

# PHIL 3268: MARXISM

## Theme R: Revolutionary Ideas and Innovations

Dr. Senem Saner

**Office:** HOB 226

**Office Hours:** TR 1:30-3:00 and W 10-11:30

**E-mail:** ssaner@csub.edu

*In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all... The workers have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.*

*Workers of all countries, unite!*

Marx is an economist, more appropriately, a **political-economist**, as he made the case for the necessary connection between economic and productive activity and the political system of a society. Marx is a **philosopher**, schooled in the history of philosophy; he wrote his dissertation on two Greek philosophers' systems of science. Marx is a **political activist**—he co-authored, with Engels, the *Communist Manifesto*, the pamphlet that came to represent the worker's movement in Europe in 1848. A political-economist, a philosopher, an activist, an avid reader of literature, a journalist, ... Marx is a complex figure and author. **Marxism** is at least as varied and complex as its originator. It is neither a homogeneous nor a well-defined phenomenon: it may denote various schools of thought, economic insights, activist movements, or interpretative principles. We could take up any one of these aspects of Marx or meanings of Marxism and spend a whole semester on it alone. However, ...

Instead, we will try to get a holistic view of Marx's thought, looking at his analysis of **labor, class, commodity, surplus value**, and the defining framework of these activities, **capital**. In the first half of class, we will read selections from Marx's writings as well as selections from influential Marxist authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second half will comprise two sections: One, reading contemporary scholars analyze and evaluate the continuing relevance and influence of **Marx's ideas at the end of the Millennium** and, two, having the participants of this class research and present projects on the echoes of **Marx in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**. What are the major consequences and implications of Marx's thought today, for us, for the future? Our aim is to bring Marx to our time and ask ourselves "**whither Marx?**"

### Text

Antonio ed., *Marx and Modernity: Key Readings and Commentary* (available at the Runner Bookstore), ISBN: 0631225498.

### Course Objectives

This course introduces students to the conceptual foundations of Marxist thought and explores the continuing relevance of those ideas for contemporary social issues, such as the economic crisis, globalization, climate change, war, racism, gender relations, immigration, etc. Students will

1. Describe the basic tenets of Marx's major works and their philosophical impact (CT and TR-1A);
2. Critically read and analyze primary texts from historical and contemporary sources (CT and OC);
3. Use philosophical methods to critically evaluate Marxist ideas and their relevance to contemporary social issues (CT, OC, and TR-1B).

**Oral Communication (OC):** Students will demonstrate proficiency in oral communication.

- Outcome 1A. Students will create organized oral presentations using appropriate information for the subject and the audience. (**Research Project Presentation**)

- Outcome 1B. Students will present information in a professional manner using well-developed oral presentation skills. **(Participation and Research Project Presentation)**

**Critical Thinking (CT):** Students will demonstrate critical reasoning and problem solving.

- Outcome 1A. Students will analyze, evaluate, and/or construct arguments. **(Reading Journals, Research Project Presentation, Final Portfolio)**

**Revolutionary Ideas and Innovations (TR):** Students will be able to identify and critically evaluate major consequences and implications of a revolutionary idea or innovation. Revolutionary ideas may be economic, social, ethical, cultural, political, and/or scientific, among others.

- Outcome 1A: Students will identify the major consequences and implications of a revolutionary idea or innovation beyond the field. **(Reading Journals, Research Project Presentation)**
- Outcome 1B: Students will critically evaluate the major consequences and implications of a revolutionary idea or innovation beyond the field. **(Reading Journals, Research Project Presentation)**

### Course Requirements:

Reading Journals	20 %
Participation	10 %
Final Portfolio	35 %
Research Project	35 %

- You are expected to submit a reading **journal entry before each class**. Your entry is due the day before the class meets **(Mondays and Wednesdays at 5 pm)**.
  - **Conceptual Analysis:** Your assignment for Tuesday's class is **conceptual analysis**: Choose **one idea/term** that appears in the reading and in your opinion, is **central to the main argument** of the text (examples might be crisis, labor, bourgeois, surplus value, fetishism, profit, commodity...). **Define** the term (you may use a regular or discipline specific dictionary, such as Webster English Dictionary or Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy or Historical Dictionary of Marxism), **explain** the meaning and significance of the concept **1)** in the text's argument and **2)** today, for us.
  - **Critical Analysis:** Your assignment for Thursday's class is **critical analysis**: Choose **one passage** from the reading selection (keep it short, 1-2 sentences max) that in your opinion expresses a **theoretical position that is central to the argument of the text**. It might be the conclusion, the main point that the author is arguing for; it might be a key premise or supporting claim. Explain its meaning and significance in the text's argument. What does it say to us today? Does it apply to our world? If yes, why and how? If no, what has made it obsolete?
  - Your entries should be 250-500 words. Late reading journals (completed before the week is over) will receive half credit. Reading Journals are graded on a C/NC basis.
- Your **participation** grade will be based on your prepared and active participation in class discussions. Students will present their responses to the readings each class meeting, based on their reading journal entries for that day. Remember this is a class that reinforces oral communication skills. Thus, your participation grade will depend largely on your oral report of your research and reflection on that day's reading. Participation points cannot be made-up.
- The **final** portfolio will be a culmination of the work you have done throughout the semester, providing an opportunity for you to consolidate and reflect back on the development of your thinking on Marx and Marxism.
- For your research project, you will work in **groups of three-four** in the second half of the semester. You will collaborate on deciding on a topic, doing research, preparing and presenting

poster presentations of your group projects. The in-class presentations are scheduled for the last two weeks of class (April 30-May 9). This group assignment will contribute to forming a 21<sup>st</sup> century interpretation and evaluation of Marxism as you will apply a key Marxist idea to a contemporary event or issue. Here is a sample project topic: How does Marx's analysis of commodification of labor help to analyze and evaluate precarity of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

### Schedule (subject to revision)

Date	Topic	Readings (Ch. # are from <i>Marx and Modernity</i> )
Jan 22	Revolutionary Ideas Theme and Introductions	Syllabus
	<b>Part I: Marx and Marxism</b>	
Jan 24	Historical background	Introduction to <i>Marx and Modernity</i>
Jan 29	World History and Class	Ch. 1-7
Jan 31	Bourgeois and Proletarians	Ch. 8-13
Feb 5	Excursus: Marx on Alienated Labor	<i>Marx's Estranged Labour</i>
Feb 7	Surplus Value	Ch. 14-15
Feb 12	Excursus: Class Consciousness	Lukács on <i>Class Consciousness</i>
Feb 14	Excursus: Hegemonic Struggle	Gramsci on <i>Intellectuals and the Subaltern</i>
Feb 19	Fetishism	Ch. 16-17
Feb 21	Industrial Revolution	Ch. 18-19
Feb 26	Excursus: Technology and Capitalism	Adorno and Horkheimer on <i>Culture Industry</i>
Feb 28	Crisis of Capital	Ch. 20-25, 33
Mar 5	Colonialism	Ch. 26-30
Mar 7	Excursus: Ideology	Althusser on <i>Ideological State Apparatuses</i>
Mar 12	Film: Young Marx	<i>Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto</i>
Mar 14	Communist Manifesto	<i>Communist Manifesto</i>
Mar 19	Revolutionary Proletariat	Ch. 34-36
Mar 21	Future of Democracy?	Ch. 37-38
	<b>Part Two: Marx at the end of the Millennium</b>	
Mar 26	After Communism	Ch. 39-41
Mar 28	Corporations	Ch. 42-43
Apr 2	Social Stratification	Ch. 44-45
Apr 4	Globalization	Ch. 46-48
Apr 9	<b>Poster Presentation Workshop</b>	Brecht <i>Writing the Truth: 5 Difficulties</i>
Apr 11	Angela Davis	Reading TBD
Apr 15-19	<b>Spring Break</b>	
Apr 23	Case Study in Resistance: Seattle	Ch. 49-51
Apr 25	Rethinking Class	Ch. 52-53
	<b>Part Three: Marx in the 21<sup>st</sup> century</b>	
Apr 30	Group Work	Post Group Readings on Blackboard
May 2	Poster Presentations	Group Readings
May 7	Poster Presentations	Group Readings
May 9	Poster Presentations	Group Readings
May 17	<b>Final Portfolio Due</b>	

## Course Policies

**Grading:** Final grades will be assigned as follows:

92-100 = A	82-87 = B	67-77 = C	57-62 = D
90-91 = A-	80-81 = B-	65-66 = C-	55-56 = D-
88-89 = B+	78-79 = C+	63-64 = D+	below 55 = F

**Make-up exams** are allowed only in cases of emergency or unavoidable absence (documented proof required in such cases). It is your responsibility to acquire notes for missed class content and follow announcements regarding any changes to the schedule. I recommend that you exchange e-mails/phone numbers with a few of your classmates – to find out what you have missed, but also to discuss homework questions, and form study groups. **Missed classwork cannot be made up.**

**Office Hours and Email:** No appointment is necessary to see me during my office hours. If you cannot meet during my office hours, send me an email, a few days in advance, to set up an appointment.

**Academic Integrity:** The commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of handing in someone else's work, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest. Academic dishonesty in any form is grounds for unconditional failure for the course and a report to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

**Harassment Policy:** Written or spoken statements that can be construed as harassment will not be tolerated and will be reported to the appropriate university office for proper legal investigation and action. This includes, but is not limited to, comments based on race, ethnic origin, sex, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

**Reasonable Accommodations Policy:** CSUB encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please contact the professor as soon as possible.