

The University of Calgary  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Department of Sociology  
Sociology Department Home Page: <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca>

**Doctoral Seminar in Sociological Theory**  
Soci 731, Winter 2008

Instructor: Ariel Ducey  
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The seminar will focus on theories of capitalism and, to an extent, radical political economy. It will begin with an analysis of the economic concepts of Karl Marx (since any discussion of “capitalism” in social theory today necessarily implies a reaction to Marx’s work and thought). Marx raises several themes which will recur throughout the course: the necessary conditions for a capitalist mode of production, contradictions within capitalism and potential causes of crisis in the capitalist system, capitalist strategies for overcoming contradictions and crises, and the nature of labor and value.

After our introductory discussion of Marx, the course will examine one key issue within contemporary theories of capitalism each week. These will necessarily be snapshots of much larger debates, but they will provide you with the conceptual and analytical tools to pursue further reading and study in each area (if you so choose) and to recognize differing assumptions and emphases even among theorists on the “left.”

The purpose of this course is to:

- Obtain a general understanding of debates within social theory about the nature of capitalism
- Gain some familiarity with key economic terms, processes and debates
- Consider the embeddedness of social and economic relations
- Consider how your own dissertation projects—research questions, research design, and analysis—might be altered by taking into consideration political and economic forces
- Prepare you to view a range of specific topical areas in sociology from the vantage point of radical political economy (such as gender, health care, science and technology, etc.)

Course Readings

The course readings are indicated in the schedule. Please note these readings may change if class discussion suggests that other material may be more appropriate. Because this is the first time I have taught this course, changes to the readings are more likely. I will consult you whenever possible prior to making final decisions on changes to course readings.

In addition to the course readings, there are three documentary films you are required to watch by the following dates:

“Life and Debt” – February 5th, available to borrow from me

“Startup.com” – February 26, available to borrow from me

“Dam/age” – February 12, available to borrow from me

### Evaluation

In-class presentation:

Verbal, in-class component: 15%

Written component: 10%

Participation: 15%

Final paper: 40%

“Proposal” thought piece: 20%

### Presentation Guidelines

Each of you will be required to prepare an in-class presentation for one week’s readings and lead class discussion for half the class (60 minutes). The presentation should focus on one or two primary texts from the group of assigned readings (your choice), but you will be expected to draw upon the other required texts from that week as appropriate. The presentation should include:

1. A summary of the argument in the primary text(s)
2. A discussion of the significance of the arguments in the primary text(s). Why did they write this? What are the stakes?
3. A critical discussion of the strengths and limitations of the argument(s).

During the presentation, especially for the last two items of the presentation, you will be expected to direct other seminar participants to key passages of the texts that you have identified as crucial to understanding the authors’ arguments and their significance, and lead a discussion about why those passages are important.

You should also plan to draw selected attention to differences or similarities with the other assigned readings for the week, but the close textual analysis should focus on only one or two texts.

On the day of the presentation, you are also expected to turn in a typed, written overview of your presentation of no more than 1,500 words. The document should summarize your conclusions on the three points above, include selected, appropriate references and examples from the texts, and be properly cited and formatted.

## Participation Guidelines

This is a small seminar, and in-class participation is expected. The instructor will lecture or provide overviews as necessary, but the major portion of the seminar is discussion-based. Therefore, you must come to class having done the readings, identified important themes within and between them, and with questions or concerns in mind. You must also be prepared to participate when your classmates are giving their presentations; we should aim to produce an atmosphere of mutual support and engagement with one another.

## Final paper instructions

The final paper should be a short essay on a topic/theme of your choice or a topic/theme I have raised during the class (through lecture or an occasional “reading guide”). You will be expected to consult with me at least two weeks before the paper is due about the theme you plan to address and which texts you will use. This is not a research paper, but a reflective, critical essay. You are not required to consult secondary sources or do extra reading, but I may recommend selected additional reading as needed, depending on your theme.

The final paper will be due Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup>. The recommended length is around 3,000 words (10 pages).

## Proposal Thought Piece

The proposal thought piece is a chance for you to speculate on how the concepts of radical political economy and theories of capitalism might relate to your own dissertation project. You will want to summarize your current plans for your project and discuss how/whether it might be changed by examining it from the perspective of radical political economy or theories of capitalism. You should discuss how the latter might impact: 1) the way you formulate your research question; 2) the kinds of evidence you would choose to gather to answer the research question; 3) the way in which you would analyze such evidence; and 4) the decisions you might make about how to write and present the results of your research. Clearly you will not be able to take into account all the readings and perspectives presented in class, but you will be expected to choose several distinct theoretical approaches or theorists that are, for reasons you provide, most relevant to your topic.

The proposal thought piece will be due Friday, February 15<sup>th</sup>. The recommended length is around 2,000 words (7 pages).

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## **INTELLECTUAL HONESTY**

Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge and requires that the contribution of others be acknowledged. As a result, cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination are regarded as extremely serious academic offences. Students

are advised to consult the University Calendar, which present a Statement of Intellectual Honesty, definitions of plagiarism, cheating and other academic misconduct, and the penalties associated with these offences.

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY LEGISLATION**

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place e.g. outside the instructor's office, the department office etc. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class or during the instructor's office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

## **HANDING IN AND RETURN OF PAPERS, RELEASE OF FINAL GRADES**

1. When students are unable to submit papers at class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor rather than at the Sociology Department main office.
2. Final papers will not be returned through the Sociology Department main office. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation (see above) does not allow this. Students who want their final papers returned by mail may, as noted above, attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will be available for pick-up only during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or the beginning of the next term.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online

## **REAPPRAISAL OF GRADES**

A student seeking reappraisal of graded exams or exercises must discuss this work with the instructor within two weeks of the date the exam/assignment is handed back. Consistent with Faculty of Social Sciences regulations, the entire exam or assignment will be remarked, and the mark may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION**

Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.

## **RESEARCH ETHICS**

Students are advised that any research with human subjects – including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation – must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

## **SAFEWALK**

*The University of Calgary provides a “safe walk” service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.*

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

Items with an \* will be provided in hard copy. The remaining will be available on .pdf files.

### 1. Marx and the concepts of radical political economy (January 14)

Karl Marx. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). Preface, Chapter 1, and excerpts of the Appendix.

Karl Marx, *Capital. Volume I* (1867).

Chapter I, Section 4 – The Fetishism of Commodities and the secret thereof

Ch. IV – The General Formula for Capital

Ch. V – Contradictions in the General Formula of Capital

Ch. VI – The Buying and Selling of Labour-Power

Ch. VII, Sections 1 & 2 – The Labour-Process and the Process of Producing Surplus-Value

Ch. VIII – Constant Capital and Variable Capital

Ch. X, Sections 1, 2, , 5 – The Working-Day

Ch. XII – The Concept of Relative Surplus Value

Ch. XIII – Co-operation

Ch. XV, Section 3, parts a, b, c – Machinery and Modern Industry, The Proximate Effects of Machinery on the Workman

Ch. XVI – Absolute and Relative Surplus Value

Ch. XXV, Sections 1, 3, 4 – The General Law of Capitalism Accumulation

Ch. XXVI – The Secret of Primitive Accumulation

Ch. XXVII – The Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land

Ch. XXXII – Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation

A very useful resource on the web, which includes electronic versions of most of Marx's work is: <http://www.marxists.org>

### 2. Accumulation and Crisis (January 22)

Wright, Erik Olin. 1999 [orig pub 1975]. "Alternative Perspectives in Marxist Theory of Accumulation and Crisis," *Critical Sociology* 25, 2/3: 115 - 142. [& the introduction]

\*Harvey, David. 1990. "The political-economic transformation of late twentieth century capitalism," Part II of The Condition of Postmodernity. London: Blackwell.

\*Lipietz, Alain. 1986. "New Tendencies in the International Division of Labour: Regimes of Accumulation and Modes of Regulation," pp. 16-40 in Production, work, territory, A. Scott and M. Storper, eds. London: Allen & Unwin.

\*Jessop, Bob. 1994. "Post-Fordism and the State." Pp. 251-279 in *Post-Fordism: A Reader*. A. Amin, ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

### 3. Explaining Capitalist Reproduction (January 29)

- \*Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon Press. [selections TBD]
- \*Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- \*Fred Block, "The Ruling Class Does Not Rule: Notes on the Marxist Theory of the State," *Socialist Revolution*, 7 (1977), 6-28
- \*Burawoy, Michael. Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979. [sections TBD]

#### **4. Global Capitalism** (February 5<sup>th</sup>)

- \*Aronowitz, Stanley. 1981. "The End of Political Economy," pp. 139-200 in The Crisis in Historical Materialism. New York: Prager.
- \*Baran, Paul A. 1996. [orig. pub. 1952] "On the Political Economy of Backwardness," pp. 93 – 104 in The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment (6<sup>th</sup> ed.), K. Jameson and C. Wilber, eds. McGraw-Hill.
- Frank, Andre Gunder. "The Development of Underdevelopment," (first published 1966), *Monthly Review*, v.41, n.2 (1989), pp.37-51 or online at [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1132/is\\_n2\\_v41/ai\\_7659725](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1132/is_n2_v41/ai_7659725)
- Arrighi, Giovanni. 2002/2003 "Global Inequalities and the Legacy of Dependency Theory." *Radical Philosophy Review* 5 (1-2).
- \*Amin, Samir. 1997. "The Capitalist Economic Management of the Crisis of Contemporary Society," pp. 12-45 in Capitalism in the Age of Globalization. London: Zed Books.
- \*Standing, Guy. 1996 [orig pub 1989]. "Global Feminization Through Flexible Labor," pp. 405-430 in The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment (6<sup>th</sup> ed.), K. Jameson and C. Wilber, eds. McGraw-Hill.

#### **5. The Limits of Capitalist Reproduction** (February 12)

- \* O'Connor, James. 1994. "Is Sustainable Capitalism Possible?" pp. 152 – 175 in Is Capitalism Sustainable? Martin O'Connor, eds. New York: Guilford Press.
- \*Foster, John Bellamy and Brett Clark. 2003. "Ecological Imperialism: The Curse of Capitalism," pp. 186-201 in, The Imperial Challenge, Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, eds. London: Merlin Press.
- \*O'Connor, James. 1988. "Capitalism, Nature, Socialism: A Theoretical Introduction." *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism (CNS)*, 1 (1): 11-38.
- \*Mies, Maria. 1986. *Patriarchy and Accumulation on World Scale*. London: Zed Books. [selections TBD]
- \*Shiva, Vandana. 1997. *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit*. Boston: South End Press. [selections TBD]

#### **6. Immaterial Labor and Frontiers of Value** (February 26)

- \*Negri, Antonio. 1999. "Value and Affect." *Boundary 2* 26:77-87.
- \*Hardt, Michael. Hardt, M. (1999) 'Affective labor', *Boundary 2*, 26: 89 -100

- \*Lazzarato, Maurizio. 1996. "Immaterial Labor," pp. 133-147 in Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, eds. Radical Thought in Italy. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press.
- Terranova, Tiziana. 2000. "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," *Social Text*, 18 (2): 33-58.
- \*Thacker, Eugene. 2005. "The Incorporate Bodies of Recombinant Capital," Ch. 5, pp. 174-207 in The Global Genome: Biotechnology, Politics, and Culture. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.