

POLS 327, Autumn 2007

Hope Against Hope, Marx After Marx

Room 9, Tuesdays 2:00-4:45pm

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office hours: Thursdays, 1:00-4:00pm & by appt.

This course is devoted to close readings of Karl Marx and two Marxists, Georg Lukacs and Walter Benjamin. Stepping away from neat mechanistic readings of Marx, this course engages with the messy nature and substance of possibility and hope in marxist thought. Appreciating the intriguing relation of Marx to modernity and modernism, the course delves into what it might have meant for Marx to subvert dominant philosophers for whom matter had no weight, to unsettle modernity's conceits of progress and happiness, and to then postulate revolution, communism and hope on the basis, and not to the exclusion, of very heavy, often very wounded, human bodies. Marx stands as a significant diagnostician of alienation and the decrepitude of a world whose ethical, political, material, spiritual reality tends to slip through the fingers of precisely those hands that create it. Marxist thinkers such as Georg Lukacs and Walter Benjamin worked on the costs and conditions of possibility, enchantment and hope within capitalism, rethinking categories of dialectics, relation, history, culture, class, art, faith, experience, matter, spirit, time, space, etc., to lend Marx currency in times that had far from borne out his hope. Other folks, besides Marx, Lukacs and Benjamin will make an appearance as necessary.

Core Texts

Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (1861) [any edition; Penguin is preferred]

Georg Lukacs, *Soul and Form* (1910) [any edition]

Walter Benjamin, *Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, (1928)

Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, (1927-1948, 1982)

Access to www.marxists.org (Marx/ian texts in public domain)

Other required selections are accessible through electronic reserves (password abb-327)

Supplementary and Reference Texts (entire or selections)

Thomas Kemple, *Reading Marx Writing*

Moishe Postone, *Time, Labour and Social Domination*

Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*

Jason Read, *The Micropolitics of Capital*

Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno et. al, *Aesthetics and Politics*

Lucien Goldmann, *Lukacs and Heidegger*

Lucien Goldman, *Cultural Creation*

Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*

Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality*

Fredrick Engels, *Anti-Dubring*

Msx Horheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Some supplementary selections may be accessed through electronic reserves (password abb-327)

Course Requirements

Every class will feature a mandatory student presentation on the recommended supplementary text for the week. This presentation will comprise of almost half the class—in other words, the appointed student will approach it as if s/he were teaching the text to the rest of us. This necessitates reading the text at least a week in advance and having a required meeting with me at least once during the week before the class to go over a plan. This presentation alone amounts to 15% of the grade and will be very meticulously graded. Presenter's absence on the day of the his/her presentation OR missing the required planning meeting amount to an automatic F on this assignment, and you will unfortunately not have a chance to do a makeup presentation. You should approach this as almost a test.

Active class participation is expected and required. You must have done the reading assignments in advance of the class, and all assigned text must be read by everyone. Everyone will not, however, be required to read the supplementary text for the week, unless the student presenter communicates a short reading assignment to the rest of the class in preparation of her/his presentation.

You will write a short (3-4 page) exegetical paper each on Marx, Lukacs, and Benjamin, for a total of 3 short papers and 45 percent of the grade. A longer final paper or project will be more thematic rather than centred on any one thinker. Proposals for these must be discussed with the instructor and approved accordingly. Imaginative proposals are encouraged. Along the way, there may be in-class and out-of-class assignments that will require group work.

Supplementary Text presentation	20%
Three Exegetical Papers	45%
Final Paper/Project	25%
Participation/Auxiliary Projects	10%

Week One—28 August

Introductions

MARX

Francis Wheen, "Karl Marx: A Life" (excerpt)

Francis Wheen, "Poet of Dialectics," excerpted from *Karl Marx's Das Kapital: A Biography*

Marx, *Scorpion and Felix* (selections)

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1837-pre/verse/verse41.htm>

Marx, *The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature* (selections)

Dedication, Foreword, "The Subject of the Treatise"

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1841/dr-theses/ch01.htm>

Week Two—4 September

Marx, *The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature* (selections)

Part One: Ch. 1, II, III, IV

Part Two: Chs. 1-5 (refer to notebooks, if you wish)

Access these at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1841/dr-theses/index.htm>

Supplementary Text:

Engels, Fredrick, *Anti-Dubring*

Week Three—11 September

Marx, *Grundrisse*

pp. 7-63, 69-80, 83-111

Supplementary Text:

Kemple, Thomas. *Reading Marx Writing*

Week Four—18 September

Marx, *Grundrisse*

pp.

Supplementary Text:

Postone, *Time, Labour and Social Domination*

LUKACS

Week Five—25 September

Lukacs, *Soul and Form*

(selections TBA)

Supplementary Text:

Week Six—2 October

Lukacs, *Soul and Form*

(selections TBA)

Supplementary Text:

Goldmann. *Lukacs and Heidegger or Cultural Creation*

BREAK

Week Seven—16 October

*Lukacs, selection from *History and Class Consciousness*

Or *In Defense of History and Class Consciousness: Tailism and the Dialectic*

Supplementary Text:

Lukacs. *Theory of the Novel*

Week Eight—23 October

*Lukacs, *The Destruction of Reason* (selections TBA)

Supplementary Text:

Horkheimer and Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Week Nine—30 October

Adorno, et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*

Week Ten—6 November

Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*

pp.

Supplementary Text:

Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: Idea of the Tragic*

Week Eleven—13 November

Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*

pp.

Supplementary Text:

Jay, *Marxism and Totality*

BREAK

Week Twelve—27 November

Benjamin, *Arcades Project*

pp.

Supplementary Text:

Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*

Week Thirteen—4 December

Benjamin, *Arcades Project*

pp.

Supplementary Text:

Fritsch, *The Promise of Memory: History and Politics in Marx, Benjamin and Derrida*

Week Fourteen—11 December

Review and Final Presentations

Date	Reading	Source	Ref Reading
28 Aug		Internet	
4 Sep	Marx Dissertation		Kemple
11 Sep	Marx Grundrisse		Postone
18 Sep	Marx Grundrisse		Negri's book on grundrisse Labor of Dionysus?
25 Sep	Lukacs		
2 Oct	Lukacs		
BREAK			
16 Oct	Lukacs		
23 Oct	Lukacs		Goldmann — Lukacs and Heidegger
30 Oct	Lukacs		Marxism and totality.
6 Nov	Benjamin		
13 Nov	Benjamin		
BREAK			
27 Nov	Benjamin		Aesthetics and politics
4 Dec	Benjamin		
11 Dec			