

# New Topics in Sociology: Capitalism (SOC394H1F)

## Logistics

Meetings: Tuesdays, 9:10-11:00a.m.

Term: Fall 2024

Instructor: Professor Simeon J. Newman

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Office hours: Tuesdays 11:30a.m.-12:30p.m. in the Sociology Department (700 University Ave, 17th floor, Toronto, ON M5G 1X6) room 17-136

Teaching Assistant (TA): Yu-Hsuan Sun

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Office hours: Thursdays, 1-2p.m. at L'Espresso Bar Mercurio (321 Bloor St W, Toronto, ON M5S 1S5)

Please direct your questions to the TA, if possible. And please note that neither of us will answer questions already answered below—be sure to read the syllabus!

## Description

This course covers some of the key works in a variety of debates in the literature on capitalism (mostly but not entirely internal to Marxism). It surveys some of capitalism's basic *features*, including its relationship to nature and its crisis tendency. It covers some accounts of its *origins*, including how it was related to patriarchy and racism. And it examines some of its *dynamics*, including those surrounding industrialization, international trade, and dependency; the indirect political power of the capitalist class; and the problem of accumulation by dispossession.

## Prerequisite

The prerequisite to take this course is completion of 1.0 SOC credits at the 200 or higher level. Students without this requirement will be removed at any time discovered and without notice.

## Requirements

The course has five requirements (weighted as follows):

1) *Take-home test on Marx (10% of grade)*

Students are required to return a take-home test on Marx's *Capital*, vol. I. Hard copy due in class on 17 September. No extensions allowed!

2) *Written participation for ten (10) weeks (15% of grade)*

You must write a reading response to the texts for each of ten (10) weeks. Written participation must be completed prior to class each week and posted to the week's discussion forum on Quercus. You should make critical comments about the arguments and/or pose questions inspired by the readings. Responses should be between about 100 and 500 words in length (100 words is often plenty; as a rule, longer is usually *not* better).

3) *In-class participation (15% of grade)*

In-class participation involves raising your hand and, when called upon to speak, formulating questions or posing critiques that engage the arguments put forth in the assigned texts and/or in lectures, or referencing topics you or others introduced into the discussion forum on Quercus. You are expected to contribute to the in-class discussion regularly throughout the semester; if the professor does not know your name, you are probably not actively participating.

4) *Take-home midterm paper (30% of grade)*

One 6-page (double-spaced) argumentative paper responding to a prompt of your choice from a list of prompts to be distributed in class. The midterm paper is due (in both hard copy and electronically via Quercus) on 5 November. (There is a 1-week grace period for the midterm paper; that is, you can have a 1-week extension—you do not even need to ask. After that, further tardiness will result in significant grade deductions.)

5) *Take-home final paper (30% of grade)*

One 6-page (double-spaced) argumentative paper responding to a prompt of your choice from a list of prompts to be distributed in class. The final paper is due (only electronically via Quercus) by 10 December. (There is a 1-week grace period for the final paper; that is, you can have a 1-week extension—you do not even need to ask. No further extensions will be allowed.)

## Expectations

*Attendance:* Responsibility for being aware of what the professor says in lectures (including administrative announcements) rests with students.

*Electronic devices in the classroom:* Laptops are permitted, but only for taking notes. Using laptops for other purposes will be treated as a breach of courtesy toward others. Texting, photography, cellphone use, and audio or video recording are forbidden. Offenders will be asked to leave the classroom.

*Emailing:* Be sure to mention the course number/title in the subject line of any emails sent. Emails with questions pertaining to matters explained in the syllabus will not receive a response. Emails about tests, papers, and exams should be sent to your TA.

*Deadlines:* Work is due at the start of class on each due date.

*Evaluation of written work:* The main criteria for evaluating your papers and other written work are: clarity of the argument; originality of the argument; adequacy of evidence used to support the argument; appropriate use of sources; coherence of ideas (concise expression, smooth transitions, logical organization); engaging style (tone, stance toward audience, level of formality); and correct grammar, punctuation, and citation form. The order of these criteria does not necessarily reflect their importance for good writing or their weight in calculating your grade: each of them matters. For more help, please ask your TA.

*Avoid plagiarism:* Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with University of Toronto's plagiarism policy. See the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). Especially relevant is the passage noting that it is an offence for a student knowingly "to represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e., to commit plagiarism." Plagiarism is considered unacceptable and very severe sanctions often result.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin service is described on the Turnitin web site.

Assignments not submitted through Turnitin will receive a grade of zero (0%), unless a student instead provides, along with their paper, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via Turnitin) is in place because, strictly speaking, using Turnitin is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

### **Artificial intelligence**

You are allowed to make use of technology, including artificial intelligence tools, to contribute to your understanding of course materials and as learning aids or to help produce assignments. But bear in mind that a college student familiar with the course material is far smarter than AI. Thus, a top grade can be achieved without using AI, whereas relying on too much on AI will not have the same result. Regardless of the means you use, you are ultimately responsible for the quality of the work you submit.

If you use artificial intelligence tools in an assignment in this course, you must document it in an appendix. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, precisely how they were used, and precisely how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work. This

is difficult to do well. And violation of these expectations will be considered an academic offense and cause for major grade reduction or for failure. So, while using AI may sound easy, it is actually very difficult to do, and it can be perilous.

## **Miscellaneous**

*Copyright:* Course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42. These materials are made available to you for your own study purposes and cannot be shared outside of the class or "published" in any way. Lectures, whether in person or online, cannot be recorded without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials or any recordings you may make to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.

*Missed deadlines and tests:* Students who miss a paper deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that paper or test. If a student encounters circumstances beyond their control, miss a paper or test for this reason, and wish to seek the corresponding credit, they must send the instructor a request for consideration within two days of missing the deadline. They must also document their request with one of the following:

- Absence declaration via ACORN
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

A request to take a make-up test should be accompanied by contact information (student email address) so the date, time, and place of the make-up test can be communicated. If a student who misses a test is offered a make-up test, this will constitute a second chance. They will not have a third chance to take the test. The grade assigned for a missed test will be zero.

*Help from your Teaching Assistant (TA):* Your TA will hold scheduled office hours and respond to your emails. Please be judicious in your use of email. Use it only for questions that are clear and specific. Before sending a question by email, be sure to check the course syllabus to see if an answer is there. Emails should not be viewed as an alternative to doing the assigned reading or attending lectures. For more in-depth discussions of the lectures, readings, tests, and papers, take advantage of your TA's office hours.

*Accessibility:* If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/accessibility-services/> as soon as possible.

## **How to access the literature**

A hard-copy reader (course pack) will be available for purchase at the University of Toronto Bookstore (214 College St., Toronto, M5T 3A1). All readings are included in the reader. It is the only way the readings will be made available to students through the class. Buy a copy if you will take the course.

# Schedule

1st SESSION (3 September): *Orientation to the course*

Read the syllabus!

## **Some basic features of capitalism, according to Marx(ists)**

2nd SESSION (10 September): *Alienation of work and exploitation of workers*

Marx, Karl. [1867] 1978. Selections from chapters 1, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, and 16 of *Capital*, volume I. Pp. 302-64, 376-84, 417-19 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton.

3rd SESSION (17 September): *Incompatibility with nature*

### **Take-home test on Marx due 17 September!!!** **(Submit as hard copy in class—no exceptions)**

Foster, John Bellamy. 2000. “The Alienation of Nature and Humanity,” “Marx’s Theory of Metabolic Rift,” “Marx’s Analysis of Sustainability,” and “Toward the Society of Associated Producers.” Pp. 72-78, 155-77 in *Marx’s Ecology: Materialism and Nature*. New York: Monthly Review.

4th SESSION (24 September): *Crisis tendency*

Mandel, Ernest. 1975. “‘Long Waves’ in the History of Capitalism.” Pp. 108-46 in *Late Capitalism*. Translated by Joris De Bres. London: NLB.

## **Origins and inputs**

5th SESSION (1 October): *Political Marxism*

Wood, Ellen Meiksins. 2002. “Part II: The Origin of Capitalism.” Pp. 71-121 in *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. London and New York: Verso.

6th SESSION (8 October): *World-system theory*

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2004. “The Modern World-System as a Capitalist World-Economy: Production, Surplus-Value, and Polarization” and “The Rise of the States-System: Sovereign Nation-States, Colonies, and the Interstate System.” Pp. 23-59 in *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham: Duke University Press.

7th SESSION (15 October): *Patriarchy and capitalism*

Federici, Silvia. [2004] 2021. Selections from “The Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women.” Pp. 59-79, 93-118, 125-36 in *Caliban and the Witch*. London: Penguin.

D’Emilio, John. 1993. “Capitalism and Gay Identity.” Pp. 467-76 in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, edited by Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin. New York and London: Routledge.

8th SESSION (22 October): *Racism and capitalism*

Williams, Eric. 1944. “The Origin of Negro Slavery.” Pp. 3-29 in *Capitalism & Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Robinson, Cedric J. [1983] 2000. “Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalist Development.” Pp. 9-28 in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press.

**No class 29 October**  
**(Reading week)**

**Dynamics and social implications**

9th SESSION (5 November): *Industrialization (core), triangular trade, dependency (periphery)*

**Mid-term paper due 5 November!!!**  
**(Submit as hard copy in class and as electronic copy via Quercus)**

Schumpeter, Joseph A. [1943] 2003. “The Process of Creative Destruction.” Pp. 81-86 in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. London and New York: Routledge.

Williams, Eric. 1944. “The Triangular Trade.” Pp. 51-57 in *Capitalism & Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Dos Santos, Theotonio. 1970. “The Structure of Dependence.” *American Economic Review* 60(2):231-36.

10th SESSION (12 November): *Regulated capitalism (social democracy) and social exclusion*

Castells, Manuel. 1978. “Collective Consumption and Urban Contradictions in Advanced Capitalism.” Pp. 15-36 in *City, Class, and Power*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Virdee, Satnam. 2014. "Racism and the Contradictions of Socialist Nationalism." Pp. 32-55 in *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider*. London: Red Globe Press.

11th SESSION (19 November): *Contemporary crises and the power of capital (capital strike)*

Streeck, Wolfgang. 2014. "From Legitimation Crisis to Fiscal Crisis." Pp. 1-46 in *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*. London: Verso.

12th SESSION (26 November): *Dispossession*

Harvey, David. 2005. "Accumulation by Dispossession." Pp. 137-82 in *The New Imperialism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

**Final paper due 10 December!!!**  
**(Submit as electronic copy via Quercus)**