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## **POLS 5345.001: Topics in International Relations Seminar Critiquing Global Capitalism Spring 2023**

### **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The April 2014 publication of Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* triggered an unprecedented global debate on capitalism and inequality. Hailed and condemned by commentators on the political Left and Right as the "21<sup>st</sup> Century Marx," Piketty argues that the tendency of returns on capital to exceed the rate of economic growth has been causing a widening of inequality that threatens to undermine (liberal) democracy. Introducing graduate students to related literature on the evolution of capitalism in the age of globalization, this course provides the necessary theoretical tools and philosophical frameworks to engage in such sophisticated critiques of capitalism and equality in the global age. There are no prerequisites for this seminar. Graduate students who have not previously taken any courses in international relations, political theory, or international/political economy are welcome to enroll in this class.

While discussing economic concepts and categories linked to the critical analysis of global capitalism, this seminar focuses on questions that explore the ideational and ethical dimensions of the contemporary framework of capitalism. These questions are intended to reveal the normative foundations of our economic system. Moreover, students are encouraged to relate their own research interests to the themes and issues raised in this seminar. The organization of this course rests on the following eight main questions:

1. What is the core of Marxist critique of capitalism and how has it evolved in the writings of various structuralist and poststructuralist thinkers influenced by Marx/Engels?
2. What kinds of global transformations has capitalism undergone in the last four decades?
3. What is the link between the globalization of capitalism and inequality?
4. What are the consequences of growing inequality for contemporary class and identity formations?
5. Can the political Left recuperate effective critiques of contemporary capitalism and inequality? If so, how?
6. What is the role of ideology and major political ideas in these forms of critique?
7. What is the significance of "epistemologies of the South" for these forms of critique?
8. Is a radical overhaul of global capitalism possible—especially in light of "global crises" like the global financial crisis of 2008, the Covid 19 pandemic, or global climate change?

### **II. Student Learning Objectives**

The five principle learning objectives of this course are:

1. To understand the basic elements and functions of global capitalism and its historical evolution in modernity;
2. To gain a clear understanding of Marxist and Marx-inspired critiques of capitalism and their relevance in the global age;
3. To acquire the knowledge and skill to analyze contemporary capitalist formations with a critical eye toward the workings of asymmetrical power relations in the current global order;
4. To appreciate the role of ideas and ideologies in contributing to the constitution and reproduction of inequality in our globalizing world;
5. To produce and deepen critical forms of knowledge and understanding that contribute to emancipatory strategies of social and political transformation.

### **III. COURSE READINGS (REQUIRED)**

1. Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London and New York: Verso, 2005. ISBN 9781786633255
2. Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780674430006
3. Standing, Guy. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. ISBN: 9781849663519
4. Tucker, Robert C. *The Marx--Engels Reader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978. ISBN: 9780393090406
5. Ferguson, James. *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015

*Please note:* Each student is required to immerse themselves in 5-10 additional readings (books, academic journal articles, or review essays) pertaining to his or her research topic/theme. Please see the instructor for specific literature recommendations that relate to the themes and issues raised in this seminar to your own areas of interest.

Additional Course Readings (highly recommended)

- 1) DeLong, J. Bradford. 2022. *Slouching towards utopia: an economic history of the twentieth century*. New York: Basic Books.
- 2) Frieden, Jeffrey A. *Global Capitalism: Its Fall and Rise in the Twentieth Century*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2006. ISBN: 0393058085
- 3) Appleby, Joyce Oldham. *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism*. 1st ed. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010.
- 4) Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- 5) Harman, Chris. *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx*. Chicago, Ill.: Haymarket Books, 2010.

- 6) Karatani, Kōjin, and Michael K. Bourdaghs. *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange*.
- 7) Milanović, Branko. *The Haves and the Have-Nots: A Brief and Idiosyncratic History of Global Inequality*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.
- 8) Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. 2nd Beacon Paperback ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001.
- 9) Rothkopf, David J. *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.
- 10) Sloterdijk, Peter. *In the World Interior of Capital: Towards a Philosophical Theory of Globalization*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2014.
- 11) Stiglitz, Joseph E. *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. 1st ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2012.
- 12) Thrift, N. J. *Knowing Capitalism*. Theory, Culture & Society. London: SAGE Publications, 2005

#### **IV. COURSE STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS**

Let me encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own active learning environment—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I expect regular student attendance and participation. Students must be willing to engage in class discussions. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But, I do not accept the equation of subjective experience or unreflective “common sense” with “truth.” Be prepared to engage with the questions raised in this seminar, regardless of students’ own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing students for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant’s dictum: “Have the courage to use your own understanding!” “Mama said so” will not suffice.

The course readings and assignments have been carefully selected to generate broad in-class discussions and insightful oral presentations. Each class meeting will follow the same basic structure:

- 1) A student engages as “discussant” of the assigned readings by raising questions for discussion and leading class discussion (40 minutes)
- 2) Instructors response to discussant and class discussion (10 minutes)
- 3) Short break (10 minutes)
- 4) Instructors lecture on assigned readings of the week plus class discussion (90 minutes)

Students are required to select a topic of their choice (in consultation with me) for a **25-page research paper that relates the materials of this seminar to a topic of the student’s interest. An abstract/outline of the paper (1 page) plus a research bibliography (10-15 entries), will be due by Week 10. The final exam period at the end of the semester is reserved for a conference style presentation of your research paper in class in front of peers.**

In your term paper, you should engage in your texts and topics with as much sophistication as possible. You should indicate how your textual analysis reveals something of political significance about the larger theme/context from which it is taken. Thus you should engage in a

careful textual analysis of your themes and texts and cite appropriate, short textual passages (full footnotes). No book reports or summaries please! You are expected to incorporate in your papers external research (books, journal articles, and reviews). I am happy to give you recommendations for additional secondary sources. If you wish such advice, please talk to me about it BEFORE you get to work on your paper. Your papers represent an exercise in political interpretation. **An electronic copy (MSWord) of the research paper is due April 25 via Canvas.**

Finally, each student will be responsible for serving as a discussant of our weekly reading assignments (possibly with another student). You will be required to raise questions for class discussion that relate to self-selected textual passages of the assigned readings. You will lead these discussions and involve the entire class. You will be asked to sign up for specific weeks by the end of the third week of class. Assignments on particular topics/weeks will be made on first-come, first serve basis. In addition to the assigned readings, your presentation may include additional supportive (brief) materials (for example, handouts, charts, and/or visual materials like Power Points, video clips, or other web-based materials).

Regular class attendance is required. Please inform the instructor *in advance* if you have to miss class for really, really important reasons!

#### **V. A NOTE ON GRADING:**

You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the seminar. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the seminar (see academic dishonesty section below). Your in-class presentation and participation will count for 25% and your term paper for 75%. Thus, your seminar grade will reflect your presentation, participation, and the overall quality of your written work. Students who participate regularly during our class discussions will receive *extra credit* –meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the *higher grade*.

Please be advised that *overparticipation* and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers may hurt the quality of the course, especially if such actions tend to derail the thematic agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order to keep us on track and help *all* students to engage with the relevant materials. A significant element in academic study is the ability to learn to listen to other voices. For the purposes of this course, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

1) *Discussant Presentations:*

An “A” will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such presentations of self-selected textual passages are coherent, well organized, and adhere to the given time frame. “A” students show their critical and careful reading of the texts and generate genuine interest and excitement for their topic. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme.

2) *Term Papers:*

Much of the above pertains to term papers as well. In addition to treating the subject in a

sophisticated and creative manner, “A” papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw connections between non-obvious points; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct voice. An “A” paper in a graduate seminar should add a new wrinkle to the existing body of texts/literature. If this grade is to mean something, just doing a “good job” will result in a “B.” To get an “A,” you must demonstrate your ability to go *beyond* the expected.

## **VI. COURSE AND CLASSROOM PROTOCOLS:**

Our goal is learning, through the sharing of ideas about a complex and rich subject of great intellectual and aesthetic value. The classroom is for comments, questions, and clarifications about the assigned reading. To help achieve that goal:

- Reading assignments are to be completed in advance of the class meeting when they are scheduled to be discussed; you are expected to bring a hard copy of the assigned readings, your insights, and any puzzlements to share with the rest of the class;
- Be on time; do not go out and come back during class (except for real emergencies); do not leave early;
- Turn off and put away your cell phones;
- No private conversations;
- Laptops are permitted for occasional note taking use only; you may not withdraw from the group into your laptop;
- Participation in class discussions is a required component of the grade for classwork;
- To sum up: we want to keep the heat in the system for 150 minutes and maximize our learning experience.

## **OFFICE HOURS:**

M/W 12:30pm to 2pm and by appointment outside of scheduled office hours.

Students are **required** to meet with me at least once during the semester to discuss potential research topics. Students are also encouraged to see me during office hours on a regular basis. Please clarify any difficult readings and/or other problems as soon as they arise.

Don't wait until the last few weeks of the semester.

## **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

The UT Tyler community regards cheating as an extremely serious matter and deals severely with those who violate the standards of academic integrity.

Examples of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

- Copying from another person's test paper
- During a test, possession of materials not authorized by the person administering the test
- Discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination or the divulging of examination contents to another when an instructor has allowed the exam to be kept by the student

- Working with others in taking tests or preparing academic assignments when not authorized by the course instructor
- Obtaining by any means another person's work and submitting that work as one's own. This included the downloading of academic papers or the purchase of papers written by others.

If a student is suspected of academic dishonesty, the classroom instructor may ask the student to meet with him or her to discuss the incident. A student may admit to allegations of academic dishonesty, waive the right to a hearing and accept penalties imposed by the instructor. The student may also deny all allegations and ask to see the Dean of Student Affairs. An accused student may accept the decision of the Dean of Student Affairs or ask for a hearing before an impartial hearing officer appointed by the university. Witnesses may be called and evidence presented. The hearing officer will consider all evidence and make a decision. The decision of the hearing officer may be appealed to the President by either the student or the Dean of Student Affairs. For a discussion of possible penalties, please see <http://www.uttyler.edu/mainsite/conduct.html>.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**Note Regarding Student Absence due to Religious Observances:** Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are *requested* to inform the instructor by the second class meeting of such absences.

**Disability Statement:** If you have a disability, including a learning disability, for which you request disability support services/accommodation(s), please contact Ida MacDonald in the Disability Support Services office so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting disability support services/accommodation(s) must provide appropriate documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Support Services counselor. For more information, call or visit the Student Services Center located in the University Center, Room 282. The telephone number is 566-7079 (TDD 565-5579)." Additional information may also be obtained at the following UT Tyler Web address: <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>.

**Social Security Statement:** It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number.

**Grade Replacement:** If you are repeating this course for a grade replacement, you must file an intent to receive grade forgiveness with the registrar by the census date. Failure to file an intent to use grade forgiveness will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. A student will receive grade forgiveness (grade replacement) for only three (undergraduate student) or two (graduate student) course repeats during his/her career at UT Tyler. (2006-08 Catalog, p. 35)

## **SEMINAR SCHEDULE:**

### **Key:**

- = Assignment
- ! = Required Reading due before arriving to class
- MER = Marx Engels Reader (MER)

## **Class 1: January 9: Introduction to the Seminar (Note: MLK Day is January 16 so no class)**

### **Read:**

- ! Anand Giridharadas, “When Technology Sets off a Populist Revolt,” *New York Times*, August 29, 2016;
- ! Marx, ‘For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing’ (MER, pp. 12-15);
- ! Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, ‘preface to the English Edition’ (pp. ix-xxvii);
- ! Christopher Chase-Dunn, "[Twenty-first century deglobalization and the struggle for global justice in the world revolution of 20xx](#)," in *The Routledge Handbook of Transformative Global Studies*, ed. S. A. Hamed Hosseini et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).
- ! Anna M. Agathangelou and Mishall Ahmed, "[On the question of bodies, flesh, and global racial capitalism](#)," in *The Routledge Handbook of Transformative Global Studies*, ed. S. A. Hamed Hosseini et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2020).

## **Class 2: Marx & Engels, Historical Materialism**

- ! **Read:** Marx & Engels, “Thesis on Feuerbach” (MER, 143-145); “Communist Manifesto” (MER, 469-500); “The German Ideology” (MER, 146-165); “Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,” (online at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>)

## **Class 3: Marx, CAPITAL**

- ! **Read:** “Wage Labor and Capital” (MER, 203-218); *Capital* Volume 1 (MER, 294-365).

## **Class 4: Althusser, Ideology and the State**

- ! **Read:** Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” online at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>

## **Class 5: Boltanski and Chiapello Part I**

- **Student Presentation (discussant)**
- ! **Read:** Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, intro and part I.

## **Class 6: Boltanski and Chiapello Part II**

- **Student Presentation (discussant)**
- ! **Read:** Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, intro and part II.

### **Class 7: Boltanski and Chiapello Part III**

➤ **Student Presentation (discussant)**

! **Read:** Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, intro and part III

### **Class 8: Piketty, Parts I and II**

➤ **Student Presentation (discussant)**

! **Read:** Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Intro, Parts I & II

### **Spring Break March 13**

### **Class 9: Piketty, Part III**

➤ **Student Presentation (discussant)**

! **Read:** Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Intro, Part III

### **Class 10: Piketty, Part IV**

➤ **Student Presentation (discussant)**

➤ **1-page abstract and annotated bibliography for research paper due in class**

! **Read:** Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Intro, Part IV

### **Class 11: Standing, *The Precariat***

➤ **Student Presentation (discussant)**

! **Read:** Standing, Guy. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, both prefaces and chapters 1-4

### **Class 12: Standing, *The Precariat***

➤ **Student Presentation (discussant)**

! **Read:** Standing, Guy. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, finish the book

### **Class 13: Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish***

➤ **Student Presentation (discussant)**

! **Read:** Ferguson, Give a Man a Fish, First half

### **Class 14: Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish***

➤ **Student Presentation (discussant)**

! **Read:** Ferguson, *Give a Man a Fish*, Finish book

### **Class 15: (exam week, research presentations)**

➤ **Academic Conference style presentation of research papers**