

Integrative Studies 231B, Moral Issues, The Arts, and Humanities

Topic: The Culture of Capitalism

Summer Semester 2008,
Michigan State University

Dr. Christian Lotz



Tentative Schedule (last **UPDATE**: November 03, 2009)

Number	Date	Topic	First Part of Class: Reading	Second Part of Class: Media	Other	General Assignments
1	May 13	Introduction				
CLASSICAL POSITION 1: MARX WITH BERTOLT BRECHT AND CHARLIE CHAPLIN						
2	May 15	Alienation	Marx, The Marx Reader, pp.171-174; 85-95 (Theses on Feuerbach; Alienated Labor)	[Film] Chaplin, Modern Times, First part		Assignment 1
3	May 20	Private Property	Marx, The Marx Reader, pp.95-104 (Private Property and Communism)			Reading Quiz 1
4	May 22	Social relationships under capitalism	Marx, The Marx Reader, pp.124-134 (On James Mill)	[Film] The Edukators		Assignment 2
5	May 27	History and Ideology	Marx, The Marx Reader, pp.175-198 (The German Ideology: Preface-Communist Revolution)			Reading Quiz 2
6	May 29	History and Ideology	Marx, The Marx Reader, pp.175-198 (The German Ideology: Preface-Communist Revolution)	[text] Brecht, The Good Person of Setzuan		Assignment 3
7	June 3	History and Ideology	Brecht, The Good Person of Setzuan		Guest lecture: Mary Therese Oneill [Theatre Dept.]	Reading Quiz 3
CLASSICAL POSITION 2: WEBER WITH ARTHUR MILLER						
8	June 5	Introduction to Weber	Weber, The Protestant Ethic, pp.1-51			Assignment 4
9	June 10	Protestant Ethics	Weber, The Protestant Ethic, pp.51-103	[Film] Miller, Death of a		Reading Quiz 4

10	June 12	Asceticism	Weber, The Protestant Ethic, pp.51-103	Salesman, part one [Film] Miller, Death of a Salesman, part one	Assignment 5	
11	June 17	Weber and Miller	Weber, The Protestant Ethic, pp.103-126; Miller, Death of a Salesman	[Play] Miller, Death of a Salesman, part one	Reading Quiz 5	
12	June 19	Weber and Miller	Weber, The Protestant Ethic, pp.103-126; Miller, Death of a Salesman	[Play] Miller, Death of a Salesman, part one		
EXAMS						
13	June 24	In-class exam	In-class exam	In-class exam	In-class exam	In-class exam
14	June 26	no class	no class	no class		

Class Meetings:

Days: TTH
Time: 12:30pm-4:30pm
Place: 304 Ernst Bessey

Office

Phone: 517.353.9721 (if you are unable to reach me, please leave a message at 517.355.4490 [dept.])
Place: 507 S. Kedzie Hall
Hours: after class

Exceptions:

Other Contact:

E-mail: lotz@msu.edu
Home Phone: 734.975.0803

Webpage

URL: <http://www.msu.edu/~lotz/classes>
(Please check the webpage *regularly* for the current schedule)

Box

You will find my box in the front office of the philosophy department (and in front of my office)

Course Description

In this class, we will critically explore our social environment by investigating the nature of capitalistic culture. As we will not focus specifically on economic questions, we will instead ask how capitalism determines our attitudes, our way of life, and our beliefs. We will read texts from classical philosophy (Marx) and sociology (Weber), as well as contemporary authors (Klein). In addition, we will study the course topic by discussing plays by Bertolt Brecht, and Arthur Miller. Finally, we will discuss films, such as Chaplin's *Modern Times* and *The Edukators*, and selected documentaries, such as *The Corporation*. Due to the unusual setup of this class, students are required to prepare class sessions in a disciplined manner, i.e., *read and study intensively*. Every class will contain both a theoretical part and an "applied part" (play, movie, documentary).

IAH Course Goals

Integrative Studies at MSU seeks to assist students to become more familiar with ways of knowing in the arts and humanities and to be more knowledgeable and capable in a range of intellectual and expressive abilities. IAH courses encourage students to engage critically with their own society, history, and culture(s); they also encourage students to learn more about the history and culture of other societies. They focus on key ideas and issues in human experience; encourage appreciation of the roles of knowledge and values in shaping and understanding human behavior; emphasize the responsibilities and opportunities of

democratic citizenship; highlight the value of the creative arts of literature, theater, music, and arts; and alert us to important issues that occur among peoples in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent world.

Note

Real learning is not properly measured by multiple-choice tests; especially since in the humanities there is no specific content of a sort that may be covered well in standardized examinations, which every student in the humanities should be expected to master. Instead, you will - hopefully - come to recognize that this class is about a general intellectual reflection on what we are and why we are here. The class deals with your dignity as human beings and with your intellect and reason, which is best expressed in a form of learning that is based on understanding and insight, and not mere learning by heart. It is hoped that the class will stimulate the view that intellectual activity (and therefore human reality) has to do with the *passion* of thinking, and the passion of *understanding* of our world. Intense confrontation with texts is the center of this class.

Specific Course Goals

This lecture class should students introduce to

- analysis of society and our social environment
- two classical approaches to the analysis of modern capitalism: Marx and Weber
- a critical position regarding modernity, labor, poverty, and consumption
- the analysis of capitalistic culture in theater (Brecht, Miller)
- the idea that we cannot simply pose capitalism as an economic problem; rather, we first have to understand how capitalism is a way of life and how it shapes our attitudes towards life

Required Texts (Bookstore)

- Marx, Karl, The Karl-Marx Reader (ed. by McLellan)
- Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
- Brecht, The Good Person of Sezuam
- Miller, Death of a Salesman (critical edition)

Course Organization

The course will be organized such that, ideally, each class period will include [i] "interactive" lecture, [ii] discussion time or [iii] response time. Students will be asked to intensively prepare a certain text or part of a text for the next class period. During the first part of each class we will discuss theoretical texts; during the second part of each class we will either deal with films or plays.

Course Requirements

- DAILY reading and studying
- 5 response sheets
- 1 in-class exam
- 5 Tuesday reading quizzes
- 5 Thursday assignments

Note

The class and my lectures are solely based on the texts selected for class and require a thorough study and preparation of the material. I will primarily lecture on the readings, which will help you to more fully understand the texts. *Therefore* it is not sufficient for students to come to class without having prepared the texts. And indeed, in your papers and in the exam you have to demonstrate whether you have appropriately prepared the readings selected for each lecture.

Make-Up Assignments

Students who need to miss classes for *excusable* (medical) reasons must inform me ahead of time, and will be permitted to make up the exam and movie assignment. I will only accept written documentation, such as *official* doctor notes (no faxes, no emails) or letters from other professors.

Class Attendance

I hope and strongly encourage that students attend all lectures. However, I will not require attendance, as I think that college students should manage their own class attendance decisions. Nevertheless, please be aware that you should not make *me* responsible for a failure that results out of *your* decision. You should be aware that chances to master this class are minimal, if you

do not show up for class or if you do not prepare the readings (=studying).

Response Sheets

Every student is asked to submit "response sheets" after my lectures. Every student can submit up to 5 response sheets over the course of the semester.

[Click here to download the response sheet](#) (Word document)

Note: I will only accept responses that are given on this form.

Study Questions

Here are two sets of study questions for the preparation of Marx, Brecht, Weber, and Miller

- Set I : [Marx - Brecht](#) (posted: May 13)
- Set II: [Weber - Miller](#) (posted: June 04)

Movies

We will be discussing several movies in class. Due to the unusual setup of this class we will try to combine both theory and art work in each class. Every film will be accompanied by an assignment.

Exams

There will be one brief in-class essay exam. You will be offered a set of essay-questions, one of which you will answer in a brief essay about the material that we discussed in class. Note that mere memorization of what I lectured about will not be a satisfactory preparation of the exam; rather, you should demonstrate that you thought about and *understand* the material. You will not be able to answer the exam question(s) if you did not study the texts. You are not permitted to use your books in class.

Tuesday/Thursday Assignments

There will be five brief Tuesday-Reading Quizzes and five Thursday Assignments (will be passed out in class and either will be take-home assignments or will be in-class assignments). One of these assignments will be dropped and will not count towards your final grade.

Participation

You will receive points for participation. Participation means coming to class prepared and ready to contribute to discussion of the material assigned for this class.

Course Evaluation

You will be evaluated on the basis of:

Lecture:	
5 response sheets (to be submitted during the course of the semester)	10 points
1 exam	20 points
5 Tuesday reading quizzes (one will be dropped)	20 points (4x5)
5 Thursday assignments (one will be dropped)	40 points (4x10)
Participation	10 points

	100 points

Grading:

4.0	100 - 93
3.5	92 - 87
3	86 - 82
2.5	81 - 77
2	76 - 72
1.5	71 - 65

1.0 64 – 60
0.0 < 60

GENERIC SYLLABUS (might not be applicable to each class)

Class Attendance

As mentioned above, I do not employ in my classes a class attendance policy. Having said this, you should be aware that class attendance is very important. When engaging in a philosophical and humanistic dialogue it is necessary to be an active and present participant in the ongoing discussion. If you miss class please do not email me asking if you missed anything important. Every class is important. You should get a study buddy for the class; a student in class who will inform you of what you missed. If you miss a class you can come to my office hours or make an appointment to discuss the material, providing you have read the material and you simply want to see if your understanding of the material is on target. Time in office hours will not be used to repeat the class lectures.

Grading Criteria

[Click here to see my grading criteria for oral presentations](#) (not required in this class)

[Click here to see my grading criteria for papers](#) (tentative)

[Click here to see an EXAMPLE of my grading criteria for essay exams](#) (taken from an older class)

Helpful information about oral presentations, paper writing and plagiarism

[Click here to find help on your presentations and your writing](#)

Online Research Sources

Unfortunately, some people think that the internet as such is a reliable source of information. If you decide to use online sources for additional information or your paper then do not just use one of the common internet search engines, such as Google; rather, use **reliable academic** sources, such as *Britannica Online*, or the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). The [Internet Eyclopedia of Philosophy](#) isn't very good, but still acceptable. Check out MSU's [library resources](#)! And, as with other sources, you must cite any online sources to which you refer in your essay.

Writing Center Information

MSU's writing center offers excellent help on all matters regarding writing and learning. Check the website at <http://writing.msu.edu> for an overview and hours. For more information, please call 517.432.3610 or send an e-mail to writing@msu.edu.

Plagiarism

In any essay or exam answer submitted for assessment, all passages taken from other people's work must be placed within quotation marks, with specific reference to author, title and page. *no excuse* can be accepted for any failure to do so, nor will inclusion of the source in a bibliography be considered inadequate acknowledgement. If the marker decides that plagiarism has occurred, the student may be judged to have failed the class.

Academic Honesty

Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu) Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in (insert course number here). Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including but not limited to a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html>)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY)

Drops and Adds

The last day to add this course is the end of the first week of classes. The last day to drop this course with a 100 percent refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). The last day to drop this course with no refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). You should immediately make a copy of your amended schedule to verify you have added or dropped this course.

Note on Attendance

Students who fail to attend the first four class sessions or class by the fifth day of the semester, whichever occurs first, may be dropped from the course.

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