

**PHIL OX 204-1: 19th and 20th Century Philosophy:
Marxism and Critical Theory
Fall 2018
TuTh 4:00-5:15
Pierce Hall 237**

Professor Rebekah Spera

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Office: Whatcoat Building, Office #3

The Whatcoat building is attached to the
Oxford College Mail Center on Whatcoat Street
(across the street from the U.S. Post Office).

Office Hours:

Tuesday & Thursday 1:00-2:00
(Or by appointment)

Required Texts:

Karl Marx. *The Portable Karl Marx*. Trans. Eugene Kamenka. (ISBN: 978-0140150964)

All other required reading will be available either via electronic course reserves, Canvas, or Marxists.org

Course Description:

We often hear conflicting accounts about what it means to be a “Marxist.” These conflicts reflect the reality of Marx’s thought and the schools of thought that Marx influenced: Marx’s views develop and change during the course of his life, and philosophers inspired by his work are often highly critical of many of his theories (e.g., communism).

In this class, we will read texts from the young and mature Marx as well as numerous critical theories from the 20th century that were influenced by Marx’s work. We will ask, “Can you be a political progressive today without being some type of Marxist?” “Does a deep concern for racial, gendered, or economic justice require you to be anti-capitalist?” Readings and discussions will cover a variety of topics: the relation between economics and politics, the nature of justice and a just political society, the nature of social and political power, theories of social justice, and the philosophy and politics of identity (race, gender, class, etc.).

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to provide students with a grasp of the key texts, ideas, and figures in the history of Marxism and as well as to help them develop and interrogate their own ideas.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student will have learned to:

- Understand the important writings, concepts, and theoretical frameworks in the Marxist tradition
- Parse and evaluate arguments, both their own and those of others
- Reflect on their own presuppositions and viewpoints critically
- Articulate their own philosophical positions rigorously and respectfully both verbally and in writing

Course Policy

Participation & Classroom Etiquette:

“The human being is in the most literal sense a *political animal* not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society. Production by an isolated individual outside society ... is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living *together* and talking to each other.”

-Marx, *The Grundrisse* (1857)

Philosophical inquiry requires that the student both spend time alone reading, writing and thinking and that they engage in conversation with others. This class will require not only that the student read carefully and write thoughtfully, but also that they be both physically and mentally present for every class. The class will be partially conducted as a lecture and partially as a conversation, and every student will be expected to contribute cogently and respectfully to class discussion. While active participation comes more naturally to some individuals than others, one of the skills the student will cultivate throughout the semester is the capacity to express their own thoughts verbally, an ability that will be helpful both in and out of the classroom.

Tardiness is disrespectful both to the instructor and other students, and if a student is consistently tardy it will affect their participation grade. The student should come prepared to every class with a notebook and the required text(s).

The use of electronic devices is not permitted in the classroom, and this includes using electronic devices for notetaking. Since most of the texts will be pdfs, the student must either print the readings or have an e-reader (no laptops or phones). I recommend investing in either a three-ring binder or folder to keep the texts organized.

The reason for the ban on electronics isn't just that I am a fuddy-duddy (though I am a bit) but because I understand that, regardless of good intentions, the ever-present temptation to check social media or surf the web during class can overcome even the most virtuous among us. Additionally, studies have shown that students retain more in classes when they take notes by hand. I may, however, grant exceptions on an individual basis if a student arranges to meet with me to discuss why they need to use their laptop/tablet in class to succeed in the course. Cell phones must be turned off in class and stowed out of sight.

Failure to comply with these policies will affect a student's attendance grade.

Attendance:

For the reasons sated above, attendance is required.

That being said, life can be unpredictable and things happen. Because of this the student is allowed a maximum of two absences for any reason with no questions asked. Once this maximum has been reached, additional absences will detract from the student's grade on the following scale (note: the numbers listed here are absences beyond the two allowed absences, so two absences below means four total absences - two freebies and two additional absences):

2-4 absences: -1.5% from the final grade for each absence

5-6 absences: 3.0% from the final grade for each absence

7-8 absences: 4.5% from the final grade for each absence

9+ absences: a final grade of F for the course

Absences will only be excused in cases of religious holidays and university-sanctioned activities (e.g., out-of-town debate club tournaments, presentations at academic conferences, &c. warrant

excused absences; leaving town early to get an extra few days during fall break or scheduling time to do work for other classes do **not** warrant excused absences). However, **the student must notify me of the dates they will be absent for these reasons *in advance***. If the student fails to notify me in advance, the absences will not be excused.

Note: disability-related attendance accommodations can only be provided with documentation from the Office of Accessibility Services. See “Disability and Access” for more details about how to get accommodations.

Midterm & Final Exam

These tests are designed to ensure that the student has understood and retained the basic concepts in the class. Study guides will be provided in advance, and both will be closed- book. The final exam is not cumulative. **The exam date is scheduled for Friday, December 14th from 2:00-5:00 PM.**

Readings:

“... the method of analysis which I have employed ... makes the reading ... rather arduous ... That is a disadvantage I am powerless to overcome, unless it be by forewarning and forearming those readers who zealously seek the truth. There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits.”

-Marx, Preface to the French Edition of *Das Kapital* (1872)

This will be a reading-intensive course, and the student is expected to have completed the reading for every class. Many of the texts will be philosophically dense and challenging, and demand slow and careful reading. Part of being adequately prepared for class entails having spent time and care to digest the readings.

Discussion Board Posts:

The student must participate in an online discussion board on the course’s Canvas page. Each Sunday before every class, students will be required to write a 1-2 paragraph response to the reading due on Tuesday and post it to Blackboard **no later than 11:59 PM on Monday. Students will not receive any credit for late responses.**

These reflections should be a thoughtful engagement with some aspect of the reading the student found particularly interesting, troubling, or confusing. The short responses are meant to encourage students to engage with the readings and to come to class prepared to make good contributions to class discussion. As such, the student is free to use these reflections any way they like, with the following provisions:

The response must engage with some specific aspect of the text

The response is a response to a particular text or texts; it is not simply a space for the student to talk about anything they like. In other words, the response must be on the topic of one of the issues raised in the reading.

The response must not be merely (or primarily) a summary of the reading

The response is not a place for you to merely rehearse what you have already read; you must primarily be presenting your own thoughts and your own ideas.

The response must explain and not merely assert

While these responses are open to a variety of approaches, whatever you choose to say in these spaces must be explicated and, in some cases, substantiated by argument or supporting evidence. For example, if you wish to disagree with an author’s point, you must not merely say, “X is wrong

*about Y”; you must give at least a preliminary explanation of **why** you think this author is wrong. Similarly, if you wish to say that you had difficulty following the reading this week, you cannot merely state “This text was confusing and I didn’t understand it at all”; instead, you need to say what, particularly, confused you and why. Similarly, just saying you liked or disliked the readings isn’t enough—you also need to say a bit about why you liked or disliked the reading and what particularly stood out to you.*

Additionally, the student will be asked to write comments on at least two peer responses every week **no later than Friday at 11:59PM.**

The responses are meant to provide material for class discussion and will be graded as either acceptable or unacceptable. The instructor will not provide feedback on the blog entries except in instances where a response is marked “unacceptable.”

Papers:

Short Papers 1 & 2:

Two short essay assignments of about 2 to 3 pages each to ease the student into writing academic philosophy.

Final Paper:

A final 5-7 page paper on a topic of the student’s choosing that demonstrates a thorough understanding of one key concept in the thought of Karl Marx. The student will write a project proposal, due on the class before Thanksgiving break.

All papers are to be submitted printed out and stapled, with the student's name on every page and a word count on the last page. All sources must be properly cited – if there are questions or concerns about how to cite texts, the student should feel free to ask the instructor or contact the Writing Center. Requests for extensions must be submitted least a week prior to the due date of the paper and will be given at the instructor's discretion.

E-mail Policy:

Students should feel free to contact the instructor via e-mail with questions they have about the course material, and the instructor will respond within a 48 hour period. Please use the e-mail address provided on the syllabus.

Grade Distribution:

“A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.”

-Marx, *Das Kapital*, Volume I (1867)

Discussion Board Posts & Comments:	19%
Short Papers 1 & 2:	16% (8% each)
Midterm Exam:	15%
Final Exam:	15%
Final Paper Proposal:	5%
Final Paper:	20%
Attendance/Participation:	10%

Grading Scale: 94-100 A, 90-93 A-, 87-89 B+, 84-86 B, 80-83 B, 77-79 C+, 74-76 C, 70-73 C-, 67-69 D+, 64-66 D, < 60 F

Academic Misconduct.

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated; students must adhere to the Honor Code of Oxford College. All violations will be reported to the Honor Council, in accordance with the Code. Infractions of the Honor Code include plagiarism, cheating, seeking or giving unauthorized assistance, and lying related to academic matters. Further information on Honor Code infractions and procedures are available in the Oxford College Student Handbook, and online: http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success-student-honor-code/index.dot Should a student have a question about permissible behavior or academic integrity, they may contact me.

Inclusivity & Civil Discourse in the Classroom

Oxford College of Emory University's ideals of inclusivity require that we foster an environment where people of diverse backgrounds, identities, abilities, and ideologies are affirmed, respected, and seen as a source of strength; where we strive to learn together, and ultimately thrive communally. If we at all fail to support these ideals, then we encourage discussion towards improvement, and we hope that this statement affirms your right to seek those discussions via dialogue with faculty, staff, your peers, and the use of the "Speak Up!" system when needed.

We believe the manner in which we interact with each other is critical to cultivating and maintaining a meaningful and effective intellectual environment. We encourage a climate of respect and inclusiveness that welcomes and embraces community members with diverse backgrounds and life experiences. We deliberately seek multiple perspectives and support the free and open exchange of ideas and civil discourse. We affirm the inherent dignity in all of us and we strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by respect for each other. Our community can only continue to thrive when we approach each conversation with an open mind and when each member can contribute fully.

Disability and Access.

If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this semester, we encourage you to contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) to learn more about the registration process and steps for requesting accommodations at oas_oxford@emory.edu.

If you are a student that is currently registered with OAS and have not requested or received a copy of your accommodation notification letter, please notify OAS immediately. Students who have accommodations in place are encouraged to coordinate sometime with me during the first week of the semester to communicate your specific needs for the course as it relates to your approved accommodations. Accommodations are not implemented until the instructor is provided an accommodation letter and discusses the accommodation plan for this course face to face with the OAS student. **In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, students must contact OAS and complete the registration process.** Faculty may not provide disability accommodations until an accommodation letter has been processed; accommodations are not retroactive. All discussions with OAS and faculty concerning the nature of your disability remain confidential. Contact OAS for more information at (770) 784-4690 or oas_oxford@emory.edu. Additional information is available at the OAS website at equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access_

Religious Holidays:

I am happy to accommodate students' academic needs related to religious holidays. However, please make every effort to notify me about your religious holiday needs within the first two weeks of the semester. [If you need guidance negotiating your needs related to a religious holiday, the College Chaplain, Rev. Lyn Pace, \[ppace@emory.edu\]\(mailto:ppace@emory.edu\), Candler Hall 202, is willing and available to help. **Please be aware that Rev. Pace is not tasked with excusing students from classes or writing excuses for students to take to their professors.](#)

Class Schedule:

*Note: Schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.
The student will be notified of any alterations in advance.*

Week 1: Introduction to Marx

Tu 8/30 Introduction—Thinking Dialectically
Tu 9/4 “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” (PKM 115-129)
Note: Add/Drop Ends Wednesday, September 5th
Th 9/6 “Theses on Feuerbach”
“A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy” (PKM 155-161)

Week 2: Young Marx

Tu 9/11 **Note: First Forum Post Due Monday by 11:59PM**
Th 9/13 1844 Manuscripts— “Alienated Labor” (PKM 125-145)
1844 Manuscripts— “Private Property and Communism” (PKM 146-151)

Week 3: Young Marx

Tu 9/18 *The German Ideology* (PKM 162-183)
Th 9/20 *The German Ideology* (PKM 183-195)

Week 4: Mature Marx

Tu 9/25 *Capital*, Vol. 1 (452-472)
Short Paper 1 (Summary) Due
Th 9/27 *Capital*, Vol. 1 (472-482)

Week 5: Marx

Tu 10/2 *Capital*, Vol. 1 (482-508)
Th 10/4 *Capital*, Vol. 1 (508-526)

Week 6: Marx

Tu 10/9 **No Class—Fall Break**
Th 10/11 **Midterm Exam**

Week 7: Marxism Entering the 20th Century—Bernstein and Luxemburg (Revisionism and Orthodoxy)

Tu 10/16 Bernstein
“Final Goal and Movement” (from *The Preconditions of Socialism* 189-210)
Luxemburg
Reform or Revolution (“Introduction” up through “The Consequences of Social Reformism and the General Nature of Revisionism”)
Th 10/18 Luxemburg
Reform or Revolution (from “Economic Development and Socialism” through “Opportunism in Theory and Practice”)

Week 8: Marxism Entering the 20th Century—Lenin

Tu 10/23 Lenin
The State and Revolution (Prefaces through Chapter 3)
Th 10/25 Lenin
The State and Revolution (Chapters 4-5)

Week 9: Marxism Entering the 20th Century—Gramsci and Lukacs (Hegemony and Reification)

Tu 10/30 Gramsci
“Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc” selected from *The Gramsci Reader*
Th 11/1 Lukacs

“What is Orthodox Marxism?” & “The Phenomenon of Reification”
from *History and Class Consciousness*

Week 10: Frankfurt School

Tu 11/6

Horkheimer

“The Present Situation of Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute
for Social Research”

“Traditional and Critical Theory”

Short Paper 2 (Comparison) Due

Th 11/8

Horkheimer

“Traditional and Critical Theory”

Week 11: Black Radical Thought—The Black Power Movement

Tu 11/13

Carmichael

“Black Power”

Cleaver

“The Ideology of the Black Panther Party”

Th 11/15

Davis

“Women & Capitalism: Dialectics of Oppression & Liberation”

Week 12: Black Radical Thought: Intersections of Race, Class, & Gender

Tu 11/20

Davis

“Rape, Racism & the Capitalist Setting”

“The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working Class
Perspective”

Final Project Proposal Due

No Class—Thanksgiving Break

Th 11/22

Week 13: Class-Chosen Topic

Tu 11/27

Th 11/29

Week 14: Class Chosen Topic

Tu 12/4

Th 12/6

Tu 12/11

Concluding Discussion: The Future of Marxism

12/14 (Friday)

FINAL EXAM 2:00-5:00 PM.

12/16 (Sunday)

FINAL PAPER DUE BY 11:59PM

Potential Topics for Final Weeks:

Marxism and Mass/Popular Culture

Readings: Adorno & Horkheimer, “The Culture Enlightenment as Mass Deception” from *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* & Stuart Hall, “Encoding/decoding”

Post & de-colonial Critical Theories

Readings: Quijano, selections from *Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism & Latin America* & Mohanty, “Women Workers and the Politics of Solidarity” from *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*

Feminisms

Readings: Federichi, selections from *Caliban and the Witch* & *Wages Against Housework* & Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex”

Ecosocialism

Readings: Kovel, selections from *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* & Pepper, selections from *Ecosocialism: From Deep Ecology to Social Justice*