dateDepartment of Political Science, University of Copenhagen

Marx for the 21st Century

Spring semester 2024 Mondays 13-15, room 2.1.18

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Table of contents

Table of contents	1
1. Introduction	
2. General information	2
3. Learning objectives	2
4. Evaluation	3
4.1 Midterm paper	3
4.2 Term paper	
5. Peer groups	4
6. Work-in-progress seminar	4
7. Course structure	4
7.1 Detailed structure	5
8. Course literature	8
8.1. Required reading	8
8.2 Suggested reading	
8. Acknowledgements	13

1. Introduction

Welcome to **Marx for the 21st Century**! In this course, we will take a deep dive into Karl Marx's analyses of capitalism and their contemporary relevance. Since the outbreak of the 2008 financial crisis, the ideas of Karl Marx have felt present and topical like almost none other from the history of political thought. In this course, we will look at how Marx's thought can be applied to analyse different problems and topics of the twenty-first century, from the crisis of care to global supply chains and climate change.

2. General information

The course will be conducted as seminars, which will convene once a week (Mondays 13-15) for two hours in room 2.1.18. For the first part of the course on Marx's analysis of capitalism, the seminars will mainly take the form of lectures. Between the lectures, you will be expected to complete smaller assignments related to the readings; these are <u>not</u> required to pass the course, but completing them will enhance your learning outcome, and I strongly encourage you to do so.

For the second part of the course on Marx's relevance to problems of contemporary social theory the seminars will be conducted mainly as in-class discussions and workshops where we will discuss relevant cases and try to relate them to the readings and to Marx's analysis of capitalism. You will be expected to participate actively in these discussions and should prepare accordingly. (Working questions and exercises will be provided to further this.)

Office hours

- Tuesdays 13-14
- Room 16.1.23 (Department of Sociology)

Feel free to drop by to discuss the texts, assignments, or other topics relevant for the course.

3. Learning objectives

At its most fundamental, this course is about practising how to use texts from the history of political thought as prisms to discuss and analyse contemporary problems. The point here is not just to be 'Marxists', but to apply Marx's specific analyses and concepts (mainly from *Capital* but also in general) as an analytical prism. Your main take-away should be an increased ability to do this.

Further, through active participation in this course you should get a thorough knowledge of Karl Marx's work and thought, especially his analyses of capitalism, and the relevance of these analyses to problems of contemporary social theory.

In the final assessment (more on which below), you will be graded based on your ability to:

- Read and comprehend complex primary texts of political theory,
- Identify key concepts and arguments,
- Apply said concepts and arguments to contemporary social and political issues,
- Interpret and discuss theory-immanent problems.

At the more general level, the successful student will exhibit great skills within textual analysis, critical social theory, as well as political theory and intellectual history.

4. Evaluation

You will have to pass **two written assignments**, each of which are marked as **pass/fail**, with a chance to resubmit a failed assignment once. At the end of the course, you will receive your final grade based on those two assignments alone, i.e., <u>not</u> class participation, smaller assignments between classes, etc.

The final grade is based on the 7-point scale.

You are allowed to complete the assignments in groups of up to three people, and if you chose to do so can write longer papers.

Max length of assignments	BA	MA
1 student	14,400 characters (6 pages)	19,200 characters (8 pages)
2 students	19,200 characters (8 pages)	24,000 characters (10 pages)
3 students	24,000 characters (10 pages)	28,800 characters (12 pages)

For further details, please see the <u>curriculum for the political science BA</u>, the <u>curriculum for the political science MA</u> and the <u>general curriculum for the Faculty of Social Sciences</u>. (English versions can be found <u>here</u>.)

If you are not in the political science study programme, you should check with your local administrator if there are any special conditions relevant to you.

4.1 Midterm paper

Due: 10 April 23:59 (re-submission: 1 May)

With reference to the course literature, answer one of the following questions:

- (1) Discuss Marx's critique of bourgeois political economy in the section on commodity fetishism; compare with his own appropriation of mainstream political economy in the other sections of *Capital*.
- (2) Analyse and contrast the relationship between freedom and domination in the spheres of exchange and production respectively.
- (3) Explain the role played by history in Marx's account of capitalism.

4.2 Term paper

Due: 2 June 23:59 (re-submission: 24 June)

(1) Based on the topics of contemporary social theory that we have discussed during the course, chose a topic or problem to explore, to be approved no later than **Friday 10 May.**

(2) On the basis of the course syllabus and incorporating supplementary material as needed, set out the analyses, concepts, and arguments relevant to the topic or problem at hand and assess their usefulness.

5. Peer groups

For the midterm paper, you are expected to provide peer-feedback to each other in groups of three. These groups will be organised via Absalon.

You are expected to carefully read the papers of your two peers and give them feedback, and to take it seriously. When you are providing feedback, you should put as much effort into it as you would any other important study task. When receiving feedback, you should remember to appreciate that your peers are taking the time to read and comment on your text. Respect them by being timely and on point.

A handout with instructions for giving feedback will be provided on Absalon.

We will only have an organised peer-feedback session for the midterm paper, but I encourage you to also make use of the feedback group when writing your final paper.

The peer-feedback session will be held <u>before</u> the submission deadline for the midterm paper, so it is really a great opportunity to improve your paper before handing it in!

6. Work-in-progress seminar

In week 22, i.e., the week after our last seminar, we will have a <u>voluntary</u> work-in-progress seminar for your final papers. The preliminary time and date for this is **Monday 27 May, 13.00-16.00**.

At the seminar, you will get a chance to present your work-in-progress for your final paper and get feedback from your peers and from me. It is entirely voluntary, but **registration is required** (via Absalon).

Confirmation of time/date and more info to follow!

7. Course structure

In the first part of the course, we will study primary texts by Marx, and you will be given a thorough introduction to Marx's analysis of capitalism. We will begin by briefly discussing Marx's early engagement with economics in the 1840s, and then quickly move on to focus on his most famous work: *Capital*. Here, we will focus on the more general aspects and most central concepts from Marx's analysis of capitalist commodity production, but we will also see how he grounds his analysis of capitalism in a materialist conception of history.

In the second part, we will dive into a series of problems of contemporary social theory, as we continue to investigate themes in Marx's analysis and relate them to the nature of capitalism in the twenty-first century. This second part will be divided into six themes:

- 1. Logistics
- 2. Geography of global value chains
- 3. Information technology and digital economy
- 4. Climate and ecology
- 5. Social reproduction
- 6. Financialization and fictitious capital

Every week there will be one case, usually in the form of 1-2 news articles related to the wider theme, as well as one or more theoretical texts on the topic. The case study and theoretical work will then form the basis for classroom discussions about how this might relate to Marx's analyses. For this, we will mainly refer to our previous readings from *Capital*, but they might occasionally be supplemented with further readings from Marx such as excerpts from *Capital* vols. 2 and 3, *Grundrisse*, etc.

7.1 Detailed structure

NB: Yellow = Not required for BA students

Lesson	Reading(s)	NB!	
INTRODUCTION	INTRODUCTION		
1.Introduction (week 6)	- Heinrich, "Marx: Biography as Politics" - Elbe, "Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms" [42 pages]	Assignment: Reflect on your expectations for the course; circa 150 words; due Sunday 4 Feb 20:00. See Absalon for details.	
MARX'S ANALYSIS OF	F CAPITALISM		
2. Early engagements with economics (week 7)	- Marx, "On the Jewish Question" (1843) - Marx, "Excerpts from James Mill" (1844) - Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (1847), ch. 2, §1 - Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto (1848), chs. 1-2 [94 pages]		
3. Capital (i): What is value? (week 8)	Required reading - Marx, Capital, chs. 1-3 [119 pages] Additional material - Marx, "The Value-Form" - Marx, letter to Kugelmann	Assignment: Note three difficulties or questions from today's reading; due Sunday 18 Feb 20:00. See Absalon for details.	
4. Capital (ii): What is capital? (week 9)	- Marx, <i>Capital</i> , chs. 4-6 [33 pages]		

5. Capital (iii):	Required reading	
Absolute surplus-	Required reading - Marx, Capital, chs., 7-8, 10 (sections 1-2, 7)	
value and formal	[52 magga]	
subsumption	[53 pages]	
(week 10)	Additional material - Marx, "Results", pp. 1019-1038	
6. <i>Capital</i> (iv): Relative surplusvalue and real subsumption	- Marx, <i>Capital</i> , chs. 12-14, 15 (sections 1-2, 4-5), 16 [81 pages]	Assignment: (1) Identify a central concept, which you will explain, and (2) comment on one other student's explanation; 200-300 words total; due Sunday 10 February 20:00. See Absalon for
(week 11)		details.
7. Capital (v) The rest: The wage form, reproduction, accumulation, and history	- Marx, <i>Capital</i> , chs. 17, 19, 22-23, 25 (sections 1-4), 26, 32-33 [96 pages]	Assignment: Reflect on the relationship between theory and history in today's reading; 500 words; due Sunday 17 March 20:00 . See Absalon for details.
(week 12)		
	Easter break (week 13)	•
8. Feedback session	- Two papers	Peer feedback on mid-term papers.
(week 14)	[16-24 pages]	Assignment: Upload your draft paper to Absalon by 29 March (12:00); read and provide feedback for two other papers. See Absalon for details.
		NB: Class re-scheduled for Friday 5 April 13-15 in room 2.1.18.
CONTEMPORARY PRO	DBLEMS OF SOCIAL THEORY	
9. Logistics	Case V. and Claus (III One of the World's Discrete Chine	Mid-term paper due Sunday 7 April (12:00).
(week 15)	 Yee and Glanz, "How One of the World's Biggest Ships Jammed the Suez Canal" LaRocco, "Suez Canal blockage is delaying an estimated \$400 million an hour in goods" 	
	[9 pages]	
	Required readings - Marx, Capital Vol 2, 225-29 - Mau, Mute Compulsion, ch. 12 - Simpson, "The Annihilation of Time by Space" - Danyluk, "Capital's Logistical Fix"	
	[98 pages]	
	Additional material - ITF, "The Impact of Mega-Ships" - Chua et al. "Turbulent Circulation" - Levinson, <i>The Box</i> , ch. 1 - Podcast: "The War Over Global Shipping", <i>Ones and Tooze</i> , 19 January 2024 (37.5 minutes) [Link]	

10. Geography of global value chains (week 16)	Case - Memija, "Vestas to Manufacture Blades for Flagship 15 MW Offshore Wind Turbine in Poland" - Vestas, "A new offshore nacelle and assembly factory in Szczecin" [2 pages] Required readings - Walker, "The Geography of Production" - Starosta, "Revisiting the New International Division of Labour Thesis" - Starosta, Caligaris & Fitzsimons, ch. 8	
11. Ecology, fossil capital, and the green transition (week 17)	Case - Ambrose, "Drax gets go-ahead for carbon capture project at estimated £40bn cost to bill-payers", <i>The Guardian</i> , 16 January 2024 [2 pages] Required readings - Malm, <i>Fossil Capital</i> , ch. 13 - Malm & Carton, "Seize the Means of Carbon Removal" [82 pages] Additional material - Saito, <i>Marx's Ecosocialism</i> , ch. 3	
12. Information technology and digital economy (week 18)	Case - Video: "How job surveillance is changing trucking in America", Vox, 20 Nov 2017 (9.5 mins) [Link] - Podcast: "Data Driven", Ideas Podcast, 15 Dec 2022 (34 mins) [Link] [43 mins = 21 pages] Required readings - Marx, Grundrisse, 690-712 - Smith, "What Do (Digital) Bosses Do?" - Smith, Smart Machines and Service Work, ch. 7 [63 pages] Additional material - Benanav, "Automation and the Future of Work" I+II - Podcast: "The Real History of the Luddites", Tech Won't Save Us, 28 Sep 2023 - Podcast: "The Poorly Paid Workers Powering Automation", Tech Won't Save Us, 10 Feb 2022 - Levy, Data Driven	

	- Jones, "Big tech's push for automation hides the grim reality of 'microwork'", <i>The Guardian</i> , 27 Oct 2021 - Russon, "Uber drivers are workers not self-employed, Supreme Court rules", <i>BBC News</i> , 19 Feb 2021	
13. Social reproduction (week 19)	Case - Das and Helm, "Curbs on migrant workers would be 'dangerous' for social care, warns government adviser", <i>The Guardian</i> , 25 November 2023	Term paper topic to be approved no later than Friday 10 May, 20:50. See Absalon for details.
	[3 pages] Required readings - Vogel, Marxism and the Oppression of Women, chs. 10-11 - Farris, "Femonationalism and the 'Regular' Army of Labor" - Fraser, "Crisis of Care?"	
	[71 pages] Additional material - Bhattacharya, "How Not to Skip Class" - Ferguson, Women and Work, ch. 8	
14. Financialization and fictitious capital (week 20)	Required readings - Marx, Capital Vol 3, pp. 379-386, 459-471, 594-606 - Fine, "Locating Financialisation" - Paulani, "Money in Contemporary Capitalism" - Alves, "Fictitious capital, the credit system, and the particular case of government bonds in Marx"	Special guest appearance: Dr Carolina Alves; remember to prepare questions! Term paper due Sunday 2 June, 23:59.
	[52 pages] Additional material - Brunhoff & Foley, "Karl Marx's Theory of Money and Credit" - Palludeto & Rossi, "Marx's Fictitious Capital" - Fine, "Financialization from a Marxist Perspective" - Perelman, Marx's Crisis Theory, ch. 6	

Total: [1,015 pages]

8. Course literature

8.1. Required reading

- (A) Available on Absalon course page
- (B) Find on REX or otherwise available online (see link)
- (C) Buy or find on course shelf ('semesterhylde')

- **(B)** Alves, Carolina. "Fictitious capital, the credit system, and the particular case of government bonds in Marx". *New Political Economy* 28, No. 3 (2023): 398-415. [Link].
- **(B)** Ambrose, Jillian. "Drax gets go-ahead for carbon capture project at estimated £40bn cost to bill-payers". *The Guardian*, 16 January 2024. [Link].
- **(B)** Clovis, Mark, Princeton. "Karen Levy, 'Data Driven: Truckers, Technology, and the New Workplace Surveillance' (Princeton UP, 2022)". Podcast. *UP Ideas Podcast*, 15 December 2022. [Link]
- **(B)** Danyluk, Martin. "Capital's Logistical Fix: Accumulation, Globalization, and the Survival of Capitalism". In *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 36, No. 4 (August 2018): 630-647. [Link].
- **(B)** Das, Shanti and Toby Helm. "Curbs on migrant workers would be 'dangerous' for social care, warns government adviser". *The Guardian*, 25 November 2023. [Link].
- **(B)** Elbe, Ingo. "Between Marx, Marxism and Marxisms. Ways of Reading Marx's Theory". In *Viewpoint Magazine* (online), 21 October 2013. [Link].
- **(B)** Farris, Sara R. "Femonationalism and the 'Regular' Army of Labor Called Migrant Women". *History of the Present* 2, No. 2 (Fall 2012), 184-199. [Link].
- (B) Fine, Ben. "Locating Financialsation". Historical Materialism 18, No. 2 (2019): 97-116. [Link]
- **(B)** Fraser, Nancy. "Crisis of Care? On the Social-Reproductive Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism." In Tithi Bhattacharya, ed. *Social Reproduction Theory. Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, 21-36. London: Pluto Press, 2017. [Link].
- **(B)** Heinrich, Michael. "Marx: Biography as Politics", translated by Simon Hajdini. In *Chicago Review* 63, Nos. 3-4 (Spring 2020). [Link].
- **(B)** LaRocco, Lori Ann. "Suez Canal blockage is delaying an estimated \$400 million an hour in goods". *CNBC.com*, 25 March 2021. [Link].
- (B) Malm, Andreas and Wim Carton. "Seize the Means of Carbon Removal: The Political Economy of Direct Air Capture". *Historical Materialism* 29, No. 1 (2021): 3-48. [Link].
- (A) Malm, Andreas. Fossil Capital. The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming. London: Verso Books, 2015.
- (A) Marx, Karl. "On the Jewish Question". In *Karl Marx Frederick Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, *Marx and Engels 1843-1844*, 146-174. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975.
- (A) Marx, Karl. "Comments on James Mill, Élémens d'économie politique". In Karl Marx Frederick Engels Collected Works, Vol. 3, Marx and Engels 1843-1844, 211-228. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975.
- (A) Marx, Karl. *The Poverty of Philosophy*. In *Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 6, *Marx and Engels 1845-1848*, 105-212. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976.

- **(C)** Marx, Karl. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One.* Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin Books, 1990.
- (A) Marx, Karl. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume Two*. Translated by David Fernbach. London: Penguin Books, 1992.
- (A) Marx, Karl. *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume Three*. Translated by David Fernbach. London: Penguin Books: 1991.
- (A) Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse*. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft), translated by Martin Nicolaus. London: Penguin Books, 1993.
- (A) Karl Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 11 July 1868. In *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Volume 43, 67. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988.
- **(B)** Memija, Adnan. "Vestas to Manufacture Blades for Flagship 15 MW Offshore Wind Turbine in Poland". *OffshoreWIND.biz*, 11 January 2024. [Link].
- (**B**) Paulani, Leda Maria. "Money in contemporary capitalism and the automatisation of capitalist forms in Marx's theory". *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 38, No. 4 (July 2014): 779-795. [Link].
- (B) Simpson, Michael. "The Annihilation of Time by Space: Pluri-temporal Strategies of Capitalist Circulation". In *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 2, No. 1 (2019): 110-128. [Link].
- (B) Starosta, Guido, Gastón Caligaris, and Alejandro Fitzsimons. *Value, Money and Capital. The Critique of Political Economy and Contemporary Capitalism*. London: Routledge, 2024. [Link].
- **(B)** Starosta, Guido. "Revisiting the New International Division of Labour Thesis". In Greig Charnock and Guido Starosta (eds.), *The New International Division of Labour. Global Transformation and Uneven Development*, 79-103. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. [Link].
- **(B)** Smith, Jason E. *Smart Machines and Service Work. Automation in an Age of Stagnation.* London: Reaktion Books, 2020. [Link].
- **(B)** Smith, Jason E. "What Do (Digital) Bosses Do?" In *Brooklyn Rail* (online), July-August 2022. [Link].
- **(B)** Vestas. "A new offshore nacelle and assembly factory in Szczecin". Vestas.com. Accessed 10 April 2024. [Link].
- (A) Vogel, Lise. Marxism and the Oppression of Women. Toward a Unitary Theory. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- **(B)** Yee, Vivian and James Glanz. "How One of the World's Biggest Ships Jammed the Suez Canal". *The New York Times*, July 17 2021. [Link].
- **(B)** Walker, Richard A. "The Geopgraphy of Production". In Eric Sheppard and Trevor J. Barnes (eds.), *A Companion to Economic Geography*, 113-132. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. [Link].

- 8.2 Suggested reading and additional material
- Anderson, Perry. Considerations on Western Marxism. London: Verso Books, 1979.
- Balibar, Étienne. The Philosophy of Marx. Translated by Chris Turner. London: Verso Books, 2007.
- Bellafiore, Ricardo and Tommaso Redolfi Riva (eds.). *Marx: Key Concepts*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2024.
- Benanav, Aaron and John Clegg. "Crisis and Immiseration: Critical Theory Today". In *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, vol. 3, edited by Beverley Best, Werner Bonefeld and Chris O'Kane, 1629-1648. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018.
- Benanav, Aaron. "Automation and the Future of Work 1". *New Left Review* 119, September-October 2019: 5-38.
- Benanav, Aaron. "Automation and the Future of Work 2". *New Left Review* 120, November-December 2019: 117-146.
- Bhattacharya, Tithi. "How Now to Skip Class: Social Reproduction of Labor and the Global Working Class". In Tithi Bhattacharya, ed. *Social Reproduction Theory. Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, 68-93. London: Pluto Press, 2017. [Link].
- Callinicos, Alex. *Deciphering Capital. Marx's Capital and its Destiny*. London: Bookmarks Publications, 2014.
- Chua, Charmaine et al. "Introduction: Turbulent Circulation: Building a Critical Engagement with Logistics". In *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 36, No. 4 (August 2018): 617-629. [Link].
- De Brunhoff, Susan and Duncan K. Foley. "Karl Marx's theory of money and credit". In Philip Arestis and Malcom Sawyer (eds.), *A Handbook of Alternative Monetary Economics*, 188-204. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2006.
- Farris, Sara R. "Social Reproduction and Racialized Surplus Value". In *Capitalism: Concept, Idea, Image. Aspects of Marx's Capital Today*, ed. Peter Osborne, Éric Alliez, Eric-John Russell, 121-131. London: CRMEP Books, 2019. [Link].
- Farris, Sara R. "From the Jewish Question to the Muslim Question". *Constellations* 21, No. 2 (2014): 296-307. [Link].
- Ferguson, Susan. *Women and Work. Feminism, Labour, and Social Reproduction*. London: Pluto Press, 2020. [Link].
- Fine, Ben. "Financialization From a Marxist Perspective". *International Journal of Political Economy* 42, No. 4 (2013): 47-66. [Link].
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- Heinrich, Michael. Karl Marx and the Birth of Modern Society. The Life of Marx and the Development of his Work. Volume I: 1818-1841. Translated by Alexander Locascio. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 2019.
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- Jonas, Phil. "Big tech's push for automation hides the grim reality of 'microwork'". *The Guardian*, 27 October 2021. [Link].
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- Mau, Søren. *Mute Compulsion. A Marxist Theory of the Economic Power of Capital.* London: Verso Books, 2022.
- Musto, Marcello. "The Writing of *Capital*: Genesis and Structure of Marx's Critique of Political Economy". *Critique* 46, No. 1 (2018), 11-26.

- Musto, Marcello. *Another Marx. Early Manuscripts to the International*. Translated by Patrick Camiller. London: Verso Books, 2018.
- Palludeto, Alex Wilhans Antonio and Pedro Rossi. "Marx's fictitious capital: a misrepresented category revisited". *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 46, No. 3 (May 2022): 545-560. [Link].
- Perelman, Michael. Marx's Crisis Theory. Scarcoty, Labour, and Finance. New York, NY: Praeger, 1987.
- Roberts, William C. *Marx's Inferno. The Political Theory of Capital.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.
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- Russon, Mary-Ann. "Uber drivers are workers not self-employed, Supreme Court rules". *BBC News*, 19 February 2021. [Link].
- Saito, Kohei. *Marx's Ecosocialism. Capital, Nature, and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy.* New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 2017. [Link].
- Saito, Kohei. *Marx in the Anthropocene. Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. [Link].
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8. Acknowledgements

Despite appearances, academia – including teaching – is a collective practice, and it is important to recognise this and say it out loud. I would therefore officially like to thank Carolina Alves, William Westgard-Cruice, and Dominique Routhier for their assistance in preparing this course by helpfully suggesting literature, cases, etc.