

**MARXISM SEMINAR, FALL, 2009 (GEOGRAPHY 860.01):
SYLLABUS**

‘Bread and Butter’

- Meeting times: Mondays, Wednesdays 5:00 – 7:00
- Course number: Geography 860.01
- Class number: 12293
- Place: Derby 1116
- Cox.13@osu.edu; or call me at 888-6292 (not after 9 p.m.)

Rationale

In this seminar, I want to concentrate on the fundamental Marxist categories and logics. This means that we will not be looking at the work of geographers as part of the reading assignments for the seminar – i.e. the ‘geographical’ aspects of ‘historical geographical materialism’; we just do not have time. Just internalizing these basic understandings is a major challenge. The Marxist literature is a huge one, with innumerable wrinkles, debates and developments; a living, constantly re-worked, body of knowledge. Most of this will have to remain for the future. Thankfully, the basic principles of procedure and the view of the world that is Marxist, can and should, in my view, remain unquestioned. These were made clear by Marx himself and will be our focus in the seminar. But quite emphatically, all we can hope to accomplish is to lay a foundation for further exploration.

Most of the seminar, therefore, consists of an overview of the fundamental concepts, arguments and methods of the mature Marx. This will rely heavily on a reading of *Capital Vol 1*. If – a major ‘if’ – we get through this faster than I anticipate then we can turn to a more focused examination of some of the fundamental ideas that will be discussed in the earlier part of the seminar.

I had originally also intended an examination of the works of the young Marx to provide a contrast with what followed and the significance of the breakthroughs that he made in his thinking. The focus here was going to be on *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, *The German Ideology*, and the more transitional *Grundrisse*. I was going to dedicate two weeks to

that material. However, this is not going to be possible as I had originally intended it. Getting the basics over is too time-demanding. However, there will be extracts from these materials incorporated into the readings for the topics I will cover. So not as much as I had originally wanted, but not ignored either.

Procedure

I intend to work with two complementary approaches:

- Questions that you might want to volunteer, but I'd like to have them by 10 a.m. of the day of the seminar so that I can pre-circulate them along with questions of my own. All questions will address the reading for that particular seminar, of course. We'll then have a discussion framed by these questions. Come prepared to argue.
- Some 'straight ahead' expository lecturing.

Assessment

How you are assessed depends on whether you are taking the seminar for three or five hours. So:

For Everybody: Five short essays (5 – 7 double spaced pp.). The idea here is to facilitate the internalization of the ideas by: i) providing an incentive for you to think them through by writing about them (trying to get things down on paper is a great discipline); ii) confronting the ideas with your own concrete experiences, readings elsewhere, perhaps, what you pick up from the media, particular examples that occur to you. Each of these is worth 12% of your final grade for those doing 5 credit hours and 20% of your final grade for those doing 3 credit hours.

Additional for the Five Hour People:

Those opting to do five credit hours will also be asked to write a paper. This could take several forms and I offer some suggestions here:

- For any undergraduates I would be happy with a review of David Harvey's historical geographical materialism and how he made Marx geographic. A good source here would be his book *The Urban Experience* especially Chapters 1, 5, 6, 8 and 9. This is a book that all geographers should have anyway. Chapters 12 and 13 of his book *The Limits to Capital* (another book worth having) would also be useful for this purpose. In any case, I'll be happy to give much more guidance on this; perhaps a meeting with you all?

- For both undergrads and grads (these are just suggestions):
 - Something on the development of Marx's thought. This would involve a comparison of *Capital Vol I* (the so-called 'mature' Marx) with two of his earlier writings: the *German Ideology* and *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. If you wanted to get into the *Grundrisse*, that would be a possibility as well, though I think that that might be more challenging.
 - Something on some aspect of historical *geographical* materialism. This can be a review paper (but not one that explores particular themes rather than an author-by-author discussion); or more ambitiously, it can explore a particular process or relationship – globalization, the global-local, geographically uneven development, migration, urbanization, suburbanization, living place conflicts – from a marxist standpoint. Good initial discussions can be found in the references to Harvey above (*The Urban Experience* and *The Limits to Capital*). Modules 13 and 14 (which we will not be discussing in the seminar) also have useful material.

Note that in neither case am I asking you for something extravagantly original. I shall be pleased if you show a good familiarity with the concepts and use them in appropriate ways. Some evidence of how you can use the Marxist concepts in either a critical or interpretive mode or both would be reassuring. Please start thinking about your topic soon and talk to me about it! The paper is worth 40% of your final grade and should be at least 20, double-spaced pp. in length.

Reading

Please obtain a copy of the following: Marx, *Capital Vol I* (Vintage or Penguin Books edition; translation by Ben Fowkes). Other readings will be drawn from the web or made available for photocopying. Note that I am not planning to have the two books listed above available in the bookstores. Amazon will be a cheaper source.

I will make extensive use of Modules written specifically for this seminar. They can be accessed at: <http://geog-www.sbs.ohio-state.edu/faculty/kcox/hgm.htm>. Be alert for revised versions, however. If I do revise anything I'll send it out to you as an attachment.

Useful works of reference which I will draw on, but which you are not asked to obtain, include:
 i) John Weeks, *Capital and Exploitation.*; ii) Tom Bottomore [ed.], *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*; and iii) David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*.

An extraordinarily useful website is the Marxists' Internet Archive: <http://www.marxists.org/>. This has loads and loads of downloadable stuff. I suspect it would be hard to think of something by Marx that is not in the Archive. Explore and enjoy! You can find there *The Grundrisse*, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and *The German Ideology* and much more.

Some useful journals: *Monthly Review* (<http://www.monthlyreview.org/>) and *International Socialism* (<http://www.isj.org.uk/>): check them out regularly. Of the two, International Socialism is the more seriously intellectual. *New Left Review* also has some excellent articles (though not always). Also keep an eye on *Historical Materialism*. Others worth checking out: *International Socialist Review* (<http://www.isreview.org/>) and *Socialist Review* (<http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/>) and among the academic journals *Science and Society* and *Past and Present*.

Other websites of interest:

MarxSite: <http://marxsite.com/murrayradical%20left.htm> (lots of great stuff here!).

David Harvey: <http://davidharvey.org/>

Schedule

Note:

CVI = *Capital Vol 1*

DATE	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1 9/23	Module 1; Introduction * The Communist Manifesto: http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/classics/manifesto.html (‘Bourgeois and Proletarians’ only)	
Week 2 9/28		Essay 1 out
9/30	Module 2 and Module 3: The Law of Value and Surplus Value	

	* CVI: Chapters 6-9, 12	
Week 3 10/5		Essay 1 in. Essay 2 out.
10/7	Module 4, 5: The Development of The Productive Forces and Accumulation * CVI: Chapter 13 * CVI: Chapter 23; Chapter 24, Parts 1 and 3 only; Chapter 25, Parts 1 and 3 only. Pp.1060-1065.	
Week 4 10/12		Initial project statement: provide me with a page outlining what you have in mind for your paper.
10/14	Module 6: Primitive Accumulation * CVI: Part 7 * Charles Post (1982) "The American Road to Capitalism." <i>New Left Review</i> No.133, 30-51. * Luli Callinicos (1981) <i>Gold and Workers 1886-1924</i> . Johannesburg: Ravan Press. Chapters 5 and 6	
Week 5 10/19		Essay 2 due 8 a.m. Revised project statement due, including a rough outline of sections and references
10/21	Module 7: The Development of Capitalism * CVI: Pp. 1018-1038.	
Week 6 10/26		Essay 3 out.
10/28	Module 8: Ideology * CVI: Chapter 19, Pp.981-982, 995-999, 1005 (bottom half)	
Week 7 11/2		Essay 3 in.
11/4	Modules 9 and 10: Concepts of Capital * R. Brenner, "The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism" <i>New Left Review</i> No.104	Essay 4 out.

	(1977), 25-92. * Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment". Chapter 1 in James D. Cockroft et al <i>Dependence and Underdevelopment</i> . Anchor Books: Garden City 1972.	
Week 8 11/9	Module 10: Concepts of Class * Peter Meiksins (1986) "Beyond the Boundary Question." <i>New Left Review</i> No.157, 101- 120. * Frank Parkin (1979 <i>Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique</i> . London: Tavistock Publications. (Part 1 only).	
11/11	(NO CLASS: VETERANS DAY)	
Week 9 11/16		Essay 5 out.
11/18		Essay 4 in.
Week 10 11/23	Module 11: The State * Fred Block (1987) "The Ruling Class Does Not Rule: Notes on the Marxist Theory of the State." Chapter 3 in Block, <i>Revising State Theory</i> . Philadelphia: Temple University Press. * Peter Burnham, "Marx, IPE and Globalisation', <i>Capital And Class</i> , No. 75 * Alex Callinicos 'Marxism and the International', <i>British Journal of Politics and International Relations</i> , 6 (2004), pp. 426-33.	
11/25		Essay 5 in.
Week 11 11/30	Module 12: Marx's Method	
12/2		Final papers due