How can you tell that communism was invented by communists, not scientists?
Scientists would have tested it on mice first. (Russian joke)

Karl Marx developed one of the most radical and sustained critiques of capitalism and convinced many that capitalism had to be abolished. Yet the societies built in Marx’s name failed to reach higher standards of justice than the ones he criticized. This course examines Marx’s ideas and why Communist systems largely failed to achieve the goals to which they were dedicated, focusing particularly on Marx's oversimplified view of politics. In the last section, we address contemporary critiques and defenses of capitalism and explore what it would take to construct a more just society.

Course objectives:
After this course, you should be able to:

• (Knowledge) identify key features of communist systems
• (Knowledge) critique the ideas of major Marxist thinkers
• (Critical thinking and writing) read carefully
• (Critical thinking and writing) evaluate and construct analytical arguments in clear and logical prose, buttressed with compelling evidence
• (Methodology) appraise the role of comparison in predicting outcomes of efforts to transform the world
• (Service to humanity) assess the effects of various social and political structures and determine which are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values
• (Service to humanity) Evaluate reasons why the concrete application of Marxist ideas varied so much from the ideas in the abstract
• (Political efficacy) apply your knowledge of political systems to policy choices

We will sometimes discuss topics that cut close to our core political and personal values, and it will be necessary always to respect and engage contrasting opinions.

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-2:30, when you find me in, and by appointment. Feel free to drop by. My door is usually open.
**Required books:** (at the bookstore)

There are additional readings on e-reserve (password: communism17).

**Requirements:**
Participation, including group work – 25 percent of your grade for the course
Three five-page papers based on questions I provide – 45 percent
Quizzes – 10 percent
Final exam – 20 percent
All students must complete a course evaluation at the end of the class.

Additional short written, oral, and group assignments will arise

Missed quizzes must be excused by me before they are given. Otherwise, you will receive a grade of 0 for the missing work. Grades of 0 will also be given for missing papers. The zeros will be averaged into the final course grade. Late essays may be subject to penalties.

**Class participation**
The quality of this class depends a great deal on you and your readiness to contribute meaningfully to class discussions. You should think about class as a time for exploration, for figuring out what readings mean, and for critically evaluating arguments made by various authors, by other students, and by me. A number of things follow from this:

- **Attendance is required**, and excessive absence will harm your grade.
- **It is important to do the readings** listed for each class before coming to class. When possible, come prepared with questions that you would like to examine.
- **Laptops (and, of course, phones) may not be used in class.** While the most self-disciplined among us will not be distracted by the wealth of entertainments provided by the internet, laptops tend to reduce uninterrupted focus on the discussion and serve as barriers to honest and direct interaction.

**Academic honesty**
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 through 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: [https://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%20%20%20%20%20-2015.pdf](https://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%20%20%20%20%20-2015.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.

Specific College of Arts and Sciences Academic Honesty Policies and Procedures may be found here:
http://www.slu.edu/arts-and-sciences/student-resources/academic-honesty.php

Title IX
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. View SLU's sexual misconduct policy.

Student Success Center
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.

Disability Services
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 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.
Writing center
I encourage you to take advantage of the writing services in the Student Success Center; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. Trained writing consultants can help with any kind of writing project, multimedia project, and/or oral presentation. They offer one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, call 977-3484 or visit http://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/academic-support/university-writing-services/index.php

Grading Scale
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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</tbody>
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- **A Quality Work** – work of superior quality. Class participation is voluntary, frequent, relevant, and demonstrates thoughtful reflection on the readings. Written work is clear, correct in content and presentation, well-organized and thought-provoking. Performance on exams demonstrates complete mastery of facts and concepts and the ability to apply concepts to new situations.

- **B Quality Work** – work of high quality. Class participation is voluntary, frequent, and reflects effort to understand the readings. Written work reflects a good understanding of the issues and concepts with minimal error. Performance on exams is very strong; demonstrates mastery of facts and concepts.

- **C Quality Work** – work that minimally meets the course requirements. Class participation is occasional and/or rarely voluntary, with comments that reveal only a superficial grasp of issues and concepts. Written work may be disorganized or contain errors. Performance on exams demonstrates knowledge of facts and concepts.

- **D Quality Work** – work that has minimal clarity and comprehension. Class participation is minimal, never voluntary, and reveals a lack of preparation and/or understanding. Written work is confusing, contradictory, repetitive, and/or not well supported. Writing is marred with errors. Performance on exams demonstrates minimal mastery of facts and concepts.

- **F Quality Work** – Unsatisfactory performance along most measures, often including missing assignments.

The Marxist Critique of Capitalism
"Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution; this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."
(Marx, *The German Ideology*)

August 29

*Think about the contours of an ideal society. What kind of political system would be required? What distribution of property? How would work be organized? How would you get from the present society to that ideal? What aspects of present society would you hope to eliminate or retain?*
August 31  Mass of the Holy Spirit – no class


*What kind of equality is desirable in society?*


*What are key differences between liberal and socialist thinking?*

September 12  Karl Marx, "Marx on the History of His Opinions,” in Tucker, pp. 3-6.
Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach,” in Tucker, pp. 143-145.

*Why does Marx think the proletariat is a class in “radical chains”?*

(Marx starts to make more sense the more you read. Keep moving forward; don’t get stuck on details. If you’ve already read the Manifesto, skim it but read something else in the Tucker reader.)


*Does the concept of alienated labor ring true to you based on your own experience in the workforce?*

QUIZ 1
September 19  
*Is revolution necessary?*

September 21  
*Is revolution inevitable?*

September 26  
Pipes, ch. 1, pp. 8-20. 
*Why were Marx’s predictions about the likelihood of revolution so far off base?*

September 28  
McLellan, ch. 2, “The Revisionist Controversy,” pp. 26-34 (feel free to read the rest of the chapter if you want). 
*Can Marxist and democratic thinking be combined?*  
(Your goal in these two readings is to understand Bernstein and Luxemburg, not all the other folks mentioned.)

October 3  
ESSAY ONE DUE

**Real-Existing Communism**

Communism, as it was manifested in the world, produced great human suffering. In the Soviet Union, estimates are that up to 25 million people died as a result of Stalin’s efforts at collectivization and the famine that ensued. More perished in the gulags and as a result of mass repression. Some estimates of the number of Chinese people who died during the Great Leap Forward reach as high as 43 million. Up to a quarter of the Cambodian population was slaughtered under Pol Pot. Why does the effort to put Marx’s ideas into practice have such high human costs?

October 5  
*What changes does Lenin make to Marxist thinking?*

October 10  
*Does Marxist thinking about history encourage careful attention to the needs and desires of individuals?*
October 12

*Is it true, as Fischer says, the “immoral means produce immoral ends – and immoral persons – under Bolshevism and under capitalism”?*

October 17
Mao Tse Tung, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,”
Read through section V. Find online at: [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_58.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_58.htm)

*How do Mao’s politics differ from Lenin’s? How are they similar?*

October 19
The whole *Black Book of Communism* is available for free online. The quality of the text is better than for the e-reserve readings, but you’ll have to find the right sections. [http://archive.org/details/TheBlackBookofCommu](http://archive.org/details/TheBlackBookofCommu)

*Is it just a coincidence that efforts to construct communist utopia have resulted in famine?*

October 24
Fall break – no class

October 26

*Is it a coincidence that efforts to construct communist utopia have resulted in extraordinary human cruelty and barbarity?*

October 31

*Is Christianity compatible with Marxist thinking?*

November 2
ESSAY TWO DUE
Social Justice in a Post-Communist World

“With the supermarket as our temple and the singing commercial as our litany, are we likely to fire the world with an irresistible vision of America’s exalted purpose and inspiring way of life?” (Adlai Stevenson)

November 7

What are the social prerequisites for equality of opportunity?

November 9

Is capitalism the best social system to preserve human freedom?

November 14

How can society address inequalities that arise even before a child gets to school?

November 16

Do schools create or reflect existing inequality?

QUIZ TWO

November 21

Is it possible to start a revolution by first changing people’s minds?

November 23
Thanksgiving – no class

November 28

Are strong social networks consistent with capitalist individual freedom?

November 30
Putnam, ch. 6, “What is to be done?,” pp. 227-261.
December 5  
ESSAY THREE DUE

December 7  

Do you agree with Marcuse that “a comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization”? Is consumerism a mechanism for social control?

December 14  
FINAL EXAM (12:00-1:50)

Additional readings on Marx and Engels:

Additional readings on existing communism:


**Additional readings on post-communism and contemporary capitalism**


