

CGS 2004G CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM
The Centre for Global Studies
Huron University College
Winter 2019
Dr. Katherine Lawless



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Capitalism has been touted as the best worst economic system in the history of humankind. This course takes an in-depth look at the socio-economic form of capitalism, and examines its development and spread in a rapidly globalizing world. We begin by investigating capitalism's historical and philosophical foundations with a particular focus on Marx's formative critique. We continue by exploring four fundamental features of the capitalist economy: primitive accumulation, private property, the division of labour, and commodification. We conclude by considering important contemporary feminist, postcolonial, and indigenous critiques along with possible alternatives for post-capitalist futures. Throughout the course, we pay special attention to the ways in which capitalism participates in the reproduction of social inequality on a global scale.

Course Information

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| Professor | Dr. Katherine Lawless |
| Contact Information | 705-438-7224 x705; klawles@uwo.ca |
| Office Hours | Thurs 11:30-12:30 in A206 |
| Class Information | Thurs 8:30-11:30 in W6 |

Prerequisite(s): 0.5 course from Centre for Global Studies 3001F/G–3005F/G or permission of the Centre for Global Studies.

Learning Outcomes

On completing this course, students should be able to:

- 1) Describe the key characteristics of a capitalist economy
- 2) Explain how capitalism works, historically and in the present
- 3) Evaluate the arguments of capitalism's proponents and critics through close readings of core texts
- 4) Analyze the effects of capitalism from philosophical, Marxist, feminist, postcolonial and indigenous perspectives
- 5) Evaluate potential alternatives to capitalism
- 6) Demonstrate the academic skills of close reading and scholarly critique

Methods of Instruction and Course Conduct

This course is predominantly lecture-based, supplemented by class discussion and small group activities. Students are expected to come to class having completed all required readings and prepared to engage in scholarly conversation.

Course Requirements

| Assignment | Worth | Due Date | Learning Outcome |
|-----------------------|-------|----------|------------------|
| Participation | 10% | Ongoing | ALL |
| Midterm | 15% | Feb 7 | 1, 2 |
| Critique 1 | 20% | Feb 28 | 1, 3, 6 |
| Critique 2 | 25% | Mar 21 | 1, 2, 6 |
| Take-home Exam | 30% | Apr 11 | 3, 4, 5 |

Assignment Descriptions

Participation

Your participation grade is based on attendance and in-class participation, which means coming to class on time having done all the assigned readings, and being prepared with questions and/or contributions based on these readings. As a rule, speaking more often does not mean you will receive a higher participation grade; the content of your contribution is equally important. Half a percent will be deducted for each unexcused absence.

Midterm

The midterm exam will take place in class on Feb 7 and cover course concepts and theories from the first four weeks.

Critique 1

This first short essay asks you to conduct a critique of one of the texts, concepts or theories from the first six weeks of class. Length: 500-750 words

Critique 2

This second short essay asks you analyze an episode of *Black Mirror* (“Fifteen Million Merits”) by applying the key concepts from Unit 2. Length: 750-1000 words

Take-Home Exam

This exam is comprised of two essay questions to be answered through close readings of the course texts in Unit 3.

Course Texts

Links to all readings will be provided on OWL.

Reading Schedule

| Date | Topic | Assigned Reading | Assignment Dates |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Unit 1: Foundations | | | |
| Jan 10 | What is capitalism? | Fulcher, Chapters 1 (What is capitalism?) (1-18) Chang, <i>23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism</i> , Thing 1: There is no such thing as a free market | |
| Jan 17 | Historical Developments | Pomeranz, <i>The Great Divergence</i> , Introduction (3-28) | |

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|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------|
| | | Bryant, "The West and the Rest Revisited: Debating Capitalist Origins" (403-440) | |
| Jan 24 | Philosophical Foundations | <p>Adam Smith, <i>The Wealth of Nations</i>, Chapters 1, 2, 4 (8-17, 22-27)</p> <p>Keynes, <i>The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money</i>, chapters 1 & 2 (11pp)</p> <p>Friedman, "Capitalism and Freedom" (3-10)</p> <p>Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>, Chapter 2 (13-38)</p> | |
| Jan 31 | Marx's Critique | <p>Marx, "The German Ideology" (excerpt)</p> <p>Marx, "The Grundrisse" (excerpt)</p> <p>Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (3-39)</p> | |
| Feb 7 | N/A | N/A | Midterm Exam |
| Unit 2: Key Concepts | | | |
| Feb 14 | Primitive Accumulation | <p>Marx, The Secret of Primitive Accumulation (873-876)</p> <p>Perelman, Chapter 2, "The Theory of Primitive Accumulation (25-37)</p> <p>Harvey, "The New Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession" (63-87)</p> | |
| READING WEEK (Feb 19-22) | | | |

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| Feb 28 | Private Property | Harvey, <i>Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism</i> , Contradictions 3 & 4 (38-61) Marx, <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i> , “Private Property and Communism” | Critique 1 Due |
| Mar 7 | Division of Labour | Harvey, <i>Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism</i> , Contra. 5 & 9 (62-69, 112-130) Perelman, Chapter 4, The Social Division of Labor and Household Production (59-91) | |
| Mar 14 | Commodification | Marx, <i>Capital Volume 1</i> , Chapter 1, Sections 1 & 4 (125-131, 163-177) Harvey, <i>Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism</i> , Contra. 1 & 2 (15-37) Debord, <i>Society of the Spectacle</i> , Sections 1-10, 34-53 | |
| Unit 3: Contemporary Critique | | | |
| Mar 21 | Feminist Critique | Dalla Costa, “Capitalism and Reproduction” (1-7) Federici, <i>Caliban and the Witch</i> , “Introduction” (11-19) Mies, <i>Patriarchy & Accumulation on a World Scale</i> , Chapter 4 | Critique 2 Due |

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| | | “Housewifization International” (112-144) | |
| Mar 28 | Postcolonial and Indigenous Critique | Chakrabarty, “ <i>Subaltern Studies</i> and Postcolonial Historiography” (9-32) Coulthard, <i>Red Skin White Masks</i> , Introduction and Chapter 2 “For the Land” (1-17, 51-78) | |
| Apr 4 | Post-capitalist Futures? | Frase, <i>Four Futures</i> , Introduction (1-34) Fisher, <i>Capitalist Realism</i> , chapters 1-3 (1-20) Gibson-Graham et al, “Thinking with Marx for a Feminist Postcapitalist Politics” (1-11) Chang, <i>23 Things They Don’t Tell You About Capitalism</i> , “How to rebuild the world economy” | |
| Take-Home Exam Due April 11! | | | |
| **Please note that the reading schedule is subject to change. All attempts will be made to give appropriate notice in class and/or on OWL. | | | |

COURSE POLICIES

Email

I will make every attempt to reply to emails on the same day if they are received between the hours of 9am and 6pm. I do not check my emails after 6pm on weekdays or at all on weekends. Kindly allow 48 hours before sending a gentle reminder. Please contact me using only your university email account and include the course code in your subject line. In the case of an urgent message, please contact me instead by telephone.

Office Hours and Appointments

If you wish to utilize office hours, please contact me at least 24 hours in advance to make an appointment. Appointments are limited and granted on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you are unable to attend allocated office hours, please contact me to discuss an alternative appointment

time. Unfortunately, while I will do my best to accommodate, I cannot guarantee appointments outside of my office hours. For any appointment, please come prepared with specific questions and concerns as appointments are limited to 15 minutes each.

Class Cancellations

In the event of unexpected class cancellations, I will post an announcement on OWL as soon as possible. Every attempt will be made to post cancellations in advance.

Grading Scale

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|--------------|---|
| A+ (90-100) | Superb. No mistakes, well-written, well-researched, original thesis. One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level. |
| A (80-89) | Excellent. No mistakes, well-written and distinctive but not original. Superior work that is clearly above average. |
| B (70-79) | Good. No serious mistakes, well-written but not distinctive. Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory. |
| C (60-69) | Fine. Some errors, but demonstrates a basic understanding of the material. Competent work, meeting basic requirements. |
| D (50-59) | Poor. Many errors, and a dubious grasp of the material. Fair work, minimally acceptable. |
| F (below 50) | Fail. Problematic on all fronts. No real grasp of material or complete lack of effort. |

Late Assignments

5% will be deducted per day up until one week. I will not accept assignments that are more than one week late unless you have been granted academic accommodation.

Assignment Discussion and Grade Appeals

I will provide detailed feedback on all assignments to make the assigned grade clear. If you wish to discuss your grade you must make an in-person appointment during a pre-designated time that will be announced when the assignment is returned – I will not discuss grades via email. Before your appointment, please review the feedback in relation to assignment guidelines and grading scale (above). Appointments will not be granted if more than one week has passed since the assignment was returned. If after discussing your grade with me you wish to appeal it, you must make a request in writing that shows how your paper meets the necessary requirements. Be aware that reassessment of the assignment may potentially result in *a grade decrease*.



Appendix to Course Outlines

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it without them, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. If you enrol in this course despite having already

taken an antirequisite you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. Removals for these reasons may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites or for having already taken the antirequisites.

Conduct of Students in Classes, Lectures, and Seminars

Membership in the community of Huron University College and the University of Western Ontario implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. The academic and social privileges granted to each student are conditional upon the fulfillment of these responsibilities.

In the classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Students can avoid any unnecessary disruption of the class by arriving in sufficient time to be seated and ready for the start of the class, by remaining silent while the professor is speaking or another student has the floor, and by taking care of personal needs prior to the start of class. If a student is late, or knows that he/she will have to leave class early, be courteous: sit in an aisle seat and enter and leave quietly.

Please see the *Code of Student Conduct* at:

<https://huronuc.on.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/Code%20of%20Student%20Conduct.pdf>

Technology

It is not appropriate to use technology (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and is distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Academic Accommodation for Medical/Non-Medical Grounds

Students who require special accommodation for tests and/or other course components must make the appropriate arrangements with the Student Development Centre (SDC). Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at:

http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/?requesting_acc

(a) Medical Grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of final grade: Go Directly to Academic Advising

University Senate policy, which can be found at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf,

requires that all student requests for accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of the final grade be made directly to the academic advising office of the home faculty (for Huron students, the “home faculty” is Huron), with supporting documentation in the form (minimally) of the Senate-approved Student Medical Certificate found at:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform_15JUN.pdf.

The documentation is submitted in confidence and will not be shown to instructors. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the

presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Dean. The instructor's decision is appealable to the Dean.

**(b) Accommodation on Medical Grounds for assignments worth less than 10% of final grade:
Consult Instructor Directly**

When seeking accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth less than 10% of the final course grade, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. The instructor may not collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Dean. The instructor's decision is appealable to the Dean.

(c) Non-medical Grounds: Consult Instructor Directly

Where the grounds for seeking accommodation are not medical, the student should contact the instructor directly. Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor. Apart from the exception noted below, academic advisors will not be involved in the process of accommodation for non-medical reasons.

Where a student seeks accommodation on non-medical grounds where confidentiality is a concern, the student should approach an academic advisor with any documentation available. The advisors will contact the instructor after the student's request is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the challenge without breaching confidence. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified that significant circumstances are affecting or have affected the student's ability to complete work, and the student will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. Before denying a request for accommodation where documentation has been submitted to an academic advisor, the instructor will consult with the Dean. The instructor's decision is appealable to the Dean.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Statement on Academic Integrity

The International Centre for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as "a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behaviour that enable academic communities to translate ideals to action." (CAI Fundamental Values Project, 1999).

A lack of academic integrity is indicated by such behaviours as the following:

Cheating on tests;

Fraudulent submissions online;
 Plagiarism in papers submitted (including failure to cite and piecing together unattributed sources);
 Unauthorized resubmission of course work to a different course;
 Helping someone else cheat;
 Unauthorized collaboration;
 Fabrication of results or sources;
 Purchasing work and representing it as one's own.

Academic Integrity: Importance and Impact

Being at university means engaging with a variety of communities in the pursuit and sharing of knowledge and understanding in ways that are clear, respectful, efficient, and productive. University communities have established norms of academic integrity to ensure responsible, honest, and ethical behavior in the academic work of the university, which is best done when sources of ideas are properly and fully acknowledged and when responsibility for ideas is fully and accurately represented.

In the academic sphere, unacknowledged use of another's work or ideas is not only an offence against the community of scholars and an obstacle to academic productivity. It may also be understood as fraud and may constitute an infringement of legal copyright.

A university is a place for fulfilling one's potential and challenging oneself, and this means rising to challenges rather than finding ways around them. The achievements in an individual's university studies can only be fairly evaluated quantitatively through true and honest representation of the actual learning done by the student. Equity in assessment for all students is ensured through fair representation of the efforts by each.

Acting with integrity at university constitutes a good set of practices for maintaining integrity in later life. Offences against academic integrity are therefore taken very seriously as part of the university's work in preparing students to serve, lead, and innovate in the world at large.

A university degree is a significant investment of an individual's, and the public's, time, energies, and resources in the future, and habits of academic integrity protect that investment by preserving the university's reputation and ensuring public confidence in higher education.

Students found guilty of plagiarism will suffer consequences ranging from a grade reduction to failure in the course to expulsion from the university. In addition, a formal letter documenting the offence will be filed in the Dean's Office, and this record of the offence will be retained in the Dean's Office for the duration of the student's academic career at Huron University College.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must

see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Policy on Special Needs

Students who require special accommodation for tests and/or other course components must make the appropriate arrangements with the Student Development Centre (SDC). Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at:

http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/?requesting_acc

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Class Cancellations

In the event of a cancellation of class, every effort will be made to post that information on the Huron website, <https://huronuc.on.ca/about/accessibility> ("Cancellations and Closures").

Mental Health @ Western

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwo.com/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Academic Advising

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation [see above], students should contact an Academic Advisor in Huron's Student Support Services (huronsss@uwo.ca). An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronuc.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/academic-advising>

Department Chairs and Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about their individual programs. Their contact information can be found on the Huron website at:

<https://huronuc.ca/student-life-campus/art-social-science>