

CGS 2004F CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM
(Prerequisite: 0.5 CGS course at 1000-1099 level,
or permission of the Centre for Global Studies)
The Centre for Global Studies
Huron University College
Fall 2017



COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the socio-economic form of “capitalism” and its modes of representation. Through a selection of historical and contemporary critiques, we examine capitalism’s key features and their changing function in a globalized world. Our main concern is how to adequately represent the totalizing yet largely invisible system of global capitalism in the face of persistent and widespread social inequality. We begin with Marx’s foundational critique of traditional political economy to consider the ways in which capitalism is differently represented from the positions of the worker and the capitalist. Subsequently, early post-Marxist critiques will allow us to explore the relationship between consumer capitalism and mass mediation, while more recent feminist and indigenous critiques will offer important rejoinders to the theory of primitive accumulation from the perspective of historically exploited populations. In our investigation, we explore Jameson’s methodology of cognitive mapping to imagine the ways in which cultural critique might offer clues as to the scope and limits of global capitalism and its speculative futures. In general, we are interested in both *representations of capitalism* (theoretical, aesthetic, cinematic, etc.) and *capitalism’s representations* (value, the commodity, the money form, etc).

Course Information

<i>Professor:</i> Dr. Katherine Lawless <i>Office:</i> A206 <i>Phone:</i> 519-438-7224 x705 <i>Email:</i> klawles@uwo.ca (note: only one “s”)	<i>Class Times:</i> Monday, 9:30am-12:20pm <i>Classroom:</i> W108 <i>Office Hour:</i> Tuesday, 11:30am-12:30pm (by appointment only)
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Learning Outcomes

Upon completing the course, students should be able to:

- 1) Describe the key elements of a capitalist economy
- 2) Conduct close readings of texts by capitalism’s major critics and evaluate their arguments
- 3) Analyze and compare different critiques of primitive accumulation
- 4) Use the concept of cognitive mapping to examine historical and contemporary representations of capitalism
- 5) Understand and apply the methodology of critique to course concepts and texts
- 6) Engage enthusiastically and critically with ideas from readings and/or lectures in writing and class discussion

Modes of Evaluation

Participation		10%
Reading Quizzes	(x10)	20%
Written Critiques	(x2)	50%
In-class Essay		20%

Assignment Descriptions

Participation (10%)

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 (0.5%) will be deducted for each unexcused absence.

Reading Quizzes (20%)

Reading quizzes will take place during the first 15 minutes of every class beginning in Week 2. Each quiz will be composed of five questions regarding the assigned readings for that week. Missed quizzes will receive a grade of zero and cannot be made up. There are 10 reading quizzes in total.

Written Critiques

Over the semester, you will write two short papers designed to elicit critiques based on the works we encounter in this course. You will choose one of two options for each of the two critiques. There are a limited number of spaces open for each option for which you will sign up in advance.

First Critique (20%):

Option One

This essay requires you to examine the ways in which the methodology of critique is applied to both social phenomena and written texts. Drawing on my description of critique in the opening lecture, describe how either Marx or Jameson uses this methodology to delineate the scope and limits of capitalism.

Length: 750 words

Due: October 2

Option Two

This essay requires you to examine the ways in which the concept of primitive accumulation has been critiqued and redeployed in post-Marxist critical discourse. Begin by providing a definition of Marx's concept of primitive accumulation in your own words with support from the text. Explain how it is modified by Jameson, Federici or Coulthard and elaborate on the stakes of this modification using relevant examples from the text.

Length: 750 words

Due: October 23

Second Critique (30%):

Option One

This essay requires you to examine the relationship between capitalism and representation in twentieth-century critical theory by conducting a close reading of Benjamin or Debord. In your essay, you must summarize the author's understanding of this relationship and evaluate the author's arguments.

Length: 1000 words

Due: November 6

Option Two

This essay requires you to use the method of cognitive mapping to conduct a cultural critique of one episode of the television show *Black Mirror*, which we will screen in class in Week 8. In your essay, pay close attention to the representation of things like race, gender and class, as well as the questions of consumption and mediation.

Length: 1000 words

Due: November 20

In-class Essay (20%)

This in-class essay requires you to examine post-capitalist futures. It asks you to set Frase in conversation with Fisher to argue for or against the claim that there are no alternatives to capitalist realism. You will be given 1 hour to write this essay. You can consult your course texts and class notes as you write.

Length: 5-7 pages, handwritten

N.B. In all the written assignments, ideal answers will stay close to the text and contain a strong, clear thesis statement or central argument.

Methods of Instruction and Course Conduct

This course uses a combination of lectures and class discussion to investigate key ideas in the critique of capitalism. Lectures are predominantly oral with some multi-media elements. They are grounded in and provide a detailed elaboration of the course readings, as well as relevant historical context and secondary commentary when necessary. Class discussions are meant to provide a respectful forum for questioning, clarifying and working through ideas presented in the lectures.

You are expected to take responsibility for your own learning by:

1. Completing ALL readings prior to class
2. Coming prepared with questions and/or points of discussion
3. Maintaining regular attendance and notifying me of any necessary absences in advance
4. Consulting the course syllabus regularly for reading schedules and assignment deadlines

This is a heavy reading course – you should be prepared to spend several hours a week doing the assigned readings. In addition, many of the texts we cover have a significant theoretical component. As a result, you should be prepared to read slowly and thoroughly. While links to some of the readings are posted in electronic form, you should **always bring annotated hard copies** to class as we will refer to the text often.

Required Texts

Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. University of Minnesota Press, 2014. 229pp.

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. NY: Zone Books, 1994. 154pp.

Frase, Peter. *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism*. NY: Verso, 2016. 150pp.

Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*. NY: Autonomedia, 2004. 242pp.

Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative?* Zero Books, 2009. 92pp.

Jameson, Fredric. *Representing Capital: A Reading of Volume One*. NY: Verso, 2011. 151pp.

Toscano, Alberto and Jeff Kinkle. *Cartographies of the Absolute*. Zero Books, 2015. 296pp.

Reading Schedule

Date	Topic	Assigned Reading	Additional Info
<i>Week 1:</i> Sept. 11	Introduction and Methodology	Course Outline	<i>Recommended:</i> Foucault, "What is Critique?" (OWL)
<i>Week 2:</i> Sept. 18	Critique of Political Economy	Marx, "The Fragment on Machines" and "The Secret of Primitive Accumulation" (OWL)	Reading Quiz #1
<i>Week 3:</i> Sept. 25	Critique I	Jameson, <i>Representing Capital</i> , "Introduction," Chapters 1-3 and 7	Reading Quiz #2 <i>Recommended:</i> Jameson, "A New Reading of <i>Capital</i> " (OWL)
<i>Week 4:</i> Oct. 2	Critique II	Federici, <i>Caliban and the Witch</i> , "Introduction," "The Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women," and "Colonization and Christianization" (OWL) Midnight Notes, "Introduction to the New Enclosures" and "The Debt Crisis, Africa and the New Enclosures (OWL)	Reading Quiz #3 First Critique, Option One Due <i>Recommended:</i> "Silvia Federici: Primitive Accumulation of Capital and Violence Against Women" "Witch tales: An Interview with Silvia Federici"
READING WEEK: October 9-13			
<i>Week 5:</i> Oct. 16	Critique III	Coulthard, <i>Red Skin, White Masks</i> , "Introduction," Chapter 2 and "Conclusion"	Reading Quiz #4 <i>Recommended:</i> "The Colonialism of the Present – An Interview with Glen Coulthard"
<i>Week 6:</i> Oct. 23	Capitalism and Representation I	Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the	Reading Quiz #5

		Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version)” (OWL)	First Critique, Option Two Due
Week 7: Oct. 30	Capitalism and Representation II	Debord, <i>Society of the Spectacle</i>	Reading Quiz #6
Week 8: Nov. 6	Cognitive Mapping I	Jameson, <i>The Geopolitical Aesthetic</i> , “Introduction” (OWL) Toscano & Kinkle, <i>Cartographies of the Absolute</i> , “Introduction” and Part 1	Reading Quiz #7 Second Critique, Option One Due <i>Recommended:</i> Tally, “Jameson’s Project of Cognitive Mapping” (OWL) <i>Screening:</i> <i>The Wire</i> , Season 1, Episode 1: “The Target” (62min)
Week 9: Nov. 13	Cognitive Mapping II	Toscano & Kinkle, <i>Cartographies of the Absolute</i> , Chapter 4	Reading Quiz #8 <i>Recommended:</i> Kraniauskas, “Elasticity of Demand: Reflections on <i>The Wire</i> ” (OWL) <i>Screening:</i> <i>Black Mirror</i> , Season 1, Episode 2: “Fifteen Million Merits” (61min)
Week 10: Nov. 20	Post-Capitalist Futures I	Fisher, <i>Capitalist Realism: Is there no alternative?</i>	Reading Quiz #9 Second Critique, Option Two Due <i>Recommended:</i> Robin Hahnel and Erik Olin Wright, <i>Alternatives to Capitalism: Proposals for a Democratic Economy</i>

<i>Week 11: Nov. 27</i>	Post-Capitalist Futures II	Frase, <i>Four Futures: Life After Capitalism</i>	Reading Quiz #10
<i>Week 12: Dec. 4</i>	Final Class	None	In-class Essay

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

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 Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Provost and Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision 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.

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 Rights and Responsibilities* at:

<http://www.huronuc.ca/CurrentStudents/StudentLifeandSupportServices/StudentDiscipline>

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 Provost and Dean. The instructor’s decision is appealable to the Provost and 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 Provost and Dean. The instructor’s decision is appealable to the Provost and 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 Provost and Dean. The instructor's decision is appealable to the Provost and 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 Provost and Dean's Office, and this record of the offence will be retained in the Provost and 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 Provost and 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 Provost and Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Provost and Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Provost and 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, <http://www.huronuc.ca/AccessibilityInfo> ("Class Cancellations").

Mental Health @ Western

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/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: <http://www.huronuc.ca/CurrentStudents/AcademicAdvisorsandServices>

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: <http://www.huronuc.ca/Academics/FacultyofArtsandSocialScience>