolshevism" (1944) (V) James, "The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in the USA" (1948) (V) James, "Negroes, Women, and the Intellectuals," from <i>American Civilization</i>
21		Marx, <i>Grundrisse</i> (pp. 244-246) (V) James, "Freedom Today" and "Popular Arts and Modern Society," from <i>American Civilization</i> (V) James, "Three Black Women Writers" (1981) Roundtable
IX. Patriarchy and globalization		
23		Maria Mies, <i>Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale</i> chap. 1
28		Mies, <i>Patriarchy and Accumulation</i> chaps. 2-3
30		Mies, <i>Patriarchy and Accumulation</i> chaps. 4, 7 Roundtable
May 5	Final Exam date (7:30-9:30 am)	THIRD PAPER DUE , by 5:00 pm No class

RP10 →

RP11
T6

PP12
+7

P3

prompt #3
de

assign here on day 2 or 2 at Jany

Happy 191st Birthday, Marx!