

## **PL180 Marxist Social and Political Thought**

Seminar Leader: Riaz P Khan

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Office Hours: Mon & Wed 15:00-17:00 and by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course offers an introduction to Marxist social theory as a distinct tradition of political thought and action. Given the breadth of the subject matter, the course is organized around two overarching themes: (a) the relations of state, society, and individual as seen through (b) the link between theory and praxis in this tradition. The first part of the course explores the conceptual origins of Marx's political thought in light of its encounters with German Idealism, French Revolution, and British political economy. We begin with early critique of Enlightenment and Hegelian thought in order to trace the origins of the materialist conception of history that grounds Marx's political economy after 1857 in response to political and industrial revolutions. The second part constitutes the bulk of the course as we explore the diverse traditions and dialogues in Marxist thought and politics. We begin with the forms and critiques of organized Marxist-Leninist systems by sampling the works of different schools of emerging Marxist thought in early twentieth century. Next, we examine the conceptions of society, state, law, ideology, class, and individual in the Critical Theory of Frankfurt School and Structural Marxism, respectively, as well as post-Marxist critical theories. In the final part of the course, we turn to critical dialogues in Marxist theories of race, imperialism, feminism, postcolonialism, and culture.

### **Course Texts**

All readings are available in the following texts:

1. Course Reader
2. Robert Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (W.W. Norton, 1978)

Copies of *The Marx-Engels Reader* are available at the library. They may also be purchased at:

[https://www.abebooks.de/servlet/SearchResults?kn=9780393090406&sts=t&cm\\_sp=SearchF--topnav--Results&ds=20](https://www.abebooks.de/servlet/SearchResults?kn=9780393090406&sts=t&cm_sp=SearchF--topnav--Results&ds=20)

[https://www.amazon.de/-/en/Robert-C-](https://www.amazon.de/-/en/Robert-C-Tucker/dp/039309040X/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1673643997&sr=8-2)

[Tucker/dp/039309040X/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1673643997&sr=8-2](https://www.amazon.de/-/en/Robert-C-Tucker/dp/039309040X/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1673643997&sr=8-2)

[https://www.schweitzer-online.de/buch/Engels/Marx-Engels-](https://www.schweitzer-online.de/buch/Engels/Marx-Engels-Reader/9780393090406/A1770103/?ipe=url_stack_id_prev%3D-1)

[Reader/9780393090406/A1770103/?ipe=url\\_stack\\_id\\_prev%3D-1](https://www.schweitzer-online.de/buch/Engels/Marx-Engels-Reader/9780393090406/A1770103/?ipe=url_stack_id_prev%3D-1)

### **Course Requirements**

Students are expected to complete the main readings, attend class sessions, participate in discussions, and submit timely assignments. Performance will be assessed on the basis of *class participation*, familiarity with *assigned readings*, and *writing assignments*.

(1) **Active Participation** in group discussions and projects constitute an important component of the course. Please complete the primary readings prior to each class session. You will be well-prepared to further explore specific texts, passages, and themes, seek clarifications, express your views, and engage in peer discussions. This course is designed as a collaborative and shared enterprise.

(2) The course is **reading-intensive**. Students will demonstrate familiarity with the readings by means of (a) **two written comments** on weekly readings, (b) **in-class presentation** on selected reading, and (c) **group discussions**. It is expected that students will complete the required readings, while the recommended texts will be of use to students focusing on specific topics.

(3) The course is **writing-intensive**. Students will write short reflections, individual profiles, and essay on selected topic. Please arrange to meet with me at the earliest opportunity to discuss your research interests and writing assignments. You are encouraged to utilize the tutorial services at the Learning Center for assistance with your essays.

### **Course Assessment & Grade Components and Dates**

Student performance and final grades are evaluated on the basis of timely and satisfactory completion of all course requirements. The main components of assessments are listed below:

<b>Participation</b> in Discussions (including Reading Comments (100-200 words))	- 20%
<b>Presentation</b> (Individual dates to be determined in first class)	- 20%
<b>Profile/Poster</b> of a Marxist: <b>DUE on Monday, April 19, 2023</b>	- 20%
<b>Proposal of Essay Topic</b> (1,000 words): <b>DUE on Friday, March 31, 2023</b>	- 10%
<b>Final Essay</b> (3,500 words): <b>DUE on Friday, May 19, 2023</b>	- 30%

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. A maximum of two excused absences during the semester may be granted to account for minor circumstances. Further absences are granted under exceptional circumstances, and require supporting documentation. No unexcused absences are permitted. Unexcused absences will adversely affect participation grade in the course. In case of authorized absences, students are responsible for making up any missed work.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

### **Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

Late submission of essays are accepted only in exceptional circumstances. However, late essays must be submitted within a maximum of four weeks in order to receive a passing grade in the course. Please note that essays submitted 24 hours after the deadline may be downgraded up to one full grade (e.g., B+ to C+).

### **Academic Integrity**

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

**PL 180 Marxist Social and Political Thought  
Spring Semester 2023**

Schedule of Topics and Readings

**1a. January 30 Introduction to Marxist Political Thought**

Recommended

Karl Marx, "Marx on the History of his Opinions (Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Tucker (3-6).

I. ANTECEDENTS AND PROBLEMATICS

**1b. February 1 Nature & Inequality**

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book I.  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part 2.

**2a. February 6 Civil Society & State**

G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 219-239, 259-274 (optional; skim)

II. TOWARD A MATERIALIST CRITIQUE

**2b. February 8 Philosophy & Materialism**

Karl Marx, "For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything," in Tucker, 12-15.  
Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," in Tucker, 16-25, 53-65.  
Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in Tucker, 143-145.

**3a. February 13 Estranged Labor & History**

Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in Tucker, 70-81.  
Karl Marx, "Alienation and Social Class," in Tucker, 133-135.  
Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, Part I, in Tucker, 149-163, 186-188.

**3b. February 15 Private Property & Communism**

Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in Tucker, 81-101.  
Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, Part I, in Tucker, 188-200, 292-293.  
Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 483-87.

III. CLASS STRUGGLE & REVOLUTIONARY PRAXIS

**4a. February 20 Proletariat & Bourgeoisie**

Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 473-483.  
Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in Tucker, 599-617.  
Karl Marx, "The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850," in Tucker, 586-593.

**4b. February 22 Marx & Bakunin on Revolution**

Mikhail Bakunin, *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State*, 2-9.  
Karl Marx, "After the Revolution: Marx Debates Bakunin," in Tucker, 542-548.  
Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France, 1848-1850," in Tucker, selections.

#### IV. CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM

**5a. February 27**                      **Labor & Capital**

Karl Marx, selections from *Capital Vol 1*, in Tucker, 302-329, 431-434.

**5b. March 1**                              **Capitalism & Crises**

Karl Marx, *Value, Price and Profit*, 29-62.

Recommended

John Weeks, *Capital and Exploitation*, Ch. 1 & 2.

Lucio Colletti, "Marxism as Sociology," in *From Rousseau to Lenin*, Ch. 1.

Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, Ch. 4.

**6a. March 6**                              **Capitalism & Imperialism**

Karl Marx, "On Imperialism in India," Tucker, 653-664.

Dadabhai Naoroji, "England's Duties to India," "Benefits and Detriments of British Rule," in *Essays, Speeches, Addresses, and Writings*, 26-45; 131-136.

Recommended

Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, Ch. 27.

Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, Ch. 4, Parts I, III, IV.

#### V. AFTER MARX: REFORM AND REVOLUTION

**6b. March 8**                              **Leninism & Russian Revolution**

V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, Ch. 1.

R. Luxemburg, "Leninism or Marxism," in *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism*, pp. 81-108.

**7a. March 13**                              **Reform Or Revolution**

Rosa Luxemburg, "Social Reform or Revolution," in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, pp. 129-146.

Leszek Kolakowski, "Bernstein and Revisionism," in *Main Currents in Marxism*, Vol. 2, pp. 98-114.

**7b. March 15**                              **Hegemony & Revolution**

Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 3-23, 123-156 (optional; skim).

**8a. March 20**                              **Reification & Proletariat**

Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness*, pp. 83-119.

Recommended

Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents in Marxism*, Vol. 2, Ch. 14-16; Vol. 3, Ch. 1 & 3, 5-7.

David McLellan, *Marxism After Marx*, Ch. 5-9, 15-16.

#### VI. CRITIQUE OF CAPITALIST MODERNITY

**8b. March 22**                              **Society & Critique**

Theodor Adorno, "Society," in *Critical Theory and Society*, pp. 267-275.

Herbert Marcuse, "Liberation from the Affluent Society," in *Critical Theory and Society*, pp. 276-287.

Herbert Marcuse, "The New Forms of Control," in *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 3-20.



**14a. May 1**

**No Class**

**14b. May 3**

**Marxism & Cultural Studies**

Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism Without Guarantee," in *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, pp. 24-44.

Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," in *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, pp. 411-440.

**15a. May 8**

**Peer Review II**

Discussion of papers and panels (?)

**15b. May 10**

**Marxism & Late Capitalism**

David Harvey, "Accumulation by Dispossession," in *New Imperialism*, pp. 137-182

Joyce Liu et. al., "Interview with Harry Harootunian and Moishe Postone."

Moishe Postone, "Capitalism, Temporality, and the Crisis of Labor," American Academy in Berlin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgMvTGO1j-k&t=779s>

16a. May 15      Completion Week

16b. May 17      Completion Week

**16c. May 19**

**FINAL ESSAY SUBMISSION**