

New York University  
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication  
**Marx (Special Topics in Critical Theory)**  
Course number MCC-GE 3013 -- FALL 2023

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

Time: Wednesdays 2:00-4:50pm  
Location: East Building, Room 741

Much of critical theory finds its origin in the work of Karl Marx. This doctoral seminar will focus on reading (most of) Marx's *Capital*, vol. 1. Then, during the final three weeks of the semester, students will pursue group inquiry into a Marxist text of their own choosing. Overall the course will emphasize Marxism as a political and economic theory, but will also address Marxism as a critical methodology applicable to disciplines beyond economics. Themes for the seminar will include the commodity, alienation and reification, surplus-value, labor, machines, ideology, and community.

### **Schedule**

9/6 -- Course Introduction

9/13 -- Introduction, Prefaces, and Postfaces. *Capital*, 11-120.

9/20 -- The Commodity. *Capital*, 125-244.

9/27 -- Capital; Absolute Surplus-Value. *Capital*, 247-339.

10/4 -- The Working Day. *Capital*, 340-416.

10/11 -- no class

10/18 -- Relative Surplus-Value; Manufacture. *Capital*, 417-491.

10/25 -- Machinery. *Capital*, 492-553.

11/1 -- Machinery (cont.). *Capital*, 553-639.

11/8 -- Absolute and Relative Surplus-Value; Wages; Accumulation. *Capital*, 643-746.

11/15 -- Accumulation (cont.); Primitive Accumulation. *Capital*, 762-802, 873-940.

11/23 -- *Thanksgiving Break*

11/29, 12/6, and 12/13 -- Each student will select one of the following books to read as part of a group. Students will report each week on their reading progress, allowing for group discussion of problems and questions, as well as for planning the final paper.

1. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2005).
2. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).
3. Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
4. Kohei Saito, *Marx in the Anthropocene: Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

12/18 (Monday), 5pm -- Final paper due.

## Required Books

1. Karl Marx, *Capital, volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976/1992). ISBN: 9780140445688.
2. One of the following four books: *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, *Empire*, *Black Marxism*, or *Marx in the Anthropocene*.

## Course Assignments

- *Reading* -- Students are expected to read the assigned text in advance of class.
- *Discussion Leaders* -- Students are required to act as a discussion leader for two different weeks prior to Thanksgiving Break.
- *Writing* -- Each student will write a final paper. Length expectations are 20 pages for doctoral students and 16 pages for MA students. Papers should adhere to standard format (12 point font, double spaced, one inch margins, no spaces between paragraphs, etc.) and follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. A bibliography is not necessary. All writing should demonstrate a close reading of the required materials and exhibit a method of critical analysis.

## Grade Formula

Paper	80%
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. Please bring physical books and paper for taking notes. Exceptions can be made for students with particular learning requirements.