

# **MARXISM AND POST-MARXISM**

*Government and Politics—445*

*Tues/Thurs,*

University of Maryland

**Spring 2017**

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## **Course Summary:**

This course will critically examine the genesis and evolution of Marxist thought and the various transformations these ideas underwent throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Along with Lenin's impact on Marxian philosophy, we will explore the ways critical Marxists, in both the East and the West, challenged its more authoritarian versions. Special focus will be placed on the Frankfurt School. The course will deal with the many variants of Marxist theories and projects associated with Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Mao, Che Guevara and Castro. We will also contemplate what Marx's ideas mean after the collapse of communism in Europe. What are the legacies of Marxism and Leninism? Have Karl Marx's questions and critique of society been discredited along with the Communist regimes of Europe? In brief, what is dead and what is alive in the thought of Karl Marx?

## **The Structure of the Course:**

### *Part I: The thought of Karl Marx*

The origins, the inner dynamics, and the major concepts of Marx's political theory (class struggle and revolution; scientific versus utopian socialism; materialism, dialectics, and history; the dictatorship of the proletariat; the critique of ideologies; the philosophy of praxis). An elaboration of the Marxian radical humanism; the theory of state and religion; the critique of political economy; Marx's theory of alienation.

### *Part II: Marxism and Post-Marxism*

The historical experience of Marxism during the 20th century: Lenin's concept of the *vanguard party* and the Bolshevik revolutionary theory; the Soviet Union and the emergence of Marxism-Leninism as an official state ideology; the institutionalization (bureaucratization) of Marxism: Leninism, Stalinism and the fate of socialism in Russia; early critics of Bolshevism (Rosa Luxemburg); Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution

and the critique of bureaucracy. Understanding the Bolshevik mind. The appearance of Chinese and Latin American varieties of Marxism. The Marxism of Rosa Luxemburg, Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, Herbert Marcuse.

***Required Readings:***

Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and The Leap into the Kingdom of Freedom*, Stanford UP  
 Robert C. Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, Norton.  
 David McLellan, *Marxism After Marx*, Palgrave  
 Richard Crossman, ed. *The God That Failed*, Columbia University Press  
 Stuart Jeffries, *Grand Hotel Abyss*, Verso

***Recommended Readings:***

Marx-Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, Yale UP, 2012  
 Raymond Taras, ed., *The Road to Disillusion*, M. E. Sharpe.  
 Robert C. Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea*  
 Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism* (one volume, Norton)

***Course Requirements***

The reading assignments are an essential component of this course; it is important that you keep up with the readings to best understand the lectures and engage in class discussion. IMPORTANT: Please keep in mind that lectures do not duplicate the readings and students are expected to be familiar with notions and information provided by the professor in his presentations.

- A) One announced quiz
- B) Midterm in class exam
- C) Final take home exam
- D) Class Participation

Students are encouraged to approach the TA and discuss possible class short presentations on topic assigned by the professor. These presentation will add to the final grade.

## **Schedule:**

### **Week 1**

Who was Karl Marx? The genesis of Marxian revolutionary theory. The intellectual origins and the major components of the Marxist doctrine. Marx and Engels as revolutionaries and political philosophers: the Hegelian and utopian-communist heredity.

*The Marx Engels Reader*, “For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything” pp12-15; “Theses on Feuerbach” pp143-145.

*Marxism-Kingdom of Freedom*, Chapter 1  
*Communist Manifesto*

*Suggested:*

*Marx-Engels Reader*, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*” pp16-25.

### **Week 2**

Marx’s method and exposition. The transformation of Hegelian thought and Marx’s use of dialectics. What is materialism? What is idealism? What is dialectics and what are dialectical laws of change and transformation? Revolutionary ideology and revolutionary party.

*Marx-Engels Reader*, Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, pp. 683-717; Letters on Historical Materialism, pp. 760-768.

### **Week 3**

Political themes in Marx’s early writings: the critique of ideology, bureaucracy, and alienation. The Hegelian concept of totality and the romantic longing for total, apocalyptic revolution. Marxism as a secular religion, the revolutionary eschatology, the end of history and politics. Marx’s philosophy of human emancipation.

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” pp66-125, 133-135.

*Marxism-Kingdom of Freedom*, chapter 2.

*Suggested:*

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, ‘*The German Ideology*’ pp146-200.

### **Week 4**

Economic determinism and human freedom. Class-struggle, proletarian consciousness, and revolution. Objectivity and partisanship in Marxism. Bourgeoisie and proletariat. Marxism and the critique of liberal democracy.

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, 'The Communist Manifesto' pp. 469-500.  
*Marxism-Kingdom of Freedom*, chapter 3

*Suggested:*

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, Part II (all)  
Frank Manuel

### **Week 5**

The theory and the vision of communism. Marxism and anarchism. A new conception of morality and a radical program for the social-democratic movement: the institutionalization of Marxism and the rise of reformism. The Marxian concept of internationalism and world revolution. Political elites, radical intellectuals, and mass movements. Marxism as a structural and systemic theory of political change: evolutionary and revolutionary socialism. The struggle over Marx's legacies.

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, Against Personality Cults, The possibility of Non-Violent Revolution, Critique of the Gotha Program, After the Revolution: Marx Debates Bakunin pp521-548.  
David McLellan

*Suggested:*

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (selections) pp. 594-617.

### **Week 6**

From Marx to Lenin. The strategy and tactics of social-democracy. Reform and revolution. Lenin's revolutionary path. Lenin's conflict with Menshevism. The Bolshevik party and the professionalization of revolutionary activities. Lenin's theory of the new type of party (the revolutionary avant-garde).

*Marxism-Kingdom of Freedom*, chapter 4.  
McLellan, chapter on "Russian Marxism"

### **Week 7**

Lenin's theory of imperialism, wars, and revolutions. Lenin's revision of Marx's revolutionary scenario and "Russianization" of the classical doctrine. Lenin's polemic with Kautsky and the doctrine of the new revolutionary state (the concept of "dictatorship of the proletariat"). The break with social democracy and the foundation of the Comintern. Authoritarian-militaristic features of the Bolshevik political culture. An

assessment of Lenin's political and intellectual legacy. Selections from the writings of Nikolai Bukharin, Georg Lukacs, and Antonio Gramsci.

*Marxism-Kingdom of Freedom*, chapter 5.

## **Midterm Exam**

### **Week 8**

Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country" and the dogmatization of Marxism. The Stalin-Trotsky debate: Trotsky's theory of the "betrayed revolution." Marxism-Leninism (the ideological justification of Stalinism) as an apologetic dogma: the suppression of criticism and the celebration of the totalitarian state. The main characteristics of Stalinist totalitarianism and its relationship to Leninism. Purges, show-trials, and the Bolshevik mental universe.

*Marxism-Kingdom of Freedom*, chapter 5.

*Suggested:*

Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*

McLellan, "Russian Marxism"—class presentations.

### **Week 9**

Party loyalty, mental subjugation, and the tension between theory and praxis. Intellectuals and the ethical problems of Bolshevism (Leninism, Stalinism). Critique of the Party's ideological infallibility. Discussion on means and ends in the accomplishment of revolutionary utopias.

Crossman, *The God that Failed*. Class presentations.

### **Week 10**

The shock of the 20<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress. Khrushchev and the disintegration of Stalin's myth. Titoism and the search for national Communism. The attempt to reinvent socialism: Revisionist Marxism and the debunking of bureaucratic domination under state socialism. The Budapest School of Critical Marxism (Agnes Heller, Ferenc Feher, Gyorgy and Maria Markus) and the critique of "dictatorship over needs." The Prague Spring and the search for "socialism with a human face". Leszek Kolakowski and the dialectics of disenchantment: anti-authoritarian Polish Marxism.

Walicki

*The Road to Disillusion*— class presentations on Hungary and Poland.

McLellan, "Russian Marxism"

### **Week 11**

Chinese and Cuban Marxism: The writings of Mao, Che Guevara, the notion of guerilla warfare, the role of the peasants in social revolutions, and other transformations of Marxian thought. The tensions between Soviet Marxism and alternative Communist visions (reference to the rise of Eurocommunism, Eurocommunism and the notion of “dictatorship of the proletariat”, Italian and Spanish contributions).

class presentations on Guevara and Mao.  
McLellan

## **Week 12**

Debate: the implosion of Communism in Europe and its socio-political effects. Are there connections to be drawn between the popular uprisings (revolutions) in East-Central Europe and the ideas of Karl Marx? How were the new social movements (e.g., Poland’s *Solidarity*) different from Marx’s articulations of class struggle and revolution? Post-modern Marxism?

*Marxism- Kingdom of Freedom*, chapter 6.  
McLellan

## **Week 13**

Legacy: Are Marx’s ideas significant and insightful today (comparison to other major philosophers, e.g., Nietzsche). Does Marx’s body of work still help us look into our world and ask important questions- can we distinguish between Marx’s questions and the solutions that he believed to be the best hope for the future of mankind? The Frankfurt School’s Critical Theory.

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx, pp 681-682.  
Jeffries

## **Week 14:**

Review: Open discussion.