

New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
Marxism and Culture (MCC-UE 1402)

SPRING 2023

Professor Alexander R. Galloway
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Office Hours: Tu 3:30pm-5; Wed 10am-12pm

Time: T & Th 2pm - 3:15pm
Location: 181 Mercer Street, Room 305

The purpose of this course is to read a number of key works from Western Marxism and to understand the various political and philosophical debates with which they engage. The course emphasizes Marxism as a scholarly methodology for critique, applicable across disciplines. Particular attention is given to the so-called Cultural Turn in twentieth-century Marxist thought, including Marx's influence on feminism, identity, and theories of representation. Themes include: the commodity, alienation and reification, surplus value, ideology, consumerism, subjectivity, and post-Fordism.

I. The History of Capital and Class Struggle

Jan 24—Course Introduction.

Jan 26—John Steinbeck, "The Monster" [excerpt from *The Grapes of Wrath*] (PDF); Karl Marx, *Capital*, pp. 873-907.

Jan 31—Karl Marx, *Capital*, pp. 908-940.

II. The Young Marx

Feb 2—Karl Marx, "Concerning Feuerbach," and "Preface" in *Early Writings*, pp. 421-428.
Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts" in *Early Writings*, pp. 279-309.

Feb 7—Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts" in *Early Writings*, pp. 322-334, 345-358, and 375-379; William Morris, "How I Became A Socialist" (PDF).

Feb 9—Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 218-258.

III. Commodities and Reification

Feb 14—Karl Marx, *Capital*, pp. 89-103 and 125-153.

Feb 16—Karl Marx, *Capital*, pp. 154-209.
Quiz today & distribute midterm study guide.

IV. Surplus Value and Reproduction

Feb 21—Karl Marx, *Capital*, pp. 247-257, 270-306, and 320-329.
Midterm exam review.

Feb 23—Karl Marx, *Capital*, pp. 429-454 and 544-564.
Midterm exam review.

Feb 28—Karl Marx, *Capital*, pp. 675-682 and 709-724.
Midterm exam review.

Mar 2—Midterm Exam.

V. Ideology and Mass Culture

Mar 7—*Bicycle Thieves* (d. Vittorio De Sica, 1948). Streaming via Kanopy (<https://nyu.kanopy.com/video/bicycle-thieves>).

Mar 9—No class

Mar 14 & 16—Spring Break.

Mar 21—Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" (PDF).

Mar 23—Donna Haraway, "'Gender' for a Marxist Dictionary" (PDF).

VI. Marx in the 21st Century

Mar 28—Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program" (PDF).

Mar 30—Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*, Preface & Chapter 1.

Apr 4—Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*, Chapter 2.

Apr 6—Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*, Chapter 3.

Apr 11—Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*, Chapter 4.

Apr 13—Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*, Chapter 5.

Apr 18—Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*, Chapter 6 & Epilogue.

VIII. Post-Fordism & The Digital

Apr 20—McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto*, paragraphs 1-125.
Distribute final study guide.

Apr 25—McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto*, paragraphs 126-257.
Final exam review.

Apr 27—McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto*, paragraphs 258-389.
Final exam review.

May 2—Review and exam prep.

May 4—Final Exam.

Required Books

1. Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2022).
2. Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1* (London: Penguin, 1976).
3. Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London: Penguin, 1974).
4. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin, 2002).
5. McKenzie Wark, *A Hacker Manifesto* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2004).

Evaluation

The course contains midterm and final examinations. Each exam will be in-class and will follow a short-answer, written format. Students will also be evaluated according to their class participation. All course work and participation should demonstrate a close reading of the required materials and exhibit a method of critical analysis.

Grade Formula

Midterm examination 40%

Final examination 40%

Class participation 20%

Laptop Policy

I discourage the use of laptops, tablets, and phones in class and consider them to be detrimental to the social and pedagogical climate of the classroom. Exceptions can be made for readings that have been distributed in electronic format, and for students with special accommodation.

Grading Rubric

A — Excellent. Student exhibits exemplary creativity through a close reading and critical analysis of the required materials. Style is lucid and engaging with zero mistakes.

B — Good. References to the course material are well-selected and topical. Critical analysis is present, but largely rehearsed from class lecture and discussion. Student's style is clear and has very few mistakes.

C — Satisfactory. References to the course material are well-selected and topical, but student performs little or no critical analysis. Problems exist in student's work. Work consists mostly of underdeveloped ideas, off-topic sources or examples, inappropriate research, or anecdotes.

D — Unsatisfactory. Student does not engage with the material and no critical analysis is present. Substantial problems exist in student's work.

F — Fail. Student does not submit work, or work is below unsatisfactory level.