

CAPITALISM AND ITS OPPONENTS IN HISTORY

History 106-6-21
University Library 4770
Tues., Thurs., 3:30-4:50pm
Freshman Seminar, Fall 2016

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The past quarter of a millennium has witnessed enormous, unprecedented changes in global history. Humanity as a whole today enjoys what would have been, from the vantage of the eighteenth century, mind-boggling prosperity. At the same time, the past two and a half centuries have seen persistent economic inequality, the loss of cultural traditions, and great damage done to the environment. At the heart of it all lies a single system: capitalism.

This class offers an intellectual history of capitalism in the West, mainly North America and Western Europe. We'll study how Western thinkers have understood, defended, and criticized capitalism over the years. Because capitalism is so central to the modern age, this means we'll read some of the most important texts in modern social theory, from Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* to John Rawls's theory of justice. This class will thus provide a foundation for coursework in the social sciences, including in history, economics, sociology, political science, and anthropology.

The second focus of this course is the craft of writing. Meaning not just nuts and bolts of prose (though we'll talk about those) but the larger questions of argumentation, pacing, evidence, and structure. I trust that you are all masters of high-school writing and know your way around the five-paragraph essay. This will be different. This class will prepare you for the kind of writing you'll do, not only in college, but for the rest of your lives.

CLASS DISCUSSION

The bulk of this class is just going to be us talking about books. Our collective goal is to have an intelligent conversation from which we all learn. It may seem that the best/only way to participate is to make sharp, original observations. But asking a question, confessing confusion, connecting something already on the table to another thing, offering your own spin on someone else's idea, and offering evidence from the text are also all valuable. Examples:

RAJU: I think what's going on in the text here is that whenever Marx thinks about labor he is imagining a factory worker, rather than, say, a domestic servant.

NINA: Yeah, I noticed that, too. Doesn't that seem kind of wrong on Marx's part? What about all of the domestic labor that made the

economy run in the nineteenth century. It seems crazy to have an economic theory that ignores that.

JUDY: I'm not sure Marx ignores domestic labor. Take a look at the third paragraph of page 9 of the *Manifesto*. I think that here he's not saying that factory workers are the *only* workers, but just that they are the pivotal ones, the ones who are going to create a revolution.

JORGE: I agree with Judy's point. Marx thinks there are all sorts of workers who participate in the economy but who are not going to be part of the revolution, like peasants.

ANA: What if we connect Nina's point to what Judy and Jorge are saying? I understand that Marx is not saying that only factory workers are doing labor, but I still think that Nina was right that Marx seems to be missing something. Is it possible that by focusing on only one group of workers as the "pivotal" class Marx is overlooking something important?

It's relatively easy to come up with your own points. It can be harder to bounce off what other people are saying. Bonus points are awarded for contributions that do that. Still more bonus points are awarded for being aware of the dynamic of the classroom. If someone hasn't been talking a lot, help make room for her or try to develop one of her ideas. If you've been talking the whole class and other people want to get in, try sitting out a few rounds.

Our discussions will require your full attention. So no cell phones and no laptops. If you've been using an online version of the text in question, either print out what you need or just look on with someone else.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

This class will feature many small assignments, three papers, and a manifesto. One purpose of these assignments is to allow you to collect your thoughts about the readings. Another is to give you a chance to practice writing clear, persuasive, and interesting prose. We'll workshop some writing, so everything you turn in should be polished and ready for public inspection.

I'll grade your smaller assignments on the check/check-plus/check-minus system and your papers with letter grades. I'll mark any mechanical errors I find and, for some assignments, I'll offer comments.

The final assignment for this class will be a manifesto of at least 1,500 words. This is your chance to try your hand at the sort of writing we've been reading all quarter. So, as you make your way through your course assignments, try to think through your own views about capitalism.

QUIZZES

At eight of our meetings, I'll administer a quiz during the first five minutes of class. The quizzes will be largely multiple choice and designed to assess reading comprehension. If you're too late to take a quiz, you'll get a zero on it. If you come in late, you still need to hand your quiz in with the rest of the students, even if you're not done. At the end of term, I'll drop the lowest quiz grade.

GRADING

Participation	30%
Quizzes	15%
Written work	55%

PLAGIARISM

An easy way for an undergraduate to destroy her college career is by plagiarizing. The college's rules concerning academic integrity can be found at www.northwestern.edu/uascc. Please read them, as you will be held accountable to them. The main principles you need to know are these:

1. If you are relying on somebody else's ideas or information, cite that person as the source.
2. If you use someone else's words, enclose those words in quotation marks and cite that person as the source. Taking someone else's prose, modifying it slightly, and passing it off as your own is never appropriate, even if you include a footnote.
3. You may not turn in work that is identical to or derivative of work you have turned in for another class without both prior permission and a clear accounting of what is old and what is new.

I will report all suspected cases of plagiarism immediately to the dean.

In my experience, students most often plagiarize when they've gotten themselves into a bind. They haven't done the reading they were supposed to, or they haven't understood it, and now they have to write a paper that they don't have time to write. So they find something that someone else has written, shift it around a bit, and present it as their own.

I am really good at catching this.

If you find yourself having to choose between turning in clearly inadequate work and turning in plagiarized work, please trust me that you are better off with the former. If you turn in shoddy work, the worst thing that can happen to you is that you will get a bad grade on that assignment. If you turn in plagiarized work and get caught, the *best* thing that can happen to you is that you will fail the assignment and be reported to the administration. The worst that can happen is that you will have a disciplinary hearing and be expelled.

COURSE BOOKS

These books are all available at the university bookstore in Norris (except for the course reader). There is, however, no need to purchase them as I've also placed them on reserve at the library. It is fine with me if you use a different edition of the book than the one assigned (although you might have to look over someone else's shoulder when we refer to specific parts of the text in class).

1. Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000–1887* (1888; New York: Dover Publications, 1996)
2. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (1898; New York: Dover Publications, 1997)
3. Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer—and Turned its Back on the Middle Class* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010)
4. F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)
5. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (1944; Boston: Beacon Press, 2001)
6. James C. Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012)
7. Course reader, available at Quartet Digital Printing, 825 Clark Street.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments are due the day listed.

Tues, 9/20

- Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (1776), Book I: introduction and chaps. 1–3 in reader

Thurs, 9/22

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), introduction and sections 1–2 and 4 in reader
- Summarize the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in 400–450 words. Include a word count.

Tues, 9/27

- George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or, The Failure of Free Society* (1854), dedication, preface, chaps. 1, 4–5 in reader
- Send me by email by 10am Tuesday morning three potential theses for short essays about *Sociology for the South*.

Thurs, 9/29

- William Graham Sumner, "Sociology" (1881), in reader
- Rewrite your summary of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* in under 325 words. Include a word count.

Tues, 10/4

- Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1888), preface and chaps. 1, 3, 5–7, 9–13
- Send me by email by 10am three *questions* that could support essays about *Looking Backward*.

Thurs, 10/6

- Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1888), chaps. 14–15, 17, 19, 21–22, 25–26, 28.
- Send me by email by 10am three potential theses for short essays about *Looking Backward*.

Tues, 10/11

- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (1898), chaps. 1–2
- Send me by email by 10am three potential theses for short essays about *Women and Economics*.

Thurs, 10/13

- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics* (1898), chaps. 3–4

Tues, 10/18

- Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), introduction, chaps. 3 and 5
- Turn in two paper copies and upload to Canvas an essay of between 1,000–1,200 words (excluding notes and bibliography) about Fitzhugh, Sumner, Bellamy, or Gilman.

Thurs, 10/20

- Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), chaps. 6 and 11
- Read, edit, and comment on your partner's essay. Turn in your written comments to me as well as to your partner (paper or email).

Tues, 10/25

- Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944), chaps. 4 and 6
- Bring in a paragraph by a writer you like and write at least a paragraph of your own analyzing what *works* in that paragraph.

Thurs, 10/27

- Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944), chaps. 12 and 21
- Upload to Canvas and turn in a paper copy of a revised version of your essay.

Tues, 11/1

- Immer's note on John Rawls in reader
- John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness" (1958) in reader
- Email me by 10am an outline for a paper comparing John Rawls to some other thinker we've read.

Thurs, 11/3

- Thomas Pogge, "Priorities of Global Justice" (2001) in reader
- Bring in a paragraph by a writer you like and write at least a paragraph of your own analyzing what *works* in that paragraph.

Tues, 11/8

- Martin Wolf, *Why Globalization Works* (2004), chap. 9 in reader
- Upload to Canvas and turn in a paper copy of an essay, 1,000-1,200 words (excluding notes and bibliography), comparing two of these writers: Hayek, Polanyi, Rawls, Pogge.

Thurs, 11/10

- Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics* (2010), part I
- Bring to class two paper copies of three potential theses for an essay about Hayek, Polanyi, Rawls, Pogge, Wolf, or Hacker and Pierson, alone or in comparison. All three theses should be about the same writer or comparison. Don't choose authors whom you've already written about for your previous essay.

Tues, 11/15

- James C. Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism* (2012), preface, chaps. 1–3
- Upload to Canvas and turn in two paper copies of an essay, 1,000-1,200 words (excluding notes and bibliography), about whichever writer or comparison you wrote three theses about for 11/10.

Thurs, 11/17

- James C. Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism* (2012), chaps. 4–6
- Read, edit, and comment on your partner's essay. Turn in your written comments to me as well as to your partner (paper or email).

Tues, 11/22

- Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything* (2014), introduction and chap. 5 in reader
- Upload to Canvas and turn in a paper copy of a revised version of the essay that you turned in on 11/15.

Tues, 12/6: Upload to Canvas a Manifesto of at least 1,500 words.

GRAMMAR AND USAGE GUIDES

For many writers, knowing the rules of the grammatical road well enough to avoid accidents is sufficient. But there are some who seek a deeper familiarity with the language. These are people who know the difference between *gantlet* (a type of punishment—you “run the gantlet”) and *gauntlet* (a glove—you “throw down the gauntlet”). They care, perhaps a little too much, that the plural of *octopus* is *octopuses*, not *octopi* (an error stemming from the misconception that *octopus* is borrowed from Latin when actually it is a Greek word).¹ They are, in short, grammar dorks.

If you are a grammar dork, or if you’re willing to round yourself up to one for the purposes of this class, then here are three books you may want on your shelf:

STEVEN PINKER, *THE SENSE OF STYLE*

An up-to-date and extremely readable style guide. Written by a linguist, it combines straightforward advice with discussions of why language works the way it does.

BRYAN A. GARNER, *GARNER’S MODERN AMERICAN USAGE*

This is a usage guide, meaning that it tells you how some of the more confusing words in the language ought to be used. This is where you go to clear up those nagging doubts you’ve been having about the difference between *baleful* and *baneful*.

THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

This is the mother of all style guides, the master source for all technical matters: punctuation, citation, hyphenation, formatting, etc. It also contains a usage guide, a guide to proofreading, and other interesting sections. Kate Turabian’s *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* is a simplified and considerably condensed version of the *Chicago Manual*.

1. Two points on this. First, just because a word comes from a foreign language doesn’t mean that it takes that language’s plural. If the word has entered the English language, it is generally pluralized as an English word. Hence, *stadiums*, not *stadia*. (There are, of course, some exceptions to this. English speakers preserve foreign grammar when they pluralize *crisis* as *crises* and *phenomenon* as *phenomena*.) Second, even if *octopus* were pluralized as a foreign word, it would take the Greek plural form: *octopodes*.