

SOCI 431: Issues in Social Theorizing – Reading Marx¹

Instructor: Dr. Peyman Vahabzadeh

Course Description:

This course is called “Reading Marx,” and this is exactly what we are going to do in this course: we mainly read the original, classical works of Karl Marx, plus a small number of secondary literature that expand on specific components of Marx’s works. Karl Marx provided the first and most influential critique of capitalist society and no critique of the contemporary, possibly fatal, global crisis will be complete without incorporating the insights of Marx. The students are required to keep up with the readings and engage with the material in class.

Course Outcomes/Objectives:

By the end of this course, the students will have a sufficient and foundational knowledge of Marx. They will understand that the critique of status quo should be systemic. They will learn that no critique of contemporary society is sufficient without a ruthless critique of capitalist production, distribution, and exploitation of labour.

Course Pre/Co-requisites:

SOCI 210 – Classical Social Theorizing; minimum third-year standing; and declared Major in Sociology; or permission of the instructor.

SOCI 309 – Contemporary Social Theorizing is also recommended prior to taking this course.

Topics May Include:

Critique, capitalism, epochs, labour, alienation, surplus value, use and exchange values, commodification and commodity fetishism, essence of humanity, human-nature relationship, colonization.

Required Resources May Include:

R. C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2nd ed., 1978). A small number of supplementary readings will be provided on library reserve or such.

Grading:

Grading may be based on seminar participation, two expository short papers, and a final, take-home exam in essay form.

Important Note:

This is a fully in-person class. No Brightspace activity is required. Class attendance and participation are mandatory and evaluated. Classes mix lectures and seminar discussions. Lectures will not be recorded or posted. No visuals (Power Point) are provided.

¹ This online outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.