Course Description
Much of what one calls critical theory today finds its origin in the work of Karl Marx. The purpose of this doctoral course, “Special Topics in Critical Theory: Marx,” is to read key works by Marx, supplemented by some contemporary texts in western Marxist political theory, with the ultimate goal of understanding the various political and philosophical debates with which these texts engage. The course emphasizes Marxism as a political theory, but will also address Marxism as a scholarly methodology for critique applicable to disciplines beyond political theory. Some attention is given to the so-called cultural turn in twentieth-century Marxist thought, including Marx's influence on feminism, identity, representation, and visual culture. Themes include: the commodity, alienation and reification, surplus value, ideology, consumerism, subjectivity, postfordism, community, and communism.

Learner Objectives
1. Read a number of the primary texts of Karl Marx.
2. Read important secondary sources from twentieth-century Marxist political theory.
3. Evaluate and critique Marx's views on European history and politics.
4. Explain concepts and themes such as capitalism, communism, the subject, spectacle, and democracy.
5. Gain knowledge of and experience in the methodologies underpinning critical theory.
6. Deploy doctoral-level research methodologies in the areas of close reading, critique, and social and historical analysis.

Course Readings
Course Reader.
Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,


**Schedule**

**Week 1 -- The History of Capital and Class Struggle**

**Week 2 -- Young Marx**

**Week 3 -- Communism**
Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.
Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question” and “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right” in *Early Writings*, 211-257.

**Week 4 -- Marx's Historical and Political Analyses**
Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin, *The Civil War in France*.

**Week 5 -- Marx's Historical and Political Analyses (continued)**
Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. 

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Week 6 -- Commodities and Reification

Week 7 -- Surplus Value and Reproduction

Week 8 -- Spectacle
Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*.

Week 9 -- Postfordism
Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*

Week 10 -- Postfordism (continued)

Week 11 -- Community
Luce Irigaray, *Democracy Begins Between Two*.

Week 12 -- Community (continued)
The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*.

Week 13 -- A Return to Communism
Alain Badiou, *The Century*.

Week 14 -- A Return to Communism (continued)
Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*. 
Course Assignments

Reading
All students are expected to read the assigned texts in advance of class.

Writing
Each student should write a total of 20 pages for the semester, preferably split into two shorter papers of 10 pages each, but other combinations are also possible. Suggested paper topics will be provided, but students are also encouraged to create their own topics. All papers should be on par with doctoral level work and should demonstrate a close reading of the required materials and exhibit a methodology of critical analysis.

Grading Requirements

Each student will be evaluated based on the course assignments. All students will be expected to do the course reading, and to write papers of approximately 20 pages total. Grades will be determined according to the following formula:

80% paper(s)
20% in-class discussion
Evaluation Rubric
A= Excellent
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B= Good
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C= Average
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F= Failed
This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

A = 94-100
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C = 74-76
C- = 70-73
D+ = 65-69
D = 60-64
F = 0-59

COURSE POLICIES
Absences and Lateness
More than two unexcused absences will automatically result in a lower grade. Chronic lateness will also be reflected in your evaluation of participation. Regardless of the reason for your absence you will be responsible for any missed work. Travel arrangements do
not constitute a valid excuse for rescheduling exams. There are no extra credit assignments for this class.

**Format**
Please type and double-space your written work. Typing improves the clarity and readability of your work and double-spacing allows room for me to comment. Please also number and staple multiple pages. You are free to use your preferred citation style. Please use it consistently throughout your writing. If sending a document electronically, please name the file in the following format Yourlastname Coursenumber Assignment1.doc

**Grade Appeals**
Please allow two days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment. If you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short but considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph I will review the question and either augment your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

**General Decorum**
Slipping in late or leaving early, sleeping, text messaging, surfing the Internet, doing homework in class, eating, etc. are distracting and disrespectful to all participants in the course.

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism**
The relationship between students and faculty is the keystone of the educational experience at New York University in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. This relationship takes an honor code for granted and mutual trust, respect, and responsibility as foundational requirements. Thus, how you learn is as important as what you learn. A university education aims not only to produce high-quality scholars, but to also cultivate honorable citizens.

Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams to making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you
• cheat on an exam,
• submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors,
• receive help on a takehome examination that calls for independent work, or
• plagiarize.
Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning, and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated.

Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score, and/or other materials that are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following:
• copy verbatim from a book, an article, or other media;
• download documents from the Internet;
• purchase documents;
• report from other’s oral work;
• paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions; or
• copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

The Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development imposes heavy penalties for plagiarism in order to safeguard the degrees that the University grants. Cases of plagiarism are considered among the most serious of offenses.

**STUDENT RESOURCES**

- Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities](http://www.rich15.com/nyu/), 719 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.

- Writing Center: 269 Mercer Street, Room 233. Schedule an appointment online at [www.rich15.com/nyu/](http://www.rich15.com/nyu/) or just walk-in.