Fall 2008
History 310: Marx and Marxism

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Office Hours: Wednesday 11-12, Thursday 3-4, and by appointment

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 Communist movements 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 $1/6^{th}$ 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 10 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 Tuesday at 10am before each class meeting to me. You may do so either via blackboard or as a hard copy to my mailbox in the history department. 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 9th. 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 two weeks, and turn in an additional response paper “late” without penalty. The remaining eight 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 1/6th of a grade (i.e. if you miss two, your grade for the class will go down 1/3rd 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


All texts available for purchase are available on reserve. However, please be careful as some of the reserve editions are different than those which we are reading in class. If you are using the reserve copies, let me know so that I can tell you which pages to read from them.

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

Schedule of Readings and Discussions

September 2: Introduction

September 9: Marx and the Utopian Socialist Tradition
Presentation: Utopian Socialism
Readings: Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts from 1844, *Marx and Engels Reader* (MER), 66-125

September 16: The Marxist Economic Critique
Presentation: The Industrial Revolution
Readings: Capital, vol. 1, MER, 294-438

September 23: Revolutionary Marxism
September 30: 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”:
*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 7: Georg Lukács and Reification
Presentation: The Revolutions of 1917-1919: Russia, Germany & Hungary
Readings: Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, 1-122

October 14: Aesthetic Marxism
Presentation: Culture in the Weimar Republic
Film: Die Drei Groschen Oper (Three Penny Opera) (Screening Monday October 13, 7:00-9:00pm, location: tba)

SHORT PAPER DUE FRIDAY OCTOBER 17th AT 4PM IN HISTORY DEPT OFFICE

FALL BREAK

October 28: 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 4: NO CLASS

November 11: The Post-War Mass Culture Debates
Presentation: Americanism & Anti-Americanism in Western Europe
Readings: Adorno & Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, 120-167
November 18: 1968 & Maoism
Presentation: France, 1968
Readings:
* Daniel & Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, “The Battle of the Streets: ‘C’est Pour Toi Que Tu Fais La Révolution,’” *New Left Reader*, 254-266
Please also re-read the Althusser from last week.

November 25: Marx & The Practice of History
Presentation: The British 1970s & The Rise of Thatcher
Readings:
* E.P. Thompson, *The Essential E.P. Thompson*, selections

December 2: “Real Existing Socialism” in Eastern Europe
Presentation: Eastern European Communism
Readings:
* 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 9: Final Discussion: Whither Marxism?
Presentation: 1989

**FINAL PAPER DUE SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20TH AT 9:00AM**