

POLS 4740/5740: Marx's *Capital*

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Course Description

This is an advanced seminar in political theory. I am therefore taking it for granted that you are enthusiastic and independently motivated, intellectually.

- **The plan for the course is simple:** we will read much of *Capital, Vol. 1* – very, very carefully. We can't read every single page, because we only have one semester. So I have excised some of the less theoretical parts.
- **The learning objective for the course is also quite straight-forward:** you will leave the course having read and understood the analysis of capitalism that Marx develops in *Vol. 1* of *Capital*, such that you can accurately explain it to someone else, and will be in a position to read work by others that refers to it. There are three volumes in the complete text, so this is only a start, but you'll be set up to read the rest, and/or to re-visit *Vol. 1*, in the future.
- **The rationale for engaging in a serious study of this material is obvious too:** it is an undisputed masterpiece. There are many ways to approach this work. Given my own research interests and expertise, I will be able to offer insight into *Capital* as a metaphysically, epistemologically and methodologically self-conscious work of post-Hegelian, neo-Aristotelian social theory, rather than as an economic theory or a political tract or a work of history. Please be sure that you understand that this is my orientation to the text.

The reading load will not be onerous in terms of length, but the argument is extremely sophisticated. You will need to read slowly, and more than once. You should plan your time accordingly. It is perfectly possible that you will not understand what you read at first -- real philosophy is like that, for all of us, and this is real philosophy at its best. It will be up to you to keep at it until you do – though “keeping at it” includes coming to talk to me as much as you need or like. Luckily, once you get into it, *Capital* reads a little bit like a murder mystery, or maybe it's like being on a challenging but enjoyable conceptual treasure hunt.

General Expectations and Policies

The bottom line requirement for this course is that you do the reading as though your life depended upon it, and come to class (or what will pass for it, since we have to be on-line; see final section of the syllabus, below) prepared to talk about the material with the rest of us (or what will pass for that if necessary; again, see below). If, for whatever reason, you are not in a position to take on this high a level of intellectual responsibility, you should think hard about whether or not you will be able to meet this expectation.

Participations is mandatory unless you are sick or face an emergency situation. Irregular participation will result in a significant reduction of the final grade or in failure. In keeping with the values of

Jesuit education at SLU, I take it for granted that your comportment will be good-natured, considerate and intellectually serious.

Academic Honesty

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. In this course, academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in failure for the course and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a larger sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty:

<http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

Student learning

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at [314-977-8885](tel:314-977-8885) or visit the Student Success Center.

Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

The easiest way to contact me is through e-mail, which I check regularly. In most cases I will be able to get back to you within a few hours; if you haven't heard back within 12 hrs, send me another e-mail. I will retrieve phone messages when I am in my office, but I will not be on campus every day; e-mail is much more reliable. I'm also delighted to talk to you in person, during office hours.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Participation - 50% (1) You must participate fully (unless you are sick or have some other emergency), having done the reading very carefully, almost certainly more than once. (See below for what this will look like in this not-normal pandemic on-line setting.) (2) You must prepare [ungraded, but recorded] written summaries of the week's reading (1-2 pages). (3) You must find ways to contribute to our reconstruction and discussion of the material, success at which presupposes (1) and (2).

Written work – 50% You will prepare weekly summaries [ungraded], which you will then edit, introduce and integrate into a final paper [graded], ~ 20pps. Grad students will be required to write a 5-8 pp. diagnostic paper, also due at the end of the term, on how Marxist literature in their area of research (or on the topic that interests them) differs (or would differ) from mainstream positions.

Mid-semester or so, you will be required to have a short meeting with me (via Zoom), to check in on your progress in the course. This meeting is mandatory.

Your grade will be based on your performance on the assignments listed above. I give letter grades, corresponding to qualitative assessment of your work. I do not grade on a distributional curve; your grade is based solely on the quality of your own performance. I am a very transparent grader, and I am happy to talk with you about how to do your best in the course and to develop intellectually. Although it does not pertain in this course, I am required to tell you that the College of Arts and Sciences' common grading scheme is: A=93-100; A-=90-92; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72; D=60-69; F=below 60.

Note In this class, final grades designate the following: **A-range** = Excellent at political philosophy; **B+** = Very good at political philosophy; **B** = Good, solid work in political philosophy; **B-** = Acceptable degree of competence in political philosophy; **C-range** = Weak in the area of political philosophy; **D-range** = Poor in the area of political philosophy. Please be sure that you understand these criteria. For further explanation of the meaning of criteria such as "Excellent," "Very good," "Good," etc., please see the accompanying "Frequently Asked Questions" handout. If you have any further questions concerning the meaning of these terms, please feel free to ask me.

I don't accept late papers, unless you have contacted me ahead of time concerning an absolute emergency.

Required and recommended texts

The following book has been ordered at the SLU Bookstore, though you can also order it directly. Do get this translation if possible.

Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1* (trans. Fowkes); Penguin.

Any additional readings will be made available electronically.

The Sad Fact That We Have to be On-Line & How We'll Handle It

SLU requires us to be a-synchronous, which means that you are not required to be on-line at any given time. This said, I predict – based upon years of teaching this class – that if there is any way for us to meet up for a 2 hr block per week (on Zoom), you are going to want to, even though it won't

be required. I am willing to do what it takes to find a time. If it turns out that everyone **does** want to do meet (on Zoom), then we can conduct things more or less as we normally would, except that you will submit your weekly abstracts by e-mail. If anyone **doesn't** want to meet (on Zoom), or isn't able to, I will add assignments, etc., to Canvas as needed, such that everyone will be able to benefit fully from the class.

I will send out an e-mail proposing logistics for how we might get this sorted out. If you don't receive an e-mail from me, please let me know.

Approximate Reading Schedule

Week 1: Introductory

Week 2: The Commodity Form
Part 1, ch. 1, sec. 1-3

Week 3: Fetishism
ch. 1, sec. 4

Week 4: Exchange and The Money Form
ch. 2 & ch. 3, Sec. 1 & 2

Week 5: Continued

Week 6: The General Formula for Capital
Part 2, ch. 4

Week 7: Contradictions and Labor Power
ch. 5 & 6

Week 8: The Production of Absolute Surplus-Value: Labor and Valorization
Part 3, ch. 7

Week 9: The Production of Absolute Value, cont.
ch. 8 & ch. 9

Week 10: Absolute and Relative Surplus-Value
Part 4, ch. 12; Part 5, ch. 16 & 17; Part 6, ch. 19,

Week 11: Accumulation
Part 7, ch. 23; ch. 24, section 1; ch. 25 (selected);

Week 12: Primitive Accumulation
Part 8, ch. 26 & 27

Week 13-15: Open

Additional University Information

Academic Integrity Syllabus Statement

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission.

The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at:

http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf.

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

Title IX Syllabus Statement

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36; akratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address: <http://www.slu.edu/general-counsel-home/office-of-institutional-equity-and-diversity/sexual-misconduct-policy> www.slu.edu/here4you .

Student Success Center Syllabi Statements

In an effort to be inclusive of students' learning styles and needs with regard to academic support, the following statement has been developed for use in course syllabi which identifies resources for student support in various areas of learning. As faculty members construct their syllabi for future courses, it is requested that they update materials to include new language regarding academic and career related support offered to students through the Student Success Center.

The syllabus statement will be available throughout the year by visiting the following websites:

- Student Success Center: www.slu.edu/success
- Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching & Learning: www.slu.edu/ctl

Student Success Center Syllabus Statement:

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple

factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center, a one-stop shop, which assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning) by visiting the Student Success Center or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Disability Services Academic Accommodations Syllabus Statement

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at Disability_services@slu.edu or [314.977.3484](tel:314.977.3484) to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.