



Integrative Studies 231b,

Critical Analysis of Capitalism

Summer 2012, Michigan State University

Prof. Christian Lotz

Tentative Schedule (last **UPDATE**: June 18, 2012)

NUMBER	DATE	TOPIC	READING	MEDIA	SUMMARY	ASSIGNMENTS
Introduction: Capitalism and Global Problems						
1	May 15	Introduction, Consumer Capitalism+Laborer in Capitalism	Robbins, Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism, chapter 1+2	PBS documentary, Merchants of Cool ; documentary, The Commercialization of Childhood ; The Story of Stuff		
2	May 17	Merchant, Militarism, Nation State	Robbins, Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism, chapter 3+4	Zizek on Capitalism ; BBC-Documentary, Why we fight		RQ, follow G8 summit news coverage in Chicago/Camp David, M31 in Europe
3	May 22	Food, Hunger	Robbins, Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism, chapter 6+7	Documentary, The Price of Sugar		RQ
Marx's Analysis of Capitalism						
4	May 24	Alienation, Privatization	Marx, The Marx Reader, 85-104	Documentary, Manufactured Landscapes		RQ
5	May 29	Ideology, History, State+Class	Marx, The Marx Reader, 85-104; Marx, The Marx Reader, 175-208	PBS documentary, China Blue ; Documentary, Earthlings		RQ
6	May 31	Ideology, History, State+Class	Marx, The Marx Reader, 175-208	Documentary, The Big Sellout		RQ
7	June 5	Ideology, History, State+Class	Marx, The Marx Reader, 175-208			RQ
8	June 7	Money, labor, credit	Marx, The Marx Reader, 124-134	Graeber, Interview about Debt ; Jason Read on Occupy Wallstreet and Debt		RQ
9	June 12	Labor, Commodity, Fetishism	Marx, The Marx Reader, 452-481	Documentary, Wagenfeld, Let's Make Money		RQ
				David Harvey, Emancipation from		paper assignment

10	June 14	Capital, Surplus Value	Marx, The Marx Reader, 481-507	<u>What and from Whom? Harvey on accumulation by de-possession</u>	passed out in class
Weber: The Ethics of Capitalism					
11	June 19	Protestantism, Franklin, Luther, and Traditionalism	Weber, Protestant Ethics and Capitalism, pp.1-56		RQ
12	June 21	Capitalism, Calvinism, and the Protestant Ethics	Weber, Protestant Ethics and Capitalism, pp.57-80	Documentary, The End of Poverty	RQ
Miller: The Death of a Salesman					
13	Jun 26	Capitalism and the American Dream; applying Marx and Weber to Miller	Miller, Death of a Salesman,	Film, Death of a Salesman	paper assignment due
14	Jun28	Exam	Exam	Exam	Exam

Class Meetings:

Days: T+TH
 Time: 11:30 AM - 3:20 PM
 Place: Engineering 1134

Office:

Phone: 517.355.4490 [dept.]
 Place: 501 S. Kedzie Hall (part of room 503, front office)
 Hours: before and after class

Other Contact:

E-mail: lotz@msu.edu
 Home Phone: please ask
 Webpage: <http://christianlotz.wordpress.com>

Box

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

Teaching Assistant: no teaching assistants

Course Description

In this class, we will critically explore our social environment by critically investigating the nature of capitalism, capitalistic culture, and its global consequences. As we will not exclusively focus specifically on economic questions, we will instead ask how capitalism determines our attitudes, our way of life, and our beliefs. We will ask ourselves how Capitalism determines our social relationships and how it shapes our character. We will read texts from classical philosophy (Marx) and sociology (Weber), as well as discuss several critical documentary films. In addition, we will study the course topic by discussing Arthur Miller's play Death of a Salesman and Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice.

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 the world we live in. 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
- the idea that capitalism is a social form (and not simply an economic system)
- 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 social organization, and how it shapes our attitudes towards life
- how to discuss classical positions in the contemporary economical situation
- reading films and plays through theoretical lenses

Required Texts (Bookstore)

- Marx, Karl, The Karl-Marx Reader (ed. by McLellan)
- Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
- Miller, Death of a Salesman (Norton Critical Edition)
- Robbins, Global problems and the Culture of Capitalism
- Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice (Norton 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. There will be assignments in connection with the films.

Course Requirements

- Daily reading and studying (around 5-10 pages)
- 5 response sheets
- 1 final exam
- 1 paper
- active participation
- reading quizzes, brief in class-assignments (brief papers+group 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

I will only accept official doctor notes (no faxes, no emails) or letters from other professors if you want to make up reading quizzes, unannounced class assignments, or the exam.

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" at the end of class. Every student can submit up to 5 response sheets over the course of the semester. You determine the date, but you can't turn in more than one response sheet for one session.

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

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

Response Time

Selected response sheets will be addressed at the beginning of each class. This procedure will help you and me to clarify problems, reflect on topics, and to find answers to questions that came up during the lecture.

Take-home Assignments (Paper)

In addition to short in-class writing assignments there will be 1 writing assignment (3 pages, 900 words, 12pt Times New Roman, 1 inch margin). The paper assignment should lead you to a reflection and consideration of what we have discovered on the theoretical level about the material discussed in class. I expect well constructed essays that begin with an introduction, present a main claim and are explanatory. Mere summaries or simple "reflection" and "I feel 'X'" papers will not be satisfactory. I will pass out in class on selected dates (see schedule) questions, the written answer to which you will turn in the class after the assignment was passed out (email submissions are not acceptable). Late turn ins will result in loosing 20%-40% of your grade. It is your responsibility to get a copy of the assignment from a study buddy in class if you missed class. I will not send you the assignment per email if you missed class. A grading rubric will be provided with the assignment.

Exams

There will be one final in-class essay exam. You will be offered a set of essay-questions 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.

Reading Quizzes

I will pass out a reading quizz almost in every class. Two reading quizzes will be dropped from your grade.

Unannounced Assignments

There will be - from time to time - unannounced group assignments (related to the media discussed in class). Students who do not attend class (and have no medical documentation) lose all points. Group assignments cannot be made up.

Participation

You will receive points for participation.

Course Evaluation

You will be evaluated on the basis of:

5 response sheets	15 points
1 paper	20 points
10 reading quizzes	20 points
1 final exam	20 points
participation	10 points
unannounced assignments	15 points

	100 points

Grading:

4.0 (=A)	100 - 93
3.5	92 - 87

3 (=B)	86 - 82
2.5	81 - 77
2 (=C)	76 - 72
1.5	71 - 65
1.0 (=D)	64 - 60
0.0	< 60

GENERIC SYLLABUS (might not be applicable to each class)

Laptop/Cell Phone Policy

You are not permitted to use laptops and cell phones in class. Please do not text under the table. Cell phones should be removed from tables. Failure to follow this policy will lead to unannounced assignments in class or loss of points (at the digression of the instructor).

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

Check out [this page for grading criteria, example of assignments, etc.](#)

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.

Course Evaluation:

Michigan State University takes seriously the opinion of students in the evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction, and has implemented the SIRS (Student Instructional Rating System) process to gather student feedback. This course utilizes the "online SIRS" system, and you will receive an e-mail sometime during the last two weeks of class asking you to fill out the SIRS webform at your convenience. This course is enrolled in the "SIRS Pilot" project and, as a reminder to be sure to fill out the SIRS evaluation form, the final grade for this course will not be accessible on STUINFO during the week following the submission of grades for this course unless the SIRS online form has been filled out. You have the option on the online SIRS form to decline to participate in the evaluation of the course – we hope, however, that you will be willing to give us your frank and constructive feedback so that we may instruct students even better in the future.

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.

Integrity of Scholarship and Grades (Plagiarism)

The following statement of University policy addresses principles and procedures to be used in instances of academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, and falsification of academic or admission records, herein after referred to as academic misconduct. [See General Student Regulation 1.00, Protection of Scholarship and Grades.]: [download document](#) (pdf)

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. 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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