

**Department of Sociology
University of Calgary**

**SOCI 401.50
Sociology of Capitalism
Winter 2017**

Course Times: Monday 11:00-11:50am, Wednesday 11:00-11:50am, Friday 11:00-11:50am
Course Location: SH288

Instructor: Dr. Dean Curran

Office: SS 918

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Phone: 403-220-6520

Office Hours: Monday 2:00pm–3:10pm, Friday 10:00am–10:50am

Course Overview

In an age of growing wealth alongside increasing inequality and environmental challenges, the various characteristics of our primary social-economic system, capitalism, emerges as a particularly important social issue. This course will cover classical and contemporary understandings of the workings of capitalism and its diverse impacts through engaging with insights of thinkers such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Joseph Schumpeter, Friedrich Hayek, Karl Polanyi, David Harvey, and Wendy Brown. Topics that will be covered include how a capitalist economy and society affects modernity, inequality, economic growth, autonomy, culture, knowledge, social change, and self-identity.

Aims and Objectives

At the end of this course, students should have knowledge and understanding of:

- The dominant approaches to capitalism in contemporary sociology.
- The debates regarding the role and value of capitalism in contemporary society.
- How these debates over sociological approaches to capitalism relate to key debates in contemporary sociological theory, regarding modernity, inequality, economic growth, autonomy, culture, knowledge, social change, and self-identity.

This course should also enhance students' ability to:

- To theorize in a critical and analytical manner about how to conceive of capitalism and how capitalism relate to contemporary social life.
- Write clearly and cogently about contemporary sociological approaches to capitalism.
- Make a contribution to existing debates in the sociology of capitalism by fashioning and defending their own arguments.

Course Content

In exploring theoretical approaches to contemporary capitalism, this course is highly theoretical, as well as making extensive reference to empirical evidence to evaluate and apply these theories. While SOCI 331 and 333 are not formal prerequisites for this course, it is advised that students

who do not have a basis in theoretical approaches to social life are likely to find the content in this course quite challenging.

Theory and Theorizing

In this course it is essential that students engage in a theoretical manner with the course material in their participation and writing. It is essential that students not merely describe and summarize the readings. A theoretical analysis seeks to abstract certain key ideas, arguments, concepts from the specific content of a text and then reconstructs the arguments, ideas, or concepts in such a way that we are able to better grasp the relations between different ideas and concepts. This process of abstraction and reconstruction may be for the purpose of: better understanding a specific concept of a theorist (such as Weber's "rationalization" or Durkheim's "anomie"); better understanding the relation between the different concepts of a specific thinker (such as how Marx's theory of class relates to his theory of value); or better understanding the relation between two thinkers' conception of social reality (such as the connection between Marx's understanding of "alienation" and Durkheim's "social facts"). This improved understanding through the process of abstraction and reconstruction may be for such purposes such as: (1) helping to better understand the theorist's work in their own terms, (2) critiquing the work of the thinker, or (3) identifying how to apply the basic theories of a thinker to a very different context than the one for which they were originally formulated.

Required Texts (The books are available from the U of C bookstore)

- Course Reader (From Student Union, Used Bookstore)
- Robert Heilbroner ed. (1997) *Teachings From the Worldly Philosophy*. W.W. Norton (*TfWP*)
- Jürgen Kocka (2016) *Capitalism: A Short History*. Princeton University Press (*C*)
- Karl Polanyi (2001 [1944]) *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Beacon. (*GT*)

Teaching and Learning

Format of the Course

- 13 three X a week 50 minute lectures, presentations, and discussions (with exceptions of reading days). Fridays will be days devoted primarily to discussion.
- 1 Presentation
- 1 Theory Paper
- 1 Take-home Final Exam

Course Assessment

Participation: 10%

Presentation: 20%

Theory Paper: 35% (**Due April 5th, 2017**)

Final Exam: 35% (**April 21st, 2017**)

Course Participation (10%)

Students are expected to regularly attend the lectures and other presentations, and to have completed the readings prior to the Wednesday class. It is important that each student be prepared to contribute to the discussion of the readings, both for their own learning and for the benefit of the class as a whole.

Presentation 20%

Given that this is a 400 level course, with capped enrollment, more of an effort will be made to have student participation and contribution in the course. Each student will be expected to present once. The presentations will run from week 3 to week 12. Since the schedule of the presentations will depend on enrollment, more information will be provided on presentations in week two.

Theory Paper 35% (Due April 5th, 2017)

The theory paper is a core component of assessment for this course. The paper assignment is intended to enable students to develop a substantive theoretical paper and to further develop the skills associated with this task. The readings in this course are intended to provide an in-depth introduction to many of the key debates in the sociology of capitalism. Students are heavily encouraged to plan ahead and consult with the instructor regarding their proposed essay topics. The paper should be 2500 words (10% allowance either way).

Final Exam (35%) (Exam Period, April 21st, 2017)

The final exam will be a take-home. It will cover the entire course material, both readings and lectures. Proper citation practice must be used in the take-home essays. The questions will be placed on D2L on April 14th and will be due one week later on D2L, **April 21st, 2017 at 4pm.** Take-home exams that are late will receive an F grade.

Class Etiquette

Use of cell phones or internet on laptops distracts other students and the instructor and hence is not permitted. Based on previous feedback from students, the policy for this class will be that laptops without the use of internet is permitted, but that if laptops are used for other than taking notes, permission to use a laptop will be withdrawn.

Submission and Late Policy

The term paper is to be handed in as a hard copy in class to the course instructor the day of class that it is due. The paper will receive a late penalty of FIVE (5) MARKS PER FULL OR PART DAY (a weekend counts as two full days). Any paper more than one (1) week late without a valid extension will receive a mark of zero (0). Accommodations are unlikely to be allowed for late entry other than illness or another serious and documented situation – talk to me prior to the deadline. Take-home exams that are late will receive a mark of F.

General Referencing Guidelines

1. Always include page numbers of the source you are referencing - just using a date is not enough. Harvard style (in text citations with date and page e.g. (Marx 1848: 139) is recommended)

Learning and Discussion

While many truths that we hold may appear self-evident to ourselves, rather than remaining in our silos, a core part of the task of universities and of critical social theory is to critically engage with other viewpoints and to learn to further articulate the reasons for one's views. It is particularly important that we engage in respectful conversation in classroom discussions; likewise, it is important to emphasize that disagreement does not in itself automatically constitute disrespect of other viewpoints. In challenging dominant views in society and our own views, we can further our ability to better understand society as well better enable ourselves to engage in critical debates ongoing in contemporary society.

Office Hours: During office hours you are free to drop by without an appointment at any time. If you are unable to make that time, please contact me in advance so that we can try to arrange an appointment. Office hours are a very effective and efficient way of providing help and I encourage all students to make use of my office hours.

Departmental Standard Policies

Instructor Contact Policy

Email: Feel free to contact me over email at any time. Please put your course number and section in your email's subject line, and include a proper salutation, your full name, student ID, and a proper closing in the body of your email. All emails violating customary email conventions will be ignored. It may take up to 48 hours (not including weekends) for me to respond to you. I do not answer emails over the weekend. Please take that into account when emailing me questions pertaining assignments or exams. If you have a course-related question, please check the course outline first. Questions that can be answered by consulting the course outline will not be answered. Also, please e-mail me for administrative purposes only, for example to set up an appointment. Please do not use e-mail as a replacement for an office visit, if there is something you want to discuss. Questions about the course content and readings, concerns about grades, or any other personal issues should be dealt with in person during my office hours.

Your final letter grade will be determined according to the following schedule:

95-100 A+	67-69 C+
90-94 A	63-66 C
85-89 A-	60-62 C-
80-84 B+	55-59 D+
75-79 B	50-54 D
70-74 B-	49 or less F

Handing in Papers, Assignments

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.
2. **Protection of Privacy:** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If

students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online.

Ethics Research

Students are advised that any research with human subjects – including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation – must have the approval of the Faculty Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

Academic Misconduct Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Deferrals

When possible, please provide advance notice if you are unable to write an exam or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements, misreading the syllabus, and scheduling conflicts with other classes or employment are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a “make up” test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a “make up” test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology.

Deferred Final Exam Form: Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar’s Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/student-forms>

Deferred Term Work Form: Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It’s available at

https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

Student Representation

The 2016-17 Students’ Union VP Academic is Alicia Lunz (suvpaca@ucalgary.ca). The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: arts1@ucalgary.ca, arts2@ucalgary.ca, arts3@ucalgary.ca, and arts4@ucalgary.ca.

You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/role>

Emergency Evacuations In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at **Education Block - Food Court**. Please check these assembly point locations for all of your classes at:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

Safewalk

The University of Calgary provides a “safe walk” service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.

Academic Accommodation

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should contact Student Accessibility Services (MC 293, phone 403-220-8237) in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities available at <http://ucalgary.ca/access/>. Please provide academic accommodation letters to the instructor as early in the semester as possible and no later than two weeks after the course begins.

Course Readings

<p>Week 1 (Jan 9-13): Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Richard Swedberg. 2005. Towards an Economic Sociology of Capitalism, <i>L'Annee Sociologique</i> 55:419–50. (CR)
<p>Part I: Smith's Commercial Society</p> <p>Week 2 (Jan 16-20): Smith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mandeville in Heilbroner (<i>TfWP</i>), pp. 19-23;• Smith in Heilbroner (<i>TfWP</i>), pp. 55-105
<p>Week 3 (Jan 23-27): The Industrial Revolution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kocka (C) Ch. 3 "Expansion", pp.54-94;• Kocka (C) Ch. 4.4 "Work in Capitalism, pp. 124-145.• Polanyi, <i>GT</i>, ch. 3 pp. 35-44.
<p>Week 4 (Jan 30-Feb 3): Neo-Smithian Approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marshall in Heilbroner <i>TfWP</i> pp. 228-44;• F. Hayek (2007) "Planning and Democracy" <i>The Road to Serfdom</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 100-111; (CR)• Mill in Heilbroner <i>TfWP</i>, pp.127-57.
<p>Part II: Marxian Critiques of Capitalism</p> <p>Week 5 (Feb 6-10): Marxist Theory of Capitalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marx in Heilbroner <i>TfWP</i> pp. 161-195;• T. Bottomore "Marx's Theory of the Commodity-Producing Society" <i>Theories of Modern Capitalism</i>. London: Allen & Unwin, pp. 4-21 (CR)• Kocka (C) Ch.1, pp 1-24

Week 6 (Feb 13-17) Neo-Marxist Approaches

- E. Wood (1994) "From Opportunity to Imperative: The History of the Market" *Monthly Review* 46(3): 14-40. **(CR)**
- D. Harvey (1990) "Time-space compression and the postmodern condition" *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 284-307. **(CR)**

Part III: Weberian and Polanyian

Week 7 (Feb 27-Mar 3): Weber and Polanyi

- Aristotle in Heilbroner *TfWP*, pp. 7-10.
- D. Sayer "The Ghost in the Machine" *Capitalism and Modernity: An Excursus on Marx and Weber*. London: Routledge, ch. 3 pp. 92-116 (sec 1-5) **(CR)**
- Polanyi *GT*, ch.5- 6, pp.59-80.

Week 8 (Mar 6-10): Polanyi II

- Polanyi *GT*, ch. 4, pp. 45-58
- Kocka (C) Ch. 2 "Merchant Capitalism", 25-53.

Week 9 (Mar 13-17): Culture of Capitalism

- W. Brown (2015) "Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism's Remaking of State and Subject" *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, Brooklyn: Zone books, ch. 1, pp. 17-45 **(CR)**
- Polanyi *GT*, ch10-11, 13, pp.116-140, 158-170.

Part IV: Other Views

Week 10 (Mar 20-24): Keynes and States and Markets

- Keynes in Heilbroner *TfWP*, pp. 264-296
- Kocka (C) Ch 4.5, pp.145 -161;
- Polanyi *GT* ch 18, pp. 218-230.

Week 11 (Mar 27-31): Schumpeter and Creative Destruction

- Schumpeter in Heilbroner *TfWP*, pp. 297-330;
- Kocka (C) Ch 4- 4.2, pp. 95-114

Week 12 (Apr 3-7): Capitalism and Crisis

- W. Streeck (2011) "The Crises of Democratic Capitalism" *New Left Review* 71: 5-29 **(CR)**.
- Kocka (C) Ch 4.3 "Financialization" pp. 114-124;
- Polanyi *GT*, ch. 15, pp. 187-200

Week 13 (Apr 10): Dilemmas and Alternatives

- Jackson (2009) "The arithmetic of growth" *Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Plan*. London: Earthscan, pp. 77-82 **(CR)**
- Polanyi *GT*, ch 21, pp. 257-268

Criteria for Papers:

This is a checklist to help evaluate a paper submitted in this course. The greater degree to which each question can be answered positively to a high level, the better the paper.

Thesis Statement

Is it identifiable and clear?

Is it manageable rather than being too broad for a short paper?

Is it something substantive and does it provide the key argument(s) of the paper?

Does the paper actually then closely follow the thesis?

Theoretical Understandings

Does the paper identify the key elements of the concepts that it is discussing?

Does it explain these concepts clearly and accurately and in sufficient depth?

Does its further discussion of the concepts demonstrate an overall understanding of the theorists involved in the paper, as well as integrating other literatures into the paper well?

Does it move beyond simply describing or summarizing the readings to analyze them and their underlying reasons and understandings?

Can it apply these concepts to new contexts and arguments in an insightful way?

Does the paper manifest a critical understanding of the subject matter of the paper?

Does the paper manifest a certain level of originality or creativity in understanding and critically analyzing the theorists discussed?

Writing Quality

Is the grammar and spelling correct?

Is it clear what the meaning of the sentences and paragraphs is?

Does it follow a clear structure, and provide the reader with an understanding of where the argument is proceeding, rather than being disorganized or disjointed?

Evidence

Does the paper provide reasons for the arguments and conclusions that it makes?

Are the reasons provided clear and persuasive?

In making claims about a certain thinker's ideas does it provide proper evidence of these claims through proper citation (book and page number) and argumentation?

A Paper

The paper will be very good in all these dimensions.

B Paper

The paper will be good on all of these dimensions, or adequate on some dimensions and very good on other dimensions.

C Paper

The paper will be satisfactory on all of these dimensions, or poor on some and good (or very good) on others.

D Paper

The paper is poor on many of these dimensions.

F Paper

The paper will be inadequate on several of these dimensions.

Criteria for Presentations

Presentation skills are extremely important to develop. Presenting in the context of a university amongst supportive peers can make an essential contribution to developing these skills. The following are some criteria for the marking of presentations. The greater degree to which each question can be answered positively to a high level, the better the presentation.

Presentation Style

Is the presentation style engaging?

Is the language clear and can the presenter be heard clearly?

Does the presenter look at the audience and speak to the audience, rather than just reading his or her notes?

Organization

Is the aim of the presentation clear?

Is the presentation well-organized and does it flow well, rather than feeling disjointed or confusing?

Is the presentation on time, rather than being too short or too long?

Understanding

Does the presentation clearly display knowledge and understanding of the material involved?

Does it move beyond simply summarizing the reading to provide an analysis of the reading?

Is there a critical engagement with the key arguments of the material?

Does the presenter help the audience to better understand the reading or to better understand the issues related to the topic of the presentation?

Is the presenter's question engaging and clear?

Is the presenter able to integrate other knowledge into this specific reading or issue? (Note: this is not compulsory, but can be beneficial)

Does the presenter manifest a certain level of creativity in understanding and applying the content of the presentation?

Grade Level

A: The presentation will be very good in all these dimensions.

B: The presentation will be good on all of these dimensions, or satisfactory on some dimensions and very good on other dimensions.

C: The presentation will be satisfactory on all of these dimensions, or poor on some and good (or very good) on others.

D: The presentation is poor on many of these dimensions.

F: The presentation will be inadequate on several of these dimensions.