



**Philosophy 491,
Community, the Commons, and
Political Resistance**

**Spring Semester 2013, Michigan
State University**

Prof. Christian Lotz

Tentative Schedule (last UPDATE: April 03, 2013)

NUMBER	DATE	TOPIC	READING	MULTIMEDIA	THESIS STATEMENT	ASSIGNMENTS
1	Jan 8	Introduction	no reading	Zizek, Interview in Kosovo		
INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF QUESTIONS RAISED IN THIS SEMINAR						
2	Jan 10	Introductory Reflections	Berardi, The Future After the End of the Economy (pdf per email); Marazzi, Value in the Information Economy (pdf per email); Negri, On the Common (pdf per email)			
3	Jan 15	Introductory Reflections	Fischbach, Marx and Communism (pdf per email); Curcio, Introduction: The Common and the Forms of the Commune (pdf per email); Esposito, The Law of Community (pdf per email)			
INTRODUCTION: RETHINKING ECONOMICS						
4	Jan 17	Markets and Homo Economicus	Daly, For The Common Good, 44-62; 85-97	On Daly's For the Common Good		
5	Jan 22	Community	Daly, For The Common Good, 121-159	Daly on Globalization		
6	Jan 24	Land and Energy	Daly, For The Common Good, 159-209	Daly on homo economicus		Reaction paper assignment
NEGRI/HARDT: THE COMMON AND COMMONWEALTH						
7	Jan 29	Intro to Negri: Immaterial Labor	class cancelled because of sickness	Documentary on Negri, A revolt that never ends (recommended, watch it!)		
7a	Jan 31	Intro to Negri: Immaterial Labor	class cancelled because of sickness			Paper assignment due; Assignment per email
8	Feb 5	Intro to Negri: The Idea of the Common	Negri, Immaterial Labor (pdf per email); Negri/Balibar, Negri and Balibar in Conversation: On the Common (pdf per email)			Email assignment due

9	Feb 7	The Multitude of the Poor	Hardt/Negri, Commonwealth, part I	Hardt, The Common in Communism	
10	Feb 12	The Multitude of the Poor	Hardt/Negri, Commonwealth, part I		
11	Feb 14	Capital	Hardt/Negri, Commonwealth, part III		Haley
12	Feb 19	Beyond Capital?	Hardt/Negri, Commonwealth, part V; Harvey/Negri, Commonwealth: An Exchange (pdf per email)		Ryan

RETHINKING THE IDEA OF COMMUNISM?

13	Feb 21	no class	no class	Badiou, State and Politics	
14	Feb 26	Everyday Communism	Graeber, Debt (pdf per email)	Graeber, Interview about Debt ;	Alexa
15	Feb 28	A Kantian Idea of Communism?	Badiou, The Idea of Communism; Callinicos, Badiou and the Idea of Communism (pdf per email)	Balibar, Communism as Commitment	Bhavik
16	Mar 5	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break	prepare readings
17	Mar 7	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break	prepare readings
18	Mar 12	A Kantian Idea of Communism?	Zizek, The Communist Hypothesis (chapter 2 of <i>First as Tragedy</i>)	Badiou and Zizek, On Philosophy and Communism (forward to 8:30)	Josh
19	Mar 14	Rethinking Communism I	Badiou and Zizek	Zizek, A new Beginning? Zizek, The Idea of Communism	
20	Mar 19	Rethinking Communism II	Badiou, The Idea of Communism; Zizek, How to Begin from the Beginning;	Zizek, What does it mean to be a revolutionary today?	Reaction paper assignment
21	Mar 21	Rethinking Communism III	Negri, Communism: Some Thoughts on the Concept and Practice; Hardt, The Common in Communism		
22	Mar 26	Rethinking Communism IV	Bosteels, The Leftist Hypothesis; Ranciere, Communists without Communism	Dean, On the Communist Horizon , Dean, Lecture On the Communist Horizon ; and here at the Brecht Forum ; here is another one on Communist Desire	Paper assignment due

THE ORIGIN OF COMMUNITY AND THE SOCIAL

23	Mar 28	Thinking philosophically about community	Esposito, <i>Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community</i> , Introduction		
24	Apr 2	Hobbes	Esposito, <i>Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community</i> , chapter 1: Fear		Adam
25	Apr 4	Hobbes	Esposito, <i>Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community</i> , chapter 1: Fear		
26	Apr 9	Rousseau	Esposito, <i>Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community</i> , chapter 2: Guilt		Ahmed

EXAMPLES OF POLITICAL RESISTANCE

27	Apr 11	The Weather Underground	Port Huron Statement (SDS manifesto); New York Times, The Port Huron Statement at 50 ; Democracy Now, A Look Back at the Weather Underground Movement ; check the Wikipedia entry on the WU	Film, <i>The Weather Underground</i>	
28	Apr 16	Black Panther Movement,	Interview with Angela Davis (Yancy); Interview with Angela Davis (Mendieta); Somerville, <i>The</i>	Film, <i>Angela Davis: Portrait</i>	Group project assignment will

SDS Constitutional Rights of of a Revolutionary be passed out
Communist Teachers (send out per email as pdfs)

GROUP PHASE

29	Apr 18	no class	no class	no class	
30	Apr 23	Group Project (meeting without instructor)	Group Project (meeting without instructor)		
31	Apr 25	Group Project (meeting without instructor)	Group Project (meeting without instructor)		
	May 3 (day of final exam)				Final essay and group project write-up due by email

Class Meetings:

Days: TTH
Time: 12:40 PM - 2:00 PM
Place: 150 Natural Sciences

Office:

Phone: 517.355.4490 [dept.]
Place: 518 S. Kedzie Hall
Hours: T 11am-12pm and TH 4:30pm-5:30pm - no office hours after April 16

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

From Plato onwards, Communism is the only political idea worthy of a philosopher (Alain Badiou)

We will discuss three larger issues: [1] the concept of community in contemporary European Political Philosophy (by reading the Italian philosopher R. Esposito), [2] the idea of the commons or common good, and its relation to society in general (articles), [3] the relation of the commons to contemporary cognitive capitalism and network society (by reading works by Negri/Hardt and others), and [4] the idea of communism, as it is currently re-imagined by a group of contemporary philosophers, such as Zizek and Badiou. In addition, we will watch a long documentary film by P. Watkins on the experience of community and radical democracy in the Paris Commune. .

Note

This is a 491 course in philosophy and, as such, contains difficult material and requires mature students. If you are not willing to study dense written material, listen to unusual lectures, and discuss ideas in an organized fashion, then you should not take this class. This class though can be taken by students without prior knowledge in philosophy.

Course Goals

This lecture class should students introduce to

- the idea of communism as it is discussed in contemporary philosophy
- the political and social aspects of the Paris commune as a model for radical democracy
- the problem of private property and the idea of the commons
- the question of the common good and contemporary economic ideology
- the question of how to think about community in relation to the modern tradition of political thinking
- the internal contradictions of Capitalism, immaterial labor, and social wealth

Note

Students should be aware of the fact that this course is based on difficult (and at times awkward) texts. Accordingly, this class requires self-responsible learners and an intense confrontation with the primary text. Accordingly, if you are not excited about the prospect of a daily confrontation with abstract and historical reflections, then you should not take this class. This class is not based on a set of fixed knowledge and, as such, is not based on a behavioral idea of education; rather, we will try to learn together and critically examine the material. The instructor of this class does not have anything to teach, but much to learn.

Required Texts (Bookstore)

- Zizek (Ed.), *The Idea of Communism*, Verso
- Hardt/Negri, *Commonwealth*, Harvard
- Zizek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, Verso
- Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*

Course Requirements

- Daily reading and studying (around 5-10 pages up to 60 per week)
- 2 shorter reaction papers
- 1 thesis statement (short assignment, systematic summary of the readings)
- 1 final paper
- participation

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 the exams you have to demonstrate whether you have appropriately prepared the readings selected for each lecture.

Make-Up Assignments

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

Attendance

To get a good grade in this class, regular attendance is required. I will not call roll. Hence, it is up to you to come to class or not. However, if you do not come to class on a regular basis and participate in the class discussion, it is impossible for you to achieve a good grade in this class; so coming to class is your responsibility and your call. If you choose to attend class, please come on time, turn off cell phones and other electronic devices that interfere with your (and others') concentration, have the reading prepared and be ready to participate. If you are not prepared, do not bother showing up. It is a sign of disrespect to your peers and the instructor to attend class unprepared. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain class notes from a fellow student and to catch up on reading. 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).

Thesis Statement (brief overview of assigned reading)

Each student has to prepare once a thesis paper for class. The thesis paper should contain [a] a list of main points and claims, [b] concepts that are unclear, [c] intelligent questions about the readings. Students who prepare the thesis paper need to send their responses by 8am per email on the due date to me, bring copies for everyone to class and be prepared to briefly present their paper. The thesis paper is limited to two pages and you must use the prepared document (download below). Note: you are not allowed to cite common internet resources, such as Wikipedia. Instead, work with the following online resources (or other resources in the library): [Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy](#) - [Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) - [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) - [Encyclopedia of Continental Philosophy \(e-book\)](#) - [The Oxford Companion to Philosophy](#)

[Click here to download thesis statement form](#)

Reaction Paper

Each student has to write two 2-page (no more than 600 words) reaction papers in reaction to one of the readings or YouTube material. The reaction paper should contain a systematic thesis about a selected aspect of the material. Assignments will be passed out in class.

Reading Quizzes

There will be - from time to time - *unannounced* reading quizzes and group assignments. Students who do not attend class (and have no medical documentation) will lose *all* points. Reading quizzes and group assignments cannot be made up. I will waive this requirement if I have the impression that students come prepared to class.

Papers

In order to intensify and improve your understanding of the material, you will turn in one final research and academic style paper, in which you analyze a specific topic (6 pages, double spaced, no more than 1800 words). Assignments will be passed out in class.

Class Response Sheets

Every student is asked to submit up to 5 class response sheets during the semester.

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

(Word document, I will only accept answers that are given on this form) The response sheets have to be submitted at the end of a class session. I do not accept late turn ins.

Course Evaluation

You will be evaluated on the basis of:

1 final paper	20 points
2 reaction papers	20 points
unannounced reading quizzes and group assignments	15 points
1 thesis statement	10 points
participation	10 points
response sheets	15 points
Group project	10 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.

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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