

**MARX AND MARXISMS**  
**POLSCI 734 / GLOBALST 734**  
**Term 2, Winter 2023**

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## **Course Description**

Karl Marx's writings, thinking, and agitations have, in recent years, taken on something of a new life. Critiques of neoliberalism, a growing interest in anticolonialism's Marxist moorings (and growing criticism of Euro-American colonialism/imperialism's capitalist foundations), disillusionment with liberalism's failings, concerns over the global order's incapacity to confront the climate emergency – these and other contemporary crises have precipitated an interest in fundamental social, political, and economic changes, and in challenging the hegemony of capital and of the liberal democratic norms and institutions built atop it. Marx most succinctly, and most critically, explains why capitalist economics and democratic institutions fit together so neatly, and how difficult it is for democratic institutions to resist capitalist oligarchies.

This course has two aims. The first (which will occupy us in the first half or so) is to develop a foundational knowledge of Marx's political writings and consider what he aimed to *do* in advancing them, as political interventions. Rather than reading Marx as issuing timeless theoretical insights into capital, the state, revolution, historical transition, and so on, we will make sense of those (changing) views in relation to his context and political ambitions. The course's second aim, taken up in its second half, is to read thinkers who took up and developed Marx's insights to, again, advance projects of social, political, and economic transformation. In both cases, we will be reading Marx *politically* – as an activist thinker who aimed to change the world, not just observe it.

One thing to consider: through the vicissitudes of scheduling, this year's course is limited to 11 weeks, including our introductory session. I have, as a result, built in more material than we can likely cover (particularly in the course's final weeks) so that we can, as a class, choose those topics we'd most like to address. The course's final 4 weeks have options on Marcuse (or Gramsci, if you'd prefer), settler colonialism, Marxism in India (via M. N. Roy), Marxism in China (via Mao Zedong), and racial capitalism (via Angela Davis). In our first week, we will decide as a class which we'd most like to read. I'm also open to revising readings from the course's first half if that's where the consensus lands.

This course is a **research seminar**. As a **seminar**, it will require significant student participation; regular attendance, careful preparation and active involvement will be essential. As a **research** course, students will be expected to read extensive primary and secondary texts, particularly in preparing the final paper.

## **Course Objectives**

Students will develop

- their knowledge of Marx's political thought and of various 20<sup>th</sup> century Marxisms
- advanced critical thinking, presentation, and research skills

## **Required Materials and Texts**

- David McLellan (ed), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2000)
- Terrell Carver (ed), *Marx: Later Political Writings* (Cambridge)
- Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (Vintage)
- Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Beacon Press)
- Mao Zedong, trans/ed. Slavoj Zizek, *On Practice and Contradiction* (Verso)
- Petrus Liu, *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* (Duke)
- Online Course Pack (OCP; will be posted on Avenue); Library (Lib)

**\*Please note\*** Two things. First, excepting the two Marx collections, books to be acquired will depend on our selections. Please wait until after our first seminar to purchase books other than the Marx collections, since you likely won't be needing everything included above. Second, I'm conscious that the McLellan volume is expensive. If it is beyond your means, please let me know and we will come to an arrangement to ensure your access to course materials.

Because of the unpredictability of our final reading list, I have not ordered these books to the campus bookstore. If you'd like to acquire them online but don't want to contribute to Jeff Bezos' retirement fund, I recommend this website:

<https://www.biblio.com/>.

## **Class Format**

The course will meet for a three hour seminar weekly. Each session will involve brief introductory remarks, group discussions, and student presentations.

## **Course Evaluation – Overview**

1. Attendance & participation (20%)
2. Student presentations/seminar moderation (30%)
4. Research paper (50%), due Mar. 24, 2023

## **Course Evaluation – Details**

Your **attendance and participation (20%)** grade will be gauged by consistent attendance, and by active and informed participation. You will be expected to have completed the readings and be ready to discuss them. As a graduate seminar, the course will revolve around our discussion of the salient issues, rather than lectures. The expectation will be that you've read and understood the materials and that you've thought about what we should discuss from them.

Each student will be responsible for **two presentations/seminar moderations (30%)**.

The first will be an **individual presentation/seminar moderation (15%)**, for which you will sign up on the first day of the course. As presenter/leader, you should aim to do several things.

- First, your presentation should *briefly* introduce the central themes and ideas in the week's readings. This should *not* be the focus of your presentation but should rather just take a minute or two to situate the central ideas in question.
- Secondly, and more importantly, the presentation should raise what you think are the most interesting, controversial, and/or perplexing ideas, themes or conundrums stemming from the week's readings. You are more than welcome (but not obligated) to go beyond the readings themselves; you should feel free to introduce any additional ideas, examples, or materials that you think will help us to sort through what's most interesting about the week's theme. In short, the presentation should raise the ideas or arguments that you think we need to discuss as a class and should include a few questions to that end. It aims to have you critically evaluate what's most important for us to think about and to initiate our discussions on the subject, to which I will add my own questions and comments.
- Third, you will serve as the seminar's moderator for the session: while I will help steer things to some degree, the idea is to have you largely guide the discussion.

The **second presentation (15%)** will follow the same format, only with one of your peers. This will require you to meet with your presentation partner ahead of time to plan your presentation and leadership of the seminar. The first presentation will be peer-reviewed and graded; the second presentation will be reviewed and graded by me.

The **research paper (50%)** will be 6000-8000 words, on a topic of your choosing. It can be based on the themes/ideas/readings from the course, or on a different subject altogether (within the constraints of our subject matter, broadly speaking, and subject to my approval). You are required to discuss your paper topic with me ahead of time to have it approved. The paper will be due in hard copy on Friday, Mar. 24.

## **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

### **Week 1 (Jan 13) Introduction: Reading Marx Politically**

#### *Reading:*

- Terrell Carver, "Making Marx Marx", *Journal of Classical Sociology* 17 (1) 2017: 10-27.

## **Week 2 (Jan 20) Writing to Make Progressive Change**

### *Reading:*

- Marx, The Communist Manifesto (McLellan)
- Marx, Address to the Communist League (McLellan)
- Marx, The Class Struggle in France (McLellan)
- James Martin, "The Rhetoric of the *Manifesto*", in Terrell Carver and James Farr, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to the Communist Manifesto* (Lib)

## **Week 3 (Jan 27) Writing to Stop Regressive Change (Rescuing the Past, Looking to the Future)**

### *Reading:*

- Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Carver)
- Marx, The Civil War in France (Carver)
- Marx, Critique of the Gotha Program (Carver)
- Carver, "Editor's Introduction" for the above readings (Carver)

## **Week 4 (Feb 3) Writing to Find a New Audience (Shifting Thoughts on What Humans Are/Do)**

### *Reading:*

- Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (McLellan)
- Marx, On James Mill (McLellan)
- Marx, Notes on Wagner (Carver, pp. 234-257)
- David Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, Ch. 1, 2 (Lib)

## **Week 5 (Feb 10) Writing to Make Sense of Change I**

\*Guest seminar: Prof. Terrell Carver, University of Bristol, will be joining the class\*

### *Reading:*

- Marx, Wage-Labour and Capital (McLellan)
- Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, Part VIII, Primitive Accumulation (available here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/index-I.htm>)

- Terrell Carver, “Marx and *Capital*, Vol. 1 (1867)” (OCP)

## **Week 6 (Feb 17) Writing to Make Sense of Change II (Shifting Thoughts on What Societies Are/Do)**

### *Reading:*

- Marx, *The German Ideology* (McLellan)
- Marx, *Letter to Annenkov* (McLellan)
- Marx, *Grundrisse* (McLellan)
- Marx, *Letter to Mihailovsky* (McLellan)
- Marx, *Letter to Vera Sassoulitch* (letter and drafts) (McLellan)
- Onur Ulas Ince, “Between Equal Rights: Primitive Accumulation and Capital’s Violence,” *Political Theory* 46 (6) 2018: 885-914 (Lib)

## **Week 7 (Feb 24) READING WEEK, NO CLASS**

## **Week 8 (Mar 3) Writing Against Imperialism**

### *Reading:*

- V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, “Preface to the French and German Editions”, “Imperialism, as a Special Stage of Capitalism”, “The Critique of Imperialism”, “The Place of Imperialism in History” (available here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>)
- Rosa Luxemburg, “The Historical Conditions of Accumulation”, “The Dissolution of Primitive Communism”, in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, eds Peter Hudis and Kevin Anderson (OCP)
- Peter Hudis and Kevin Anderson, “Introduction”, in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, eds Peter Hudis and Kevin Anderson (OCP)

## **Week 9 (Mar 10) Writing to Update Marx**

### *Reading:*

- Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*
- OR
- Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (selections TBD)

## Week 10 (Mar 17) Writing Against Colonialism

### Reading:

- Frantz Fanon, "On Violence", in *Wretched of the Earth* (OCP)
- Glen Sean Coulthard, "Introduction", "The Politics of Recognition in Colonial Contexts", "Conclusion", in *Red Skin, White Masks* (Lib)
- Glen Sean Coulthard, "Once Were Maoists: Third World Currents in Fourth World Anticolonialism, Vancouver, 1967-1975" (OCP)
- Robert Nichols, "Marx, After the Feast", in *Theft is Property! Dispossession and Critical Theory* (Lib)

## Week 11 (Mar 24) Writing with Marx Beyond the West

### Reading:

#### In India

- M. N. Roy, "An Indian Communist Manifesto", "Minutes of the Second Congress of the Communist International, Fourth Session, July 25" (read both Lenin's and Roy's speeches), *The Future of Indian Politics* (pp. 90-100, 114-118), "India in a Transition Stage", "What do we Want?" (all available at marxists.org)
- Sudipta Kaviraj, "The Heteronomous Radicalism of M. N. Roy", in Thomas Pantham and Kenneth L. Deutsch, eds, *Political Thought in Modern India* (OCP)
- OPTIONAL: for an interesting perspective on how Lenin and Roy affected one another's views, see V.I. Lenin, "Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions for the Second Congress of the Communist International" (marxists.org) and M. N. Roy "Original Draft of 'Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question' (1920)" (OCP)

OR

#### In China

- Mao Zedong, *On Practice and Contradiction* (selections TBD)
- Petrus Liu, *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* (selections TBD)

## Week 12 (Mar 31) Writing with Marx Within the West

### Reading:



- Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class*

## **Week 13 (Apr 7) GOOD FRIDAY, NO CLASS**

### **Course Policies**

#### **Submission of Assignments**

The paper will be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on Friday, Mar. 24.

#### **Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
69-0	F

#### **Late Assignments**

All students will be granted a **one-week** extension on the final paper, by request. If you opt to use the extension, please let me know **by email** a minimum of one week prior to the paper's due date.

#### **Absences, Missed Work, Illness**

Beyond the above, extensions for the paper will **ONLY** be extended to students unable to submit in time due to extraordinary circumstances. This will require **official documentation** (for example, an official medical certificate) explaining your circumstances.

#### **Avenue to Learn**

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **University Policies**

### **Academic Integrity Statement**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#), located at [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

### **Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

### **Course Modification**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable

notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.