

Instructor: Professor Manfred B. Steger

Meeting Time & Place: Monday, 2:30 - 5:00/Saunders 624

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POLS 710: SEMINAR IN POLITICAL THOUGHT Spring 2015: CRITIQUING GLOBAL CAPITALISM

Course Description

The April 2014 publication of Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (#1 bestseller on amazon.com!) triggered an unprecedented global debate on capitalism and inequality. Hailed and condemned by commentators on political Left and Right as the "21st-Century Marx," Piketty argues that the tendency of returns on capital to exceed the rate of economic growth has been causing a widening of inequality that threatens to undermine (liberal) democracy. Introducing graduate students to related literature on the evolution of capitalism in the age of globalization, this course provides the necessary theoretical tools and philosophical framework(s) to engage in such sophisticated critiques of capitalism and equality in the global age. There are no prerequisites for this seminar. Graduate students who have not previously taken any courses in political theory or political economy are welcome to enroll in this class.

While discussing economic concepts and categories linked to the critical analysis of global capitalism, this seminar focuses on questions of *political theory* by exploring the ideational and ethical dimensions of the contemporary framework of capitalism. Moreover, students are encouraged to relate their own research interests to the themes and issues raised in this seminar. The organization of this course rest on the following eight main questions:

- What is the core of the Marxist critique of capitalism and how has it evolved in the writings of various structuralist and poststructuralist thinkers influenced by Marx/Engels?
- What kinds of global transformations has capitalism undergone in the last four decades?
- What is the link between the globalization of capitalism and inequality?
- What are the consequences of growing inequality for contemporary class and identity formations?
- Can the political Left recuperate effective critiques of contemporary capitalism and inequality? If so, how?
- What is the role of ideology and major political ideas in these forms of critique?
- What is the significance of "epistemologies of the South" for these forms of critique?
- Is a radical overhaul of global capitalism possible—especially in light of "global crises" like the global financial crisis of 2008 or global climate change?

Student Learning Objectives

The five principal student learning objectives of this course are:

- *To understand the basic elements and functions of global capitalism and its historical evolution in modernity*
- *To gain a clear understanding of Marxist and Marx-inspired critiques of capitalism and their relevance in the global age;*
- *To acquire the knowledge and skill to analyze contemporary capitalist formations with an critical eye toward the workings of asymmetrical power relations in the current global order;*
- *To appreciate the role of ideas and ideologies in contributing to the constitution and reproduction of inequality in our globalizing world;*
- *To produce and deepen critical forms of knowledge and understanding that contribute to emancipatory strategies of social and political transformation.*

Course Readings (required)

The following required paperback books are available for purchase in the U.H. bookstore:

- 1) Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd ed. W.W. Norton, 1978. ISBN: 978-0393090406
- 2) Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." Online at: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>
- 3) Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Verso, 2005. ISBN: 978-1844671656
- 4) Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the 21st Century*. Harvard University Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0674430006
- 5) Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. ISBN: 978-1849663519
- 6) Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Empistemicide*. Paradigm Publishers, 2014. ISBN: 978-1612055459
- 7) Jeffrey Frieden, *Global Capitalism: Its Fall and Rise in the 20th Century*. Norton, 2007. ISBN: 978-0393329810
- 8) Pope Francis I, Excerpt from *Evangelii Gaudium* ('The Joy of the Gospel'); handout provided in class.

Please note: Each student is required to imbibe 5-10 additional readings (books, journal articles, or review essays) pertaining to his or her research topic/theme. Please see the instructor for specific literature recommendations that relate the themes and issues raised in this seminar to your own areas of interest.

Additional Course Readings (highly recommended)

- 1) Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Beacon, 2001).
- 2) Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (Routledge, 1994).
- 3) Nigel Thrift, *Knowing Capitalism* (Sage 2005).
- 4) Joyce Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism* (Norton, 2010).
- 5) Kojin Karatani, *The Structure of World History* Duke UP, 2014).
- 6) Branko Milanovic, *The Haves and the Have Nots* (Basic Books, 2011).
- 7) Joseph Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality* (Norton, 2012).
- 8) David Rothkopf, *Superclass* (FSG, 2008).
- 9) Kojin Karatani, *The Structure of World History* Duke UP, 2014).
- 10) Chris Harman, *Zombie Capitalism* (Verso, 2009).
- 11) Peter Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital* (Polity, 2013).
- 12) David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital* (Oxford UP, 2010).
- 13) David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Oxford UP, 2014).
- 14) Eric Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World* (Yale UP, 2011).
- 15) Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions* (Harvard UP, 2014).
- 16) Maurizio Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity* (MIT Press, 2014).
- 17) Walden Bello, *Capitalism's Last Stand?* (Zed, 2013).
- 18) Arundhati Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (Haymarket Books, 2014).
- 19) Manfred B. Steger, *The Rise of the Global Imaginary: Political Ideologies from the French Revolution to the Global War on Terror* (Oxford University Press, 2008).
- 20) Manfred B. Steger, James Goodman & Erin K Wilson, *Justice Globalism: Ideology, Crises, Policy* (Sage Publications, 2013).

Course Structure & Requirements

Let me encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own active learning environment—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I EXPECT REGULAR STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. Students must be willing to engage in class discussions. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But I do not accept the equation of subjective experience or unreflective “common sense” with “truth.” Be prepared to engage with the questions raised in this seminar, regardless of students’ own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing students for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant’s dictum, *Sapere aude*—“Have the courage to use your own understanding!”

The course readings and assignments have been carefully selected to generate broad in-class discussions and insightful oral presentations. Except for the initial 5 weeks, each class meeting will follow the same basic structure:

- 1) A student engages as “discussant” of the assigned readings by raising questions for discussion and leading class discussion (40 min)
- 2) Instructor’s response to discussant and class discussion (10 min)
- 3) Short break (10 min)
- 4) Instructor’s lecture on assigned readings of the week plus class discussion (90 min)

Students are required to select a topic of their choice (in consultation with me) for a **25-page research paper that relates the materials of this seminar to a topic of the student’s interest. An abstract/outline of the paper (1 page) plus a research bibliography (10-15 entries), will be due Week 14 (April 13). At students’ request, I will provide feedback on ONE draft of the term paper between May 1 and 8 (face-to-face consultation in my office only—no email drafts!). In addition, on May 4, all students are required to give a short presentation on their paper topic and their selection of texts.**

In your term paper, you should engage in your texts and topics with as much sophistication as possible. You should indicate how your textual analysis reveals something of political significance about the larger theme/context from which it is taken. Thus you should engage in a careful textual analysis of your themes and texts and cite appropriate, short textual passages (full footnotes or endnotes). *No book reports or summaries please!* You are expected to incorporate in your papers external research (books, journal articles, and reviews). I am happy to give you recommendations for additional secondary sources. If you wish such advice, please talk to me about it BEFORE you get to work on your paper. Your papers represent an exercise in political interpretation. A hardcopy of the research paper is due on **Monday, May 11 at noon, in my office (or department office). No late papers will be accepted.**

Finally, each student will be responsible for serving as a discussant of our weekly reading assignments (possibly with another student). You will be required to raise question for class discussion that relate to self-selected textual passages of the assigned readings. You will lead these discussions and involve the entire class. You will be asked to sign up for a specific week at the latest by the third week of class. Assignments on particular topics/weeks will be made on first-come, first-serve basis. In addition the assigned readings, your presentation may include additional supportive (brief) materials (for example, handouts, charts, and/or visual materials like Power Points, video clips, or other web-based materials).

Regular class attendance is required. Please inform the instructor *in advance* if you have to miss class for really, really important reasons!

A Note on Grading

You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the seminar. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the seminar (see academic dishonest section below). Your in-class presentation and participation will count for 25% and your term paper for 75%. Thus, your seminar grade will reflect your presentation, participation, and the overall quality of your written work. Students who participate regularly during our class discussions will receive *extra*

credit—meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the *higher grade*.

Please be advised that *overparticipation* and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers may hurt the quality of the course, especially if such actions tend to derail the thematic agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order keep us on track and help *all* students to engage with the relevant materials. A significant element in academic study is the ability to learn to listen to other voices. For the purposes of this course, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

1) Discussant Presentations:

An “A” will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such presentations of self-selected textual passages are coherent, well organized, and adhere to the given time frame. “A” students show their critical and careful reading of the text(s) and generate genuine interest and excitement for their topic. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme.

2) Term Paper:

Much of the above pertains to term papers as well. In addition to treating the subject in a sophisticated and creative manner, “A” papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw connections between non-obvious points; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct voice. An “A” paper in a graduate seminar should add a new wrinkle to the existing body of texts/literature. If this grade is to mean something, just doing a “good job” will result in a “B.” To get an “A,” you must demonstrate your ability to go *beyond* the expected.

Course and Classroom Protocols:

Our goal is learning, through the sharing of ideas about a complex and rich subject of great intellectual and aesthetic value. The classroom is for comments, questions, and clarifications about the assigned reading. To help us achieve that goal:

- Reading assignments are to be completed in advance of the class meeting when they are scheduled to be discussed; you are expected to bring the book, and your insights as well as puzzlements to share with the rest of the class;
- Be on time; do not go out and come back during class (except for real emergencies); do not leave early;
- Turn off and put away your cellphones;
- No private conversations;
- Laptops are permitted for occasional note taking use only; you may not withdraw from the group into your laptop;

- Participation in class discussions is a required component of the grade for classwork;
- To sum up: we want to keep the heat in the system for 150 minutes and maximize our learning experience.

Academic Dishonesty

The Political Science Department holds its graduate students to the highest standards of academic integrity. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Using the same paper for more than one class without explicit permission from the instructors
- Cutting and pasting directly from a website or other source without attribution.
- Using sources or referring to sources without directly referencing the materials.
- Passing off work done by other students as your own.
- Cheating on tests.

No forms of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. If a student is found to have engaged in a form of academic dishonesty, consequences will range from failure in the course to suspension from the program. Evidence of academic dishonesty within a course will be forwarded first to the graduate chair and then, following the procedures for the University of Hawaii system, to the Office of Judicial Affairs. A record of charges will be kept in the student's file. More information regarding this subject can be found on the Office of Student Affairs' website in the student conduct code.

Source: Graduate Student Guide, Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii at Manoa. Accessible at: <http://www.politicalscience.hawaii.edu/3-working/grad/documents/gradguide12011.pdf> p. 28.

Office Hours

Wednesday, 2:00 – 3:00pm; and by appointment.

Students are encouraged to see me during office hours on a regular basis. Please clarify any difficult readings and/or other problems as soon as they arise. Don't wait until the last few weeks of the semester.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (Jan 12): Introduction to the Seminar (Read 'Boltanski & Chiapello, 'Preface to the English Edition' (pp. ix-xxvii); Marx, 'For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing' (MER, pp. 12-15);

Readings for week 3: Marx (& Engels), 'Theses on Feuerbach' (MER, pp. 143-45); 'Communist Manifesto' (MER, pp. 469-500); 'The German Ideology' (MER, pp. 146-165); 'Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>

WEEK 2 (Jan 19): HOLIDAY: Martin Luther King Day

WEEK 3 (Jan 26): MARX & ENGELS, HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Readings for week 4: 'Wage Labor and Capital' (MER, pp.203-218); *Capital* Vol. 1 (MER, pp. 294-365).

WEEK 4 (Feb 2): MARX, CAPITAL

Readings for week 5: Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>

WEEK 5 (Feb 9): ALTHUSSER, IDEOLOGY & THE STATE

Readings for week 7: Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Intro and Part I.

WEEK 6: (Feb 16) HOLIDAY PRESIDENTS' DAY

WEEK 7 (Feb 23): BOLTANSKI & CHIAPELLO, PART I

Student Presentation #1

Readings for week 8: Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Part II.

WEEK 8 (Mar 2): BOLTANSKI & CHIAPELLO, PART II

Student Presentation #2

Readings for week 9: Boltanski & Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Part III.

WEEK 9 (Mar 9): BOLTANSKI & CHIAPELLO, PART III

Student Presentation #3

Readings for week 10: Thomas Picketty, *Capital in the 21st Century*, Intro, Parts One & Two.

WEEK 10 (Mar 16): PICKETTY, PARTS I & II

Student Presentation #4

Readings for week 12: Picketty, Part Three

WEEK 11 (Mar 23): No Class: Spring Recess

WEEK 12 (March 30): PICKETTY, PART III

Student Presentation #5

Readings for week 13: Picketty, Part Four & Conclusion.

WEEK 13 (April 6): PICKETTY, PART IV

Student Presentation #6

Readings for week 14: Standing, *The Precariat* (all).

WEEK 14 (April 13): STANDING, THE PRECARIAT

Student Presentation #7

1-page abstract and bibliography for research paper due.

Readings for week 15: De Souza Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, Intro & Part I

WEEK 15 (April 20): DE SOUZA SANTOS, PART I

Student Presentation #8

Readings for week 16: De Souza Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, Part II; Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* ('The Joy of the Gospel'); handout provided in class.

WEEK 16 (April 27): DE SOUSA SANTOS, PART II & POPE FRANCIS

Student Presentation #9

WEEK 17 (May 4): STUDENT RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

Discussion. Research Paper due: Mon, May 11, noon. No late papers will be accepted.