

Instructor: Professor Manfred B. Steger

Meeting Time: Monday, 10:30am - 1:00pm/ SAUND 624

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POLS 611: TRADITIONS OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY Spring 2016: Marx & Marxism

Course Description

Few political thinkers have been denounced as “irrelevant” and “out of date” with such frequency and ferocity as Karl Marx. However, after the Great Recession of 2008-10, the ongoing European Debt Crisis, and the recent economic slowdown in China, global capitalism has been rattled in serious ways. Marx-inspired critiques of the global economic regime are once again stimulating anti-systemic social movements (e.g. the Global Justice Movement and the Occupy-related movements) that are organizing mass protests against rising global inequality around the world. This course invites students to critically explore and analyze major Marxist writings and relate them to the twenty-first century context of global capitalism.

Course Structure

Starting with a brief consideration of G.W.F. Hegel’s pivotal influence on Marx’s thought, this course will introduce students to the main ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Hence, much of our time will be taken up with studying primary texts. We will engage in close textual readings of crucial passages in class and discuss their central theoretical claims. In particular, there are five main questions we’ll tackle in this course:

- *What are Marx’s (and Engels’s) main ideas, methods, and political prescriptions?*
- *What are the weaknesses and strengths of their philosophical (political) framework?*
- *What is the relevance and significance of their historical context?*
- *How did Marxism evolve as a political ideology from 1895-1914?*
- *What is the contemporary relevance of Marxist thought and analysis in the global context of recurring crises of capitalism?*

In addition to our thorough investigation and analysis of the political thought of Marx and Engels, we’ll also consider the development of Marxism as a globalizing political ideology by exploring such influential figures as Eduard Bernstein, Rosa Luxemburg, V.I. Lenin, and Mao Zedong. In the final section of the class, we’ll rely on David Harvey’s seminal theoretical contributions to probe the extent to which Marxist analysis can help us make sense of the ongoing crises of global capitalism.

Course Readings (required)

The following 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) G.W.F. Hegel, *Reason in History*. Prentice Hall, 1995. ISBN: 978-0023513206
- 3) David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism*. Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-19-983684-0.
- 4) Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx: Thoroughly Revised 5th ed.* Princeton University Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0691156507
- 5) Excerpts (free downloads) from writings by Eduard Bernstein, Rosa Luxemburg, V. I. Lenin, and Mao Zedong from the following website: www.marxists.org;

Also check out resources made available through the Online University of the Left: <http://ouleft.org/>

Additional Recommended Readings:

- 1) Chris Harman, *Zombie Capitalism*, Haymarket Books, 2009
- 2) Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right*, Yale, 2011
- 3) Alex Callinicos, *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx*, Haymarket Books, 2011
- 4) Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, Routledge, 2006 (1994)
- 5) Terrell Carver, *The Postmodern Marx*, Penn State University Press, 1998
- 6) Joseph Stiglitz, *Freefall: America, Free Markets and the Sinking of the World Economy*, W.W. Norton, 2010
- 7) Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Current of Marxism*, W.W. Norton, 2005 (1978)
- 8) Charles Derber: *Marx's Ghosts: Midnight Conversations on Changing the World*, Paradigm (2011)
- 9) Jason Reid, *The Micro-Politics of Capital*, SUNY Press (2003)
- 10) Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire*, Harvard UP (2000)
- 11) Eric Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World: Reflections on Marx & Marxism*. Yale University Press (2011).

12) David Priestland, *The Red Flag: A History of Communism*!. Grove Press (2010) ISBN: 978-0802145123. Available in UH book store.

Please note: Each student is required to imbibe 5-10 additional journal articles pertaining to your research topic/theme in Marxist theory (conduct your own online search).

Learning Objectives and Course 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. You 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 your own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing you 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) Two students engage as “discussants” 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 15 (April 18). At students’ request, I will provide feedback on ONE draft of the term paper between May 2 and 6 (face-to-face consultation in my office only—no email drafts!). In addition, in our last class on May 2, all students are required to give a short presentation on their paper topic and their selection of texts.**

In your research 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 9 at noon, in my office (or department office). No late papers will be accepted.**

Finally, as noted above, seven teams of two students will be responsible for serving as discussants by a) engaging in an *immanent critique* of self-selected textual passages; and b) leading the ensuing *discussion* involving the entire class. 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. Your in-class presentation, engaged discussion, and participation will count for 25% and your research 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) In-Class Presentations (Immanent Critique):

An 'A' or 'A-' will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such immanent critiques 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) Research Paper:

Much of the above pertains to interpretive essays/term paper 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' research paper in a graduate seminar should add a new wrinkle to the existing body of literature on this topic. 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.

Office Hours

Monday, 9:00 – 10:00 am; 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.

Academic Conduct

Students are expected to abide by the university's policies regarding academic integrity. Actions that are academically dishonest include, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information, interfering with the education of another student. Violation of these policies will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences including receiving a failing grade, suspension, or expulsion. The university policy on academic dishonesty can be found at the UH Manoa Student Conduct Code Policies Section IV Proscribed Conduct. For detail information, please consult the following website: http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/proscribed_conduct.php

Disability Accommodation

If you have a disability for which you need an accommodation, please make an appointment with the UH Manoa KOKUA Program (Disability Access Services) at (808) 956-7511, or via email kokua@hawaii.edu. For more information please access its website: <http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/>

Subject to Change Statement

This syllabus and schedule are provisional and are subject to change. It is at the discretion of the instructor to do so for the purpose of furthering the educational objectives of the course. While the instructor will notify students of any changes through class announcements and email communications, it is students' responsibility to check on the course syllabus periodically for changes.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

PART I: INTRODUCTION: THE INFLUENCE OF HEGEL

WEEK 1 (Jan 11): Introduction to the Course

Readings for week 3: Hegel, *Reason in History*.

WEEK 2 (Jan 18): NO CLASS: MLK HOLIDAY

WEEK 3 (Jan 25): Hegel

Readings for week 4: Marx-Engels Reader (MER), pp. 1-25; Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx* (all)

PART II: MARX AND ENGELS: THEORY, METHOD, HISTORY

WEEK 4 (Feb 1): Earliest Writings; Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*

Readings for week 5: MER, pp. 26-65.

WEEK 5 (Feb 8): On the Jewish Question

Readings for week 7: MER, pp. 66-109; 133-35; 143-145.

WEEK 6: (Feb 15) NO CLASS: PRESIDENTS' DAY HOLIDAY

WEEK 7(Feb 22): Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844; Alienation and Social Classes; Theses on Feuerbach

Readings for week 8: MER, pp. 146-200; 469-500.

WEEK 8 (Feb 29): The German Ideology; Manifesto of the Communist Party Student Presentations #1

Readings for week 9: MER, pp. 203-20; 294-438.

WEEK 9 (Mar 7): Wage Labor and Capital; Capital: Volume 1

Student Presentations #2 ; *Readings for week 10:* same as for week 9.

WEEK 10 (Mar 17): Capital: Volume 1

Student Presentations #3

Readings for week 13: 586-93; 594-617; 618-652; 653-664; 676-77.

WEEK 11 (Mar 21): NO CLASS: Spring Recess

WEEK 12 (March 28): NO CLASS (watch assigned episodes on YouTube: PBS series, *Heaven on Earth: the Rise and Fall of Socialism*)

WEEK 13 (Apr 4): Class Struggles in France; The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte; The Civil War in France; On Imperialism in India; Europocentric World Revolution

Student Presentations #4

***Readings for week 14:* Bernstein (in-class handouts); Luxemburg (online selections to be Announced.)**

PART III: THE GREAT SCHISM: SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND BOLSHEVISM

WEEK 14 (Apr 11): Eduard Bernstein & Rosa Luxemburg

Student Presentations #5

***Readings for week 15:* Lenin (online selections to be announced); Mao Zedong (online selections to be announced).**

WEEK 15 (April 18): V. I. Lenin, Mao Zedong

Student Presentations #6

RESEARCH PAPER: 1-PAGE ABSTRACT AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

***Reading for week 16 & 17:* Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital*.**

PART IV: MARXISM IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

WEEK 16 (April 25): Crises of Global Capitalism: Harvey's Marxist Analysis I

Student Presentation #7

WEEK 17 (May 2): Crises of Global Capitalism: Harvey's Marxist Analysis II

10-Minute Student Presentations on Research Paper

Research Paper due: Monday, May 9, noon. No late papers will be accepted!