

PHIL 490 - Special Problems: Karl Marx

Spring 2025 - Syllabus
Mondays, 2:30-5:00pm, Faner 3173

This class is concurrent with PHIL 590: Graduate Seminar.

Professor Matthew J. Brown

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Office Location and Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00pm
Center for Dewey Studies | Morris Library 0044

Class Website: <http://classes.matthewjbrown.net/marx/>

Course Description

This seminar focuses on the philosophy and thought of Karl Marx, including his political, economic, epistemological, and ethical views. After a brief look at his earlier work, this seminar will focus on analyzing the arguments of his masterwork, *Capital*, in detail.

Student Learning Objectives

1. Student will demonstrate knowledge of the significance of Karl Marx in the history of philosophy, economics, and political thought through class discussion and writing assignments.
2. Through engaging with the works of Karl Marx, students will articulate and employ the methodologies of philosophical enquiry and textual engagement in class discussion and writing assignments.
3. Student will engage with central philosophical concepts and ideas concerning value, justice, alienation, authenticity through discussion and make use of those concepts and ideas in their written work.
4. Students will demonstrate philosophical argumentation and clear communication through writing assignments.

Required Textbooks

- Karl Marx, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (Hackett) [WYM]
- Karl Marx, *Capital* Volume I, new transl. by Paul Ritter
- Karl Marx, *Capital* Volume II, & Volume III (Penguin Classics)

Some additional readings will be distributed as PDFs.

I have chosen to use the new Ritter translation of *Capital* vol I, which I have no doubt will become the scholarly standard. I encourage you to use this edition. Because the chapter numbering is slightly different from the more common Penguin Classics edition of vol I, translated by Ben Fowkes, I have noted in the syllabus where the chapter numbers depart.

Recommended Secondary Sources

These sources will help you better understand the structures and arguments of Marx's texts, especially *Capital*.

- Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*
- Paul M. Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development: Principles of Marxian Political Economy*
- Robert Paul Wolff, *Understanding Marx: A Reconstruction and Critique of Capital [UM]* (available as a free PDF)
- Robert Paul Wolff, *Moneybags Must Be So Lucky: On the Literary Structure of Capital* (available as a free PDF)
- Allen W. Wood, *Karl Marx* (Second Edition)

The books below will not be assigned for the course, but may be helpful in exploring possible paper topics and generally supplementing your interest in the topics of the course.

Suggested Primary Sources

- Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* - Marx's notebooks of 1857-58, consisting of a length unfinished manuscript on "Fundamentals of a Critique of Political Economy." Valuable in tracing the development of Marx's thinking in *Capital* and on clarifying certain aspects of his theories.
- Karl Marx with Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology, including Theses on Feuerbach* (Great Books in Philosophy) - This edition includes valuable work on various aspects of Marx's views on ideology, history, political economy, and his vision of socialism. Fragmentary and unpublished work, much of it coauthored with Engels.
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* - Marx's most widely read and programmatic work.
- Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value* - A draft of what would have been Volume IV of *Capital* (or vols. IV, V, and VI, given that it is typically published in 3 volumes itself). It is primarily a critical history of the economic theories of Marx's time.

Suggested Secondary Sources

- Jaime Edwards & Brian Leiter, *Marx* - Brand new, cutting edge resource on Marx's work in general. Similar in scope and approach to Woods' book, but a bit briefer and more recent.

- David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital: The Complete Edition* - Another valuable source of aid in grasping the core ideas and arguments of Marx's *Capital*.
- Steve Paxton, *Unlearning Marx: Why the Soviet Failure was a Triumph for Marx* - Many see the collapse of the Soviet Union and the move of China towards a capitalist framework as evidence that Marx is no longer relevant. Paxton argues the opposite, that these are exactly what a Marxist should expect – the historical reality of the Soviet experiment matches closely the predictions of Marx's historical materialism.
- Sidney Hook, *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx: A Revolutionary Interpretation* - An influential early interpretation of Marx by an American philosopher and student of John Dewey. Some see it really as a Marx-Dewey synthesis.
- William Clare Roberts, *Marx's Inferno: The Political Theory of Capital* - Situates Marx's work in the context of political theory, the worker's movement, and the literary structure of Dante's *Inferno*.
- Joan Robinson, *An Essay on Marxist Economics* (free download at archive.org) - A reading of Marx's theories by a leading post-Keynesian economist.
- Tom Rockmore, *Marx's Dream: From Capitalism to Communism* - Situates Marx in the philosophical tradition primarily as a moral philosopher.
- Helena Sheehan, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science: A Critical History* - Traces the influence of Marx on the history of the philosophy of science, with special attention to the history of debates about dialectical materialism.
- Jonathan Wolff, *Why Read Marx Today?*
- G.A. Cohen, *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?* - Explores the connections between Marxism and Rawlsian liberalism.

Video Series on Marx

- Robert Paul Wolff, Lectures on Marx's Critique of Capitalism
- Reading Marx's Capital with David Harvey

Class Schedule by Week

1. **Introduction** (1/13)
 - Read: Heinrich, Ch 1
2. (1/20) *Martin Luther King Jr. Day* - No Class
3. **The Early Marx on Alienation** (1/27)
 - Read: Selections from *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (WYM pp. 283-314)
 - Secondary Reading: Wood, Part I
4. **Marx on Method, Ideology, and Historical Materialism** (2/3)
 - Read: "Theses on Feuerbach", selections from *The German Ideology* and *The Poverty of Philosophy* (WYM 400-2, 403-429, 474-495)
 - Secondary Reading: Wood, Part II; Sweezy, Ch 1; Heinrich, Ch 2 (See also: Wood, Parts 3-4 & Ch 13)
5. **The Theory of Value in Classical Political Economy** (2/10)
 - Read: Wolff, *UM* Chs 1-3
6. **Marx on Value and Commodities** (2/17)
 - Read: *Capital* vol. I, Ch 1
 - Secondary Reading: Wolff, *UM* §4.1; Wood, §§15.1-3; Heinrich, §§3.1-2 Wolff, *Moneybags*
7. **Value, Circulation, and Money** (2/24)
 - Read: *Capital* vol. I, Ch 2-3
 - Secondary Reading: Sweezy Ch. 2; Heinrich §§3.3-8
8. **The Concept of Capital** (3/3)
 - Read: *Capital* vol. I, Chs 4-6 (Chs 4-8 in Fowkes); vol. III, Ch. 24
 - Secondary Reading: Sweezy pp. 56-66; Heinrich §§4.1-2
9. (3/10) *Spring Break* - No Class
10. **Exploitation and Surplus Value** (3/17)
 - Read: *Capital* vol. I, Chs 7-9 (Chs 9-11 in Fowkes); vol. III, Ch 48
 - Secondary Reading: Sweezy, pp. 67-71; Heinrich §§4.3-5 & 10.1; Wolff, *UM* §§4.2-5.1; Wood, Ch 16
11. **The Production Process and Technical Progress** (3/24)
 - Read: *Capital* vol. I, part IV.
 - Secondary Reading: Heinrich, Ch 5; Sweezy, "Karl Marx and the Industrial Revolution"
12. **Economic and Social Reproduction** (3/31)
 - Read: *Capital*, vol I, Chs 21-22 (Chs 23-24 in Fowkes); vol. II, Chs. 18-20
 - Secondary Reading: Sweezy, pp. 75-79; Wolff, *UM* Ch. 1; Heinrich §6.3
13. **Prices and Profits** (4/7)
 - Read: *Capital*, vol III, parts I-II
 - Secondary Reading: Sweezy, pp. 109-130; Wolff, *UM* Chs 5-6 & Envoi; Heinrich, §§7.1-2
14. **The Accumulation of Capital** (4/14)
 - Read: *Capital*, vol I, Ch 23 (Fowkes Ch 25); vol. II, Chs. 21
 - Secondary Reading: Sweezy, pp. 79-95; Heinrich, §5.6
15. **Crises of Capitalism** (4/21)
 - Read: *Capital*, vol III, part III
 - Secondary Reading: Sweezy, pp. 96-108 & Part III; Heinrich, §7.3 & Ch 9
16. **Original Accumulation** (4/28)
 - Read: *Capital*, vol I, Chs 24-25 (Fowkes part VIII) (See also *Grundrisse* §2, "Original Accumulation of Capital" / "Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations" I)
 - Secondary Reading: David Harvey, "The Secret of Primitive Accumulation"; Sweezy and Dobb, "The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism" (See also Maurice Dobb, *Studies in*

the Development of Capitalism; Takahashi, “A contribution to the Sweezy-Dobb controversy”; Dobb and Sweezy, “Comments on Takahashi”

Assignments and Grading

1. **Participation** (15%) - Participate in class discussion and peer activities regularly and well, in such a way that demonstrates you are well prepared.
2. **Discussion Questions** (25%) - Each week students will submit 1-2 substantive, interpretive or evaluative questions about the reading.
3. **Term Paper** (60%) - 2,500-4,000 word paper engaging philosophically with some aspect of Marx’s thought.

Course and Instructor Policies

Class Meeting Expectations

You are expected to have **read the assignments before class**, and it would be to your benefit to also read them again after class. You are expected to have a copy of the readings for each day’s class open to refer to during discussion. You are expected to **listen respectfully** to the professor and your fellow students, and **participate** in class discussions and activities.

Late Work, Make-Up, and Completion

It is important to stay on track with the class schedule, or else you will fall behind and not be able to complete the work to a satisfactory standard. However, life happens, and I am a reasonable person. Reasonable extensions will be given upon request, for any reason, as long as you ask *before the deadline*.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Don’t do it! If you incorporate any work that is not your own into any project that you do, and you do not cite the source properly, this counts as plagiarism. This includes someone doing the work for you, taking work done by another student, verbatim copying of published sources, *paraphrasing* published work without citation, paraphrasing in an inappropriate way even with citation, and *any* text produced by “A.I.” Re-using work that you created for another course or for prior publication also counts as plagiarism in most contexts, except by prior agreement of the instructor. Unless group work is *explicitly* permitted or required, it is expected that all of the work that you turn in is original and your own, although you are welcome to seek feedback from classmates and others as long as they do not do any of the work for you. Any sources that you make use of must be correctly cited.

“A.I.” Policy

Large Language Model algorithms (primarily GPT and its derivatives), though referred to as “artificial intelligence,” are far from intelligent; they are powerful bullshit engines designed to produce generally inoffensive mediocrity. Not only does using such text in place of your

own work a form of plagiarism, the output is more or less guaranteed to get you a bad grade even if I believe it to be your own work.

You are prohibited from including any material produced by so-called “Artificial Intelligence,” any GPT-style, large-language model algorithms or systems, including automated paraphrasing, summarizing, and revision tools. You should not use such tools at any stage of the writing process. Spelling and grammar checking software is acceptable as long as it does not re-write entire passages for you.

Writing and thinking for yourself is the way to get the most out of this class; the person hurt most by relying on LLMs or engaging in plagiarism is you.



The poster features a circular logo at the top with a stylized tree or plant design in gold and white. Below the logo, the text "MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES" is written in large, bold, gold letters, followed by "AND BASIC NEEDS" in smaller, bold, gold letters. A large QR code is centered below the text. At the bottom, the SIU logo (Southern Illinois University Carbondale) is displayed in white, followed by the text "STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES" in white.

Syllabus Attachment

Spring 2025

MISSION STATEMENT FOR SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CARBONDALE

SIU embraces a unique tradition of access and opportunity, inclusive excellence, innovation in research and creativity, and outstanding teaching focused on nurturing student success. As a nationally ranked public research university and regional economic catalyst, we create and exchange knowledge to shape future leaders, improve our communities, and transform lives.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Semester Classes Begin:01/13/2025
Last day to add full-term course (without Dean's signature):01/19/2025
Last day to withdraw from the University with a full refund:01/24/2025
Last day to drop a full-term course for a credit/refund:01/26/2025
Last day to drop a full-term course (W grade, no refund):.....03/30/2025
Final examinations:05/05/2025–05/09/2025

Note: Please verify the above dates with the Registrar calendar and find more detailed information on deadlines at <http://registrar.siu.edu/calendars>. For add/drop dates that apply to shorter-than-full-term courses, please look at the Schedule of Classes search results at <http://registrar.siu.edu/schedclass/index.php>

SPRING SEMESTER HOLIDAYS:

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday 01/20/2025
Spring Break 03/08/25-03/16/25

DIVERSITY: Southern Illinois University Carbondale's goal is to provide a welcoming campus where all of our students, faculty and staff can study and work in a respectful, positive environment free from racism and intimidation. For more information visit: <http://diversity.siu.edu>. Additional [informational flyer](#).

OFFICE FOR ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATIONS: SIU Carbondale is committed to providing an inclusive and accessible experience for all students with disabilities. Office for Access and Accommodations coordinates the implementation of accommodations. If you think you may be eligible for accommodations but have not yet obtained approval please contact OAA immediately at (618) 453-5738 or <https://access.siu.edu>. You may request accommodations at any time, but timely requests help to insure accommodations are in place when needed. Accommodations and services are determined through an interactive process with students and may involve consideration of specific course design and learning objectives in consultation with faculty.

MILITARY COMMUNITY: There are complexities of being a member of the military community and also a student, and military and veteran related developments can complicate academic life. If you are a member of the military community and in need of accommodations please visit Veterans Services at <http://veterans.siu.edu/>.

STUDENT MULTICULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER: The Student Multicultural Resource Center serves as a catalyst for inclusion, diversity and innovation. As the Center continues its work, we are here to ensure that you think, grow and succeed. We encourage you to stop by the Center, located in the Student Services Building Room 140, to see the resources available and discover ways you can get involved on the campus. Visit us at <https://smrc.siu.edu/>.

SALUKI CARES: The purpose of Saluki Cares is to develop, facilitate and coordinate a university-wide program of care and support for students in any type of distress—physical, emotional, financial, or personal. By working closely with faculty, staff, students and their families, SIUC will continue to display a culture of care and demonstrate to our students and their families that they are an important part of the community. For information on Saluki Cares: Call (618) 453-2461, email siucares@siu.edu, or <http://salukicares.siu.edu/>.

SAFETY AWARENESS FACTS AND EDUCATION: Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: <http://safe.siu.edu>.

PREGNANCY: Title IX makes it clear that students who are pregnant or have a related condition may contact the Title IX Coordinator to request accommodations or to report any allegations of discrimination. The Title IX Coordinator may be contacted at: Nick Wortman, Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 0135 Woody Hall, 900 S. Normal Avenue, Mail Code 6520, Carbondale, IL 62901, (618) 453-6667, equity@siu.edu.

SIU COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): Mental health counseling services are available by calling [CAPS](#) at (618) 453-5371. CAPS offers confidential same-day services and ongoing counseling. For after hours crisis care, students are encouraged to call 988, 911, or present to their nearest emergency room.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY (Undergraduate Only): Students who officially register for a session must officially withdraw from that registration in a timely manner to avoid being charged as well as receiving a failing grade for those classes. An official withdrawal must be initiated by the student, or on behalf of the student through the academic unit, and be processed by the Registrar's office. For the proper procedures to follow when dropping courses and when withdrawing from SIUC visit: <https://registrar.siu.edu/students/withdraw.php>.

SIUC'S EARLY WARNING INTERVENTION PROGRAM (EWIP): Students enrolled in courses participating in SIUC's Early Warning Intervention Program might be contacted by University staff during a semester. More information can be found at the University Core Curriculum's Overview webpage: <https://corecurriculum.siu.edu/for-faculty/>.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES: We ask that you become familiar with Emergency Preparedness at SIU. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, on the Emergency Preparedness at SIU website, and through text and email alerts. To register for alerts visit: <http://emergency.siu.edu/>.

CATALOGS:

catalog.siu.edu
gradcatalog.siu.edu - Graduate policies often vary from Undergraduate policies. To view the applicable policies for graduate students, please refer to the graduate catalog.

CENTER FOR LEARNING AND SUPPORT SERVICES:

Tutoring: <https://class.siu.edu/>
Math Labs: <http://math.siu.edu/courses/course-help.php>

WRITING CENTER: <http://write.siu.edu/>

PLAGIARISM: See the Student Conduct Code: <http://srr.siu.edu/student-conduct-code/>

INCOMPLETE POLICY (Undergraduate Only): <http://registrar.siu.edu/grades/incomplete.php>

REPEAT POLICY: <http://registrar.siu.edu/students/repeatclasses.php>

MORRIS LIBRARY HOURS: <https://libcal.lib.siu.edu/hours/>

ADVISEMENT: <http://advisement.siu.edu/>

SIU ONLINE: <https://online.siu.edu/>