

History 706: Marxism, Hegel and the Study of Asia

Instructor Viren Murthy

Meeting Time: Monday 3:30-5:25

Room: Humanities 5245

Contact Information: vmurthy2@wisc.edu

Course Description:

This course will operate at two levels. We will begin by familiarizing ourselves with certain basic concepts of Marxism beginning with Marx's early works and then proceeding to study his magnum opus, namely *Das Kapital*. Through such readings, we will analyze categories, such as subjectivity, recognition, commodity fetishism, surplus-value, alienation, and the changing composition of capital. The second part of the course will examine attempts to use such concepts to understand elements of Asian/non-Western history [China, Japan, India, and other places in the Global South]. We will read texts that attempt to bring the abstract categories of Marxist theory into dialectical relation with Asian realities. Marxism has always been about changing the world and consequently, the analysis that we cover in this course are not merely of theoretical interest. The issues covered in the course concerns questions such as how to understand Chinese, Japanese and Indian patterns of development in relation to the global capitalist world. We will specifically note how different Marxists have tried to make sense of Asian nations using various interpretations of Marxist categories. Through these reading, the course poses a larger question about the relevance of Marxism for our present.

Learning Goals:

After taking this course, students will be able to understand the basic concepts in Marxism, which has been the foundation of for numerous governments. However, during the first half of the course, our goal is not merely to understand Marxist ideology as it was implemented, but as a theory embedded in the primary texts of Karl Marx. Moreover, we will try to understand Hegel's ideas beyond trite formulations about linear history. For this reason, we will pay close attention to certain key chapters of Marx's *Capital* Volume One, along with ideas from some of Marx's early works. Our goal is simultaneously to understand ways we can grasp the global dynamics of capital as it is mediated by the concrete conditions of Asian historical trajectories. We will also ask whether the various experiences in Asia should cause us to rethink or reinterpret basic concepts in Marxism.

Grading:

Attendance and participation 10%

Weekly Reading Response 10 %

(A 200-250 word reading-response will be due on the Sunday of every week)

In-class Presentation #1 15%

In-class Presentation #2 15%

Oral Presentation of paper 15%

Final Paper 35%

Required Texts:

All readings will be provided on-line on the Canvas site, but students may wish to order specific books, such as Karl Marx's *Capital*.

Weekly Schedule of Readings and Assignments

(Schedule is subject to change based on the judgment of the instructor)

Week 2 9/11 : Introduction, Preparation for Prof. Nojiri's Talk

Readings: Moishe Postone, "Critique and Historical Transformation"

Optional:

Frederic Jameson, "Nostalgia for the Present"

Week 3 9/18 : Visit from Eichi Nojiri

Presentation--Eiichi Nojiri, "Negativity, History and the Organic Composition of Capital: Towards a Theory of the Transformation of Subjectivity in Japan"

9/20. Nojiri Presentation: "Japanese Popular Culture and the Contradictions of Late Capitalism"
University Club 313—same time as the class

Week 4 9/25: The Early Marx

Readings: Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question"

Paul Thomas, "Alien Politics" (Verso, 1994)

Charles Barbour, "Karl Marx, Bruno Bauer and the Ends of Classical German Theology"

Rei Tarada, Chapter 9

Optional

Murthy, "Moishe Postone and the Possibility of Jewish Marxism"

Week 5 October 2: The Commodity, Use-Value, Exchange Value, Fetishism

Readings: Marx, *Capital* Volume One (Penguin edition), Prefaces, Part I, Chapters 1-3

Week 6, 10/9: Mau, *Mute Compulsion*

Introduction, Chapter 8

Justin Evans, "Contradiction, Capital and Reason", *Critical Historical Studies*, Spring 2023.

Week 7: 10/16 Marx, India and Islam

Prasanta Dhar, *The Popular Front*, Introduction,

Subho Basu, Introduction, Chapter 6.

Andrew Sartori, *Bengal Culture Concept*, Introduction

Week 8. 10/ 23 Manny Ness Visits and Leads Discussion

Essays suggested by Prof. Ness TBD
Essay on Migration
Another Talk by Ness on 10/25 Noon.

Week 9. 10/ 30 Primitive Accumulation

Readings: *Capital*, Chapters 26, 27, 32, 33
Patnaik, “Primitive Accumulation”
Perleman, “Primitive Accumulation”

Week 10. November 6: Origins of Capitalism and Imperialism

Debate about Imperialism between Prabhat and Utsa Patnaik and David Harvey, *Theory of Imperialism*, Preface, Introduction, Harvey’s critique and the Patnaik’s response (at the end of the book) Wood, Origins, Introduction, 125-193.
Annievas, “What’s at Stake?”

Week 11: November 13 Chinese Capitalism, Indian Capitalism and The Great Divergence

Pomeranz, *Great Divergence*, Introduction.
Brenner-Issett Critique of Pomeranz
Yazdani, Introduction

Week 12 November 20 Japan, Area Studies and Deconstruction

Harry Harootunian, History’s Disquiet, 1-59. Calichman, Critique of Harootunian.

Week 13 November 27 Hegel and De-colonial Theory in Latin America

Roccio Zambrana Curti Lounge—same time as class

Rei Tarada, *Hegel and Anti-Blackness*, Chapters 2-3
“Boundary—How to Appropriately Hegel”
Another talk by Zambrana on 11/28 9am.

December 4. Presentations

December 11 Presentations

Final Paper Due: December 16 by 5pm