

MARXIAN THOUGHT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Office Hours: by email appointment

Short description:

Following the 2008 financial crisis, book publishers reported increased sales of Karl Marx. While some saw this as a renewed interest in his critique of capitalism, others argued most buyers were investors, who found his work useful for predicting—and profiting from—future crises. It is certainly not trivial to discuss Marx's ideas in detachment from the turbulent political history they gave rise to. In this course we will ask about the relevance of those ideas today: an era in which the welfare state is in decline, trade wars are on the rise, and the negative effects of globalization beginning to be felt. It will be argued that Marx did not offer an economic analysis in the narrow sense, but a new type of social and historical philosophy. He saw capitalism as ridden by an unresolved tension: unleashing an unprecedented potential for human productivity, but also giving rise to a unique form of domination; one for which the modern ideals of personal freedom and civil equality are no match. The first half of the course will be dedicated to a close critical reading of Marx's key works. The second will review a gallery of later thinkers—Louis Althusser, Slavoj Žižek, Samir Amin, and Nancy Fraser—who extend the Marxian paradigm to questions of democracy, feminism, and post-colonialism.

Assessment:

Minor assignment:

One of the following two: (a) An oral presentation of 10-15 minutes on the reading assignment for one class; or (b) A response paper of 1000 words.

The schedule of which students present or submit a response paper for each class will be assigned in the beginning of the semester, depending on the number of registered students.

Percentage of grade: 5%

Midterm:

Midterm paper of 1500 words.

Percentage of grade: 15%

Final requirement:

Either final seminar paper of 4000 words minimum, or referat paper of 2000 words (depending on student's form of registration).

Percentage of grade: 80%

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three absences without penalty. Any additional absences will affect the final grade and may result in failure of the course.

Academic conduct:

Plagiarism is taken extremely seriously. Any instance of academic misconduct which includes: submitting someone else's work as your own; failure to accurately cite sources; taking words from another source without using quotation marks; submission of work for which you have previously received credit; working in a group for individual assignments; using unauthorized materials in an exam and sharing your work with other students, will result in failure of the assignment and will likely lead to further disciplinary measures.