

RPOS 308 – 0001

(8649)

Reading Marx: Philosophical, Political, Social Perspectives

Spring 2019

Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:15 pm – 5:35 pm

Room: HU 109

Lecturer: Mykolas Gudelis

Department of Political Science, Political Theory

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

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Course Description

Various works by the followers of Karl Marx and multiple strands of interpretation of Marx's thought from economic, social, and political perspectives gave rise to the corpus of ideas and theories known as "Marxism." Historical attempts to design, shape, and institute societies based on principles of Marxism led to the emergence of so-called "communist regimes" in Eastern Europe, China, Korea, Cuba, and other parts of the world after World War II. During the Cold War, Marxism was critically perceived in Western, liberal-democratic capitalist countries and vehemently criticized by many political and intellectual elites in these places. After the dismantling of the USSR in 1992 and the increased rates of growth of global capitalism, Marxism as a social, economic, and political body of thought became largely discredited in the West. At the same time, the actual writings of Marx (his ideas, arguments, and successful and unsuccessful intellectual experiments) were forgotten, obscured, ideologically misinterpreted, and often outright misconstrued. With so much attention (and criticism) devoted to Marxism, the thinker himself, Karl Marx, and his works have been overlooked. Today, whenever we experience a major shift in the dynamics of capitalism and the profound cultural, social, and political effects on Western societies, the ideas of Marx remain relevant and may even provide new theoretical bases for contemporary political, social, and economic critiques. In this course, we will "separate" Marx from Marxism and engage with key primary texts and ideas of this profound thinker, political philosopher, and social and economic scientist, exploring concepts such as history, materialism, alienation, class, labor, value, and others. And we will follow the historical "arch" of the development of Marx's ideas—from young Marx the humanist, the idealist, the philosopher, to a revolutionary social scientist and a "mature" political economist.

Learning Objectives

- ✓ To become familiar with the major theoretical aspects of key works of Karl Marx
- ✓ To be able to analyze, interpret and critically evaluate the key concepts, ideas and arguments presented in the selected course readings.
- ✓ Expand and deepen the understanding of concepts such as "class," "labor," "alienation," "commodity," "value" and others that serve as a major points of Marx's social, political and economic theories.
- ✓ Expand the ability to interpret political theory texts – their arguments, style, and levels of meaning.
- ✓ Strengthen skills of analytical thinking and argumentative academic writing.
- ✓ To be able to establish theoretical relationships between the political concepts and contemporary political context.

Course Requirements

As a student enrolled in this course and receiving institutional academic credit, your responsibilities are:

- ✓ Attend all lectures.
- ✓ Arrive to lectures on time and do not be late.
- ✓ Complete all readings prior or by the assigned date and come to class prepared.
- ✓ Contribute to a respectful academic environment, refraining from unrelated conversations or use of technology (cell phones, laptops and other devices)
- ✓ Bring the assigned readings to a class session with you.
- ✓ Be an active: take notes, ask questions, raise points of critique.
- ✓ Be an active participant of in-class discussions.
- ✓ Be respectful of other diverse points of view by other classmates and engage in an intellectual debate in a civilized manner

Required Books

Reading and writing are essential methods and “tools” of academic work. By reading, we engage with ideas of different thinkers each of whom interpret different subjects of their studies in their own way, using specific methodologies and constructing particular arguments. Through close reading of assigned texts, you should be able to deconstruct these arguments, critically evaluate and use the knowledge and understanding of them to formulate and develop your own ideas. There is a list of required books for this course. We will not read all of them in their entirety, but selected chapters and sections. The required books have been ordered and are available for you in University’s bookstore. If you decide to acquire books from other sources, make sure you have the same exact editions as a bookstore as we want to make sure we are literally “on the same page” of the text during the lectures. It is important for you to have the exact same editions as stated in this syllabus. If you order books from somewhere else, make sure you time your orders properly to make sure your books arrive on time for the class and not later.

Note: Books are a *must* for this course.

Required books

- “The Marx and Engels Reader” Second Edition. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. Princeton University. W.W. Norton and Company, 1978. ISBN: 0-393-09040-X
- “A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,” Ed. Maurice Dobb. International Publishers, New York, 1999. ISBN 0-7178-0041-5

Additional readings in a form of PDF files will be placed on Blackboard and available to you for a download. Make sure you print out the sections of required texts and bring them with you to a classroom on a day the reading is assigned for a discussion.

Office Hours

You should not feel any hesitation to come to talk about the course material during my office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. in Humanities B16 office. You are also very welcome to approach me for a conversation after or before class or schedule a different time for a meeting if you are not available for a meeting on during office hours.

Blackboard and SUNY E-mail inboxes

Your homework assignments will be posted on Blackboard in addition to being e-mailed to your “suny.edu” mailboxes. Make sure you check blackboard and your university E-mail regularly for course updates, changes in syllabus and other announcements.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism means to pass off someone else's work as your own. Please be warned that if found guilty of plagiarism, you will automatically fail the course and receive an E grade. Further actions will be taken, including sending your case before a university committee. Remember, taking text off internet sites and "reworking them" will also earn you an E along with further disciplinary actions. The whole idea of this course is for you to engage in active, critical thinking of *your own* and to demonstrate that you worked with the texts, understood them and, based on understanding and knowledge acquired, were able to develop your own ideas and arguments. Any attempt to plagiarize in this course will be taken very seriously and may have an extremely negative outcome.

Course grade breakdown

Midterm exam (midterm paper):	15%
Final exam: (final research paper):	25%
Three response papers:	15% each (45% all together)
Participation and group assignments:	10%
Attendance	5%

Exams, homework papers, attendance and participation

Exams

Both, midterm and final exams are in the form of an *argumentative essay* in a format of *academic research paper*. Your midterm paper should be of 6 pages long. Your final exam paper should be 8 pages long. Each paper should be of the following standard: Times Roman 12pt. font, double spaced with consistent citation/foot notes style through the paper and bibliography list. Additional information on the format, structure and principles of argumentative essay is posted on Blackboard.

Homework. Response Papers

Besides two written papers for your mid-term and final exams, there will be four written homework assignments in a form of response paper in a format of argumentative essay. You will be responding to a particular question based on course readings. Your response papers should be of the same format as exam papers but only 4 pages long. (not less than 4 pages). You will be submitting your papers **by e-mail** on the assigned due date. Additional information on the format, structure and principles of argumentative essay is posted on Blackboard.

Group assignments

We will take advantage of the small class. We will have the class divided into two groups. There will be group assignments at the end of each class session that will help you to engage with your readings with certain questions in mind. You will also be able to practice your argumentative skills by debating on the same questions with your colleagues from the other group.

Attendance and participation

Regular attendance and active in-class participation are essential in this course if you want to succeed. The topic of the course is complicated and complex. We will be discussing various aspects of different arguments and ideas associated with revolution and will be clarifying and analyzing the assigned texts. Missing classes will diminish your ability to better understand the topic which subsequently will affect your homework and exam papers. I highly recommend you do not miss classes.

Grade Appeals

In order to appeal a grade on a particular assignment, you should contact your TA or the professor during office hours within 2 weeks of receiving the assignment back and submit a written explanation of your

reasons for believing that the grade should be changed, not to exceed 2 pages. A grade appeal may result in the grade being raised, or left as is, depending on the results of the review. After two weeks, grade complaints will not be considered unless there are mitigating circumstances like a serious illness.

Incomplete Grade

No graduation credit is given for an I (incomplete) grade. A temporary grade requested by the student and assigned by the instructor ONLY when the student has nearly completed the course requirements but because of circumstances beyond the student's control the work is not completed. The incomplete should only be assigned on the basis of an agreement between the instructor and the student specifying the work to be completed and establishing a general timeline in which the work will be completed. Incompletes may NOT be resolved by auditing or registering again for a subsequent offering of the course. The date for the completion of the work may not be longer than one month before the end of the semester following that in which the incomplete is received. Once the work is completed, the instructor assigns the appropriate academic grade. The instructor may extend an incomplete for a maximum of one semester beyond the original deadline providing that the student has made contact with the instructor to request the extension. Additional extensions are NOT permitted. Form more information on incomplete grades see:

<https://www.albany.edu/undergraduateeducation/grading.php>

What do I do if I am sick or need alternate arrangements to fulfill course requirements?

Any mitigating circumstances should be brought to the attention of the professor as soon as possible. Any foreseeable circumstances (athletic event, religious holidays, travel, etc...) must be raised at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible. Remember, extenuating circumstances do not excuse you from requirements of the course but only allow for an accommodation to fulfill these requirements as an exception to general standards of the course.

Excused Absences

If you must miss an exam or more than two normal classes, you must have documentation from the dean of undergraduate studies (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950) or your grade will be adversely affected. For more on University's Medical Excuse Policy see:

http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexexcuse.shtml

Reasonable accommodation

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations (<http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html>).

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations, for the above reasons or other cases including religious holidays, inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in advance and rarely granted retroactively.

What can I do to succeed academically in this course?

The Basics: Read, show up, participate, do homework, submit assignments on time. The most important factor for success is studying assigned readings, regular attendance of lectures and participation in the course in a form of paying attention, taking notes, participating in discussions.

Attendance

Regular attendance of class sessions is of crucial importance. It is during the class sessions we will be unpacking and breaking down more complicated ideas and arguments and analyze concepts. Missing the class will mean you are left on your own to go through the same process. It is easier and more rewarding to participate in this process together with instructor and your fellow students.

Writing Center Services (Humanities 140)

Tutorials on writing essays and improving language skills (ESL). Visit their website at: <http://www.albany.edu/writing/index.html> or call 442-4061.

Academic Support Services (Library Room 94)

Arrange individual and group tutorial as well as study skills workshops on time management, how to improve your concentration, essay exam skills, listening skills, and overcoming procrastination. Visit their website: http://www.albany.edu/oass/support_services.htm or contact them at 442-5180.

Course Outline

1) Jan. 23, Wednesday

- Course overview.

2) Jan. 28, Monday

- Introductory discussion
- First homework assignment

Philosophy, History, Materialism

3) Jan. 30, Wednesday

- Marx's letter to his father. (Text available on Blackboard)

3) Feb 4, Monday

- Karl Marx. "Theses on Feuerbach" (Text available on Blackboard)

4) Feb.6, Wednesday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. "Marx on the History of His Opinions" (p.3 – 6), "For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing." (p.12 – 15).

5) Feb.11, Monday

First response paper assignment announced

- The Marx and Engels Reader. "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," (p.16 -21: *The State of Civil Society; Sovereignty; Democracy.*)

6) Feb.13, Wednesday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," (p.21 -25: *Politics: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern; Bureaucracy*)

----- **Feb. 15, Friday – FIRST RESPONSE PAPER DUE (Submitted by e-mail)** -----

7) Feb. 18, Monday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. “On the Jewish Question.” (p.26 – 37).

8) Feb 20, Wednesday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. “On the Jewish Question.” (p.37 - 53).

9) Feb. 25, Monday

- *Second response paper assignment announced*
- The Marx and Engels Reader. “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right.” (p.53 – 65)

Political Economy: The Social Critique of Economic Society

10) Feb. 27, Wednesday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts” (p.65 – 70: *Authors introduction and Marx’s Preface*)

11) Mar. 4, Monday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts” (p.70 – 81: *Estranged Labor*)

----- Mar. 5, Tuesday, SECOND RESPONSE PAPER DUE (Submitted by e-mail) -----

12) Mar.6, Wednesday

MIDTERM EXAM QUESTION ANNOUNCED

- The Marx and Engels Reader. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts” (p.81 - 93: *Private Property and Communism*)

13) Mar.11, Monday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts” (p.93 - 106: *The Meaning of Human Requirements*)

14) Mar 13, Wednesday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. “Alienation and Social Class” (p.133 – 135)

----- Mar. 15, Friday, MID TERM EXAM PAPER DUE (Submitted by e-mail) -----

Mar.16 – Mar23

- **No Classes. Spring Break**

Theory and Revolution

15) Mar. 25, Monday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. (p.203 – 219: *Wage Labor and Capital*, parts 1 – 5 and *The Coming Upheaval*)

16) Mar. 27, Wednesday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. (p.469 – 483, “Manifesto of Communist Party,” *Bourgeois and Proletarians*)

17) Apr. 1, Monday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. (p.483 – 491, “Manifesto of Communist Party,” *Proletarians and Communists* and p. 525 – 534 “Critique of Gotha Program” Part I.)

The Economy of Capital

18) Apr. 3, Wednesday

Second response paper assignment announced

- The Marx and Engels Reader. (p.222 – 232, “The Grundrisse,”)

19) Apr. 8, Monday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. (247 - 256 “The Grundrisse,”)

20) Apr. 10, Wednesday

- The Marx and Engels Reader. (278 - 286 “The Grundrisse,”)

----- Apr.12, Friday, **THIRD RESPONSE PAPER DUE (Submitted by e-mail)** -----

21) Apr. 15, Monday

- A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. (p.27 – 40. “Capital in General.” *The Commodity*)

22) Apr. 17, Wednesday

- A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. (p.40 - 52. “Capital in General.” *The Commodity*)

23) Apr. 22, Monday

- A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. (p.86 - 98. “Medium of Exchange,” *The Metamorphosis of Commodities*)

24) Apr. 24, Wednesday

- A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. (p.98 - 110. “Medium of Exchange,” *The Circulation of Money*)

25) Apr. 29, Monday

Final paper proposal due hard copy submitted in class

- A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. (p.122 - 137 “Medium of Exchange,” *Money; Hoarder*)

26) May. 1

- Course wrap up. Proposal feedback. Class evaluations

**Final exam papers due hard copy handed to me personally at the same class location
ON SATURDAY MAY 11th between 3:30pm – 5:30pm.**