Fall 2013
History 310: Marx and Marxism

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Course Description

In this course, we will explore what was arguably the most important philosophical and political movement of 19th and 20th century Europe: Marxism. After spending several weeks on Marx himself, we will turn to examine how Marxists responded to politics, culture and society in the following century and a half.

Throughout this course, we will be concerned with the evolution of such concepts as class, ideology (base and superstructure), political engagement, and capitalism. This class will also explore Marxist aesthetics and the political potential of works of art. Finally, we will investigate the relationship between existing Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, oppositional Communists in Western Europe, and the philosophical work of Marxists in the twentieth century.

This class will be taught in a seminar format. We will be holding an intense conversation with and about the philosophers whom we are reading and working together to understand their historical contexts. Your informed and engaged participation is crucial to the success of this class.

Prerequisites

This course presupposes a working knowledge of the major events in European history. This course does not assume that you already have experience with intellectual history; however, a familiarity with the basic methods of intellectual historians and the major philosophers and philosophical trends of the period will be helpful.

If you are unsure of your background, please speak to me as soon as possible so we can determine if this course is right for you.

Assignment and Grading

Your grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

5% Class Introduction
15% Response Papers
15% Short Paper (5pp.)
35% Final Paper (8-10pp.)
30% Participation

All written work must be completed in order to receive credit for this course.

You must attend every class during this semester. If you miss one meeting of the seminar, you can make this up by writing a five-page response paper on the readings for the class that you missed and turning this paper in before the next class meeting. Any additional absences will lead to a $\frac{1}{6}$th reduction in the final grade for the course. If you need to miss a class due to a medical or other emergency, you must provide adequate documentation (such as a doctor’s note) to avoid the absence penalty.

Once during the semester, you will be called upon to do a brief introduction at the start of class. This introduction should last 5-10 minutes and should discuss the historical events to which the texts for that week refer. I have assigned the topic for each introduction. You should also offer some preliminary thoughts about how the texts respond to these events. You must send me a 2 page handout specifically on your assigned historical events by 9am the day of your reading intro. I will print out, copy this handout and distribute to the class. Your introduction grade will be based both on your hand-out and on your presentation to the class.

Over the course of the semester, you will be writing response papers for 9 class sessions of your choice. These response papers should be 2 pages long, and engage with the texts which we have read for that week. At the end of the response paper, you should include at least two discussion questions. You are required to turn in your response paper by Thursday at 10am before each class meeting to me. You should do so either via blackboard. Response papers will be graded on a √-, √, √+ system and will be returned to you at the start of each class.

You will write a 5 page paper that is worth 15% of your grade on the work of Marx himself. I will give a choice of topics for this paper in the fourth week of the semester and the paper itself will be due right before Fall Break.

35% of your grade is based on an 8-10 page paper on one of several assigned topics related to the post-Marx section of the course. This paper will not require any outside research beyond the course readings.

It is possible for you to combine the two papers and write one longer (15-20pp.) paper worth 50% of your grade. It may be useful for those of you who are considering graduate work to think about taking this option. If you do so, this paper must involve a significant amount of primary source research beyond the course readings. If you choose this option, you must write a three page prospectus with an attached annotated bibliography and submit it by October 3rd. Based on the quality of the prospectus and the viability of your project, I will decide whether you may continue to write this paper.

If you turn in either the short or long paper late late, it will be marked down 1/3 of a grade for each day (i.e. twenty-four hour period) it is late.
You have the option to turn one response paper in late (by late, I mean in class on the day of discussion, no later). These papers are crucial means for you to prepare for class discussion, thus, after this one late paper, no other late response papers will be accepted. In other words, you can miss response papers for three weeks, and turn in an additional response paper “late” without penalty. The remaining seven response papers must be turned in by Tuesday at 10am the day of our discussion. For each response paper you miss (beyond these exceptions), your grade for the class will be lowered by $\frac{1}{6^{th}}$ of a grade (i.e. if you miss two, your grade for the class will go down $\frac{1}{3^{rd}}$ of a grade).

All work for this class is governed by the honor code. You must write and sign the honor code pledge at the end of each assignment. If you have further questions, please go to: http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-reg.html#honor.

Texts Available for Purchase


There are additional readings, which will be available on blackboard. These readings are marked with an asterix.

Schedule of Readings and Discussions

September 5: Introduction

September 12: Marx and the Utopian Socialist Tradition

  Presentation: Utopian Socialism

  Readings: Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts from 1844, *Marx and Engels Reader* (MER), 66-125

September 19: The Marxist Economic Critique

  Presentation: The Industrial Revolution

  Readings: Capital, vol. 1, MER, 294-438

September 26: Revolutionary Marxism

  Presentation: The Revolutions of 1848

  Readings: Marx, *Communist Manifesto*

  Friedrich Engels, “The Principles of Communism”

  http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/11/prin-com.htm

October 3: NO CLASS
October 10: Revisionism vs. Vanguardism
Presentation: German Social Democracy 1875-1914
Readings: SPD Erfurt Program (1891):
   http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1891erfurt.html
   Eduard Bernstein, “Evolutionary Socialism”:
   *Rosa Luxemburg, “The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions,” Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, 153-218
   *Vladimir Lenin, “What is To Be Done?” The Lenin Anthology (New York: Norton Press, 1975), 12-114

October 17: Georg Lukács and Reification
Presentation: The Revolutions of 1917-1919: Russia, Germany & Hungary
Readings: Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, 1-122

SHORT PAPER DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 5PM VIA BLACKBOARD

FALL BREAK

October 31: Aesthetic Marxism
Presentation: Culture in the Weimar Republic
Film: Die Drei Groschen Oper (Three Penny Opera) (Screening Wednesday, October 30, 7:00-9:00pm, location: tba)

November 7: Antonio Gramsci and Hegemony
Presentation: Italian Fascism
Readings: Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 3-23, 125-6, 158-168, 175-185, 210-247, 257-276, 323-343, 364-367

November 14: The Post-War Mass Culture Debates
Presentation: Americanism & Anti-Americanism in Western Europe
Readings: Adorno & Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, 94-136
   *Paul Corrigan & Simon Frith, “The Politics of Youth Culture,” Resistance through Rituals, 231-239
November 21: 1968 & French Maoism
Presentation: France, 1968
Herbert Marcuse & Theodor Adorno debate 1960s radicalism: http://hutnyk.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/adornomarcuse_germannewleft.pdf
*Daniel & Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, “The Battle of the Streets: ‘C’est Pour Toi Que Tu Fais La Révolution,’” New Left Reader, 254-266
**“Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Interviewed by Jean-Paul Sartre,” The French Student Revolt. The Leaders Speak, 73-83.

November 28: THANKSGIVING

December 5: “Real Existing Socialism” in Eastern Europe
Presentation: Eastern European Communism
*Jonathan Zatlin, The Currency of Socialism, Introduction and Chapters 1 & 5
*Georg Lukács, “Contemporary Problems of Marxist Philosophy,” Stalinism to Pluralism, 88-93
*Ludvík Vakulíc, “Two Thousand Words to Workers, Farmers, Scientists, Artists, and Everyone,” Stalinism to Pluralism, 126-130

December 12: Review & Concluding Discussion

FINAL PAPER DUE SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 11AM VIA BLACKBOARD