Instructor: Professor Manfred B. Steger  
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POLS 611: TRADITIONS OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY  
Fall 2012: Marx, Marxism, and the Global Financial Crisis

Course Description
Few thinkers have been declared “irrelevant” and “out of date” with such frequency as Karl Marx. After the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 and the ongoing European Debt Crisis, however, global capitalism has been shaken to its core. Suddenly, Marx-inspired critiques of the global financial regime are once again stimulating anti-systemic social movements like ‘Occupy Wall Street’ around the world.

Course Structure
Starting with a brief consideration of G.W.F. Hegel’s influence on Marx’s thought, this course is designed to introduce students to the main ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Hence, much of our time will be taken up studying primary texts. These are the three main questions we’ll tackle in this course:

• What are Marx’s (and Engels’s) main ideas and methods?  
• How did Marxism evolve as a political ideology?  
• What is the relevance of Marxist thought and analysis in the current crisis of global capitalism?

Indeed, we’ll also consider the development of Marxism as a global political ideology by exploring such influential figures as Lenin, Bernstein, Gramsci, and Mao Zedong. In the final section of the class, we’ll probe the extent to which Marxist analysis can help us make sense of the lingering Global Financial Crisis of 2008-9.

Course Readings (required)
The following paperback books are available for purchase in the U.H. bookstore:


5) Excerpts (free downloads) from writings by Eduard Bernstein, V. I. Lenin, Mao Zedong, and Antonio Gramsci from the following website: www.marxists.org.

Also check out resources made available through the Online University of the Left: http://ouleft.org/

**Course readings (strongly recommended)**


**Additional Recommended Readings:**


2) Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right*, Yale 2011


*Please note:* Each student is required to identify 5-10 additional journal articles pertaining to your research topic/theme in Marxist theory (conduct your own online search).
**Learning Objectives and Course Requirements**

Let me encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own active learning environment—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I EXPECT REGULAR STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. You must be willing to engage in class discussions. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But I do not accept the equation of subjective experience or unreflective “common sense” with “truth.” Be prepared to engage with the questions raised in this seminar, regardless of your own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing you for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant’s dictum, *Sapere aude*—‘Have the courage to use your own understanding’!

The course readings and assignments have been carefully selected to generate broad in-class discussions and oral presentations. Except for the first two introductory sessions, each class meeting will follow the same basic structure:

1) Instructor’s lecture on assigned readings of the week (60 min)
2) Student questions of clarification (20 min)
3) Short Break (10 min)
4) Two students engage as ‘discussants’ in ‘immanent critique’ of self-selected short passages from the assigned readings. Followed by general class discussion led by students (60 min)

Students are required to select a topic of their choice (in consultation with me) for a 25-page research paper on a topic to be approved beforehand by the instructor. **Proposals for the research paper, including a 1-page abstract/outline and a substantive bibliography, will be due on Week 14 (November 19).** Please consult with me during office hours to discuss ideas for (and one outline) of your research paper. At students’ request, I will provide feedback on ONE draft of the research paper (face-to-face consultation in my office).

In your research paper, you should carefully explore the meaning of the theme/problem, and, with as much sophistication as possible, you should indicate how that theme/problem reveals something of political significance about the larger context/tradition from which it is taken. You should engage in a careful textual analysis and cite appropriate, short textual passages (full footnotes or endnotes). **No book reports or summaries please!** You are expected to incorporate in your papers external research (books, journal articles, and reviews). I am happy to give you recommendations for additional secondary sources. If you wish such advice, please talk to me about it BEFORE you get to work on your paper. Your papers represent research exercises in political interpretation and critical thinking. A hardcopy of the research paper is due on **Monday, December 10 at noon, in my office (or department office). No late papers will be accepted.**

Finally, as noted above, each student will be responsible for serving as a discussant by a) engaging in an *immanent critique* of self-selected textual passages; and b) leading the ensuing *discussion* involving the entire class. You will be asked to sign up for a specific week at the latest by the third week of class. Assignments on particular topics/weeks will be made on first-come, first-serve basis. In addition the assigned readings, your presentation may include additional
supportive (brief) materials (for example, handouts, charts, and/or visual materials like PowerPoints, video clips, or other web-based materials).

Regular class attendance is required. Please inform the instructor in advance if you have to miss class for really, really important reasons!

A Note on Grading
You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the seminar. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the seminar. Your in-class presentation, engaged discussion, and participation will count for 25% and your research paper for 75%. Thus, your seminar grade will reflect your presentation, participation, and the overall quality of your written work. Students who participate regularly during our class discussions will receive extra credit—meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the higher grade.

Please be advised that overparticipation and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers may hurt the quality of the course, especially if such actions tend to derail the thematic agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order keep us on track and help all students to engage with the relevant materials. A significant element in academic study is the ability to learn to listen to other voices. For the purposes of this course, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

1) In-Class Presentations (Immanent Critique):
An ‘A’ or ‘A-‘ will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such immanent critiques of self-selected textual passages are coherent, well organized, and adhere to the given time frame. ‘A’ students show their critical and careful reading of the text(s) and generate genuine interest and excitement for their topic. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme.

2) Research Paper:
Much of the above pertains to interpretive essays/term paper as well. In addition to treating the subject in a sophisticated and creative manner, ‘A’ papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw connections between non-obvious points; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct voice. An ‘A’ research paper in a graduate seminar should add a new wrinkle to the existing body of literature on this topic. If this grade is to mean something, just doing a ‘good job’ will result in a ‘B’. To get an ‘A’, you must demonstrate your ability to go beyond the expected.

Office Hours
Monday, 12:15 – 2:15 pm; and by appointment.

Students are encouraged to see me during office hours on a regular basis. Please clarify any difficult readings and/or other problems as soon as they arise. Don’t wait until the last few weeks of the semester.
**Academic Conduct**
Students are expected to abide by the university’s policies regarding academic integrity. Actions that are academically dishonest include, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information, interfering with the education of another student. Violation of these policies will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences including receiving a failing grade, suspension, or expulsion. The university policy on academic dishonesty can be found at the UH Manoa Student Conduct Code Policies Section IV Proscribed Conduct. For detail information, please consult the following website: http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/proscribed_conduct.php

**Disability Accommodation**
If you have a disability for which you need an accommodation, please make an appointment with the UH Manoa KOKUA Program (Disability Access Services) at (808) 956-7511, or via email kokua@hawaii.edu. For more information please access its website: http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/

**Subject to Change Statement**
This syllabus and schedule are provisional and are subject to change. It is at the discretion of the instructor to do so for the purpose of furthering the educational objectives of the course. While the instructor will notify students of any changes through class announcements and email communications, it is students’ responsibility to check on the course syllabus periodically for changes.
SEMINAR SCHEDULE

PART I: INTRODUCTION

WEEK 1 (Aug 20): Introduction to the Course
Readings for week 2: Hegel, Reason in History.

WEEK 2 (Aug 27): Hegel
Readings for week 4: Marx-Engels Reader (MER), pp. 1-25; Isaiah Berlin, Karl Marx (all); Priestland, The Red Flag (early chapters).

WEEK 3 (Sept 3): NO CLASS: LABOR DAY

PART II: MARX AND ENGELS: PHILOSOPHY & THEORY

WEEK 4 (Sept 10): Earliest Writings; Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right
Student Presentations #1

WEEK 5 (Sept 17): On the Jewish Question
Student Presentations #2
Readings for week 6: MER, pp. 66-109; 133-35; 143-145.

WEEK 6 (Sept 24): Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844; Alienation and Social Classes; Theses on Feuerbach
Student Presentations #3
Readings for week 7: MER, pp. 146-200; 469-500.

WEEK 7 (Oct 1): The German Ideology; Manifesto of the Communist Party
Student Presentations #4
Readings for week 8: MER, pp. 203-20; 294-438.

WEEK 8 (Oct 8): Wage Labor and Capital; Capital: Volume 1
Student Presentations #5
Readings for week 9: same as for week 8.
**WEEK 9 (Oct 15): Capital: Volume I**

**Student Presentations #6**

**Readings for week 10:** 586-93; 594-617; 618-652; 653-664; 676-77.

**WEEK 10 (Oct 22): Class Struggles in France; The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte; The Civil War in France; On Imperialism in India; Europocentric World Revolution**

**Student Presentations #7**

**Readings for week 11:** Bernstein (selections to be announced); Lenin (selections to be announced); Priestland, *The Red Flag* (later chapters).

**PART III: MARXISM IN THE 20TH CENTURY**

**WEEK 11 (Oct 29): Bernstein versus Lenin**

**Student Presentations # 8**

**Readings for week 12:** Gramsci (selections to be announced); Mao Zedong (selections to be announced).

**WEEK 12 (Nov 5): Mao; Gramsci**

**Student Presentations # 9**

**Readings for week 14 & 15:** Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital* (all); Summary of Global Financial Crisis (to be announced)

**PART IV: MARXISM IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION**

**WEEK 13 (Nov 12): NO CLASS: VETERANS' DAY**

**WEEK 14 (Nov 19): The Global Financial Crisis: Marxist Analyses I**

**Student Presentation #10**

**Reading for week 16:** Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital*.

1-page abstract and bibliography for research paper due.

**WEEK 15 (Nov 26): The Global Financial Crisis: Marxist Analyses II**

**Student Presentation #11**

**Reading for week 16:** none

**WEEK 16 (Dec 3): Roundtable: “The Relevance of Marx and Marxism in the Age of Globalization” (with selected POLS faculty members)**

Research Paper due: Monday, Dec 10, at noon. No late papers will be accepted!