Economics 708: Political Economy I

Vamsi Vakulabharanam  Email: vamsi@econs.umass.edu
Semester: Fall 2015  Lecture: MW: 2.30 to 3.45 PM.
Office Hours: Thompson 824, Tu. 9.30 AM to Noon.  Phone (O): (413)-545-4489

Course Overview

This course presents a critical analysis of the capitalist system from a Marxian framework. For all its complex successes and failures, capitalism has never been able to solve satisfactorily three major issues either singly or together - *injustice* (e.g. exploitation, inequality, deprivation, alienation), *instability* (e.g. short-term and medium term crises and longer-term disruptions of different configurations of production, distribution and consumption) and *unsustainability* (e.g. ecological crises, global warming). While there are multiple frameworks that have sought to come to grips with each of these issues, a Marxian framework offers a unique and powerful vantage position from which these three issues can be analyzed and acted upon. This course offers an advanced level introductory perspective on these issues.

Texts

Harvey, David. Companion to Marx's Capital.

The above books are ordered at Amherst Books. Several English language translations of Marx's Capital are in print. You must get the International Publishers edition, translated by Moore and Aveling and edited by Engels.

Readings

An asterisk (*) means that a reading is required. All required readings are in one of the above books, or the moodle site, or available on request.

The following abbreviations are used for journals:

CJE Cambridge Journal of Economics; NLR New Left Review; RRPE Review of Radical Political Economics; S&S Science and Society

Evaluation

There will be weekly response papers that will constitute 50% of the grade. The remaining 50% will be based on one term paper that pertains to Marxian theory or an application of it. The first submission of the term paper is by November 15th after which improvements can be made after initial comments.
Content - Brief Outline

1. Introduction

2. Marx's Method
   a. Dialectics
   b. History

3. Marxian Theory of Capitalism
   a. Value Theory.
   b. Logic of surplus value extraction
      (i) Absolute surplus value.
      (ii) Relative surplus value.
      (iii) Intensity of Labor.
      (iv) Logic of Turnover time.
   c. Accumulation and Crisis.
   d. Transformation problem.
   e. Distributions of surplus value.

4. Capitalism - Spatial and Temporal Configurations in a Marxian Framework
   a. Capitalism and Space
      i) Imperialism.
      ii) Capitalism and the urban form.
      iii) Varieties of Capitalism.
   b. Capitalism and Time
      i) French Regulation School.
      ii) Social Structures of Accumulation.

5. Capitalism and Ecology in a Marxian Framework
**Content: Detailed Readings**

1. **Introduction** (Sept 9)


**Additional Readings**

2. Anderson, P. *Considerations on Western Marxism.*  
5. Itoh, Makoto. *Value and Crisis,* Ch. 1.  

2. **Method** (Sept 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 30)

**A. Dialectics and Marx's Method** (Sept 14, 16, 21)

* Althusser, Louis. *For Marx,* Ch. 3 and 6.

**Additional Readings**


**B. History** (Sept 23, 28, 30)

(i) General Themes

* Marx. Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, in Tucker, *MER.*  
* Harvey, David. *Companion to Marx's Capital,* ch. 11.  
* Benjamin, Walter. "On the Concept of History".
(ii) Non-Western Societies:

* Banaji, Jairus. Ch 1 (Introduction: Themes in Historical Materialism) and Ch 12 (Modes of Production: A Synthesis), *Theory as History: Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation.*

* Shanin, Teodor, "Late Marx: Gods and Craftsmen," in *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism.*


Additional Readings

10. Anderson, Perry. Arguments within English Marxism, Ch. 2-4.
22. Science and Society Symposium on David Laibman's Deep History, articles by


3. Marxian Analysis of Capitalism (Oct 5, 7, 13, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28, Nov 2)

A. Introduction to Value Theory

* Capital, I, Ch. 1, 2, 3.
* Sweezy, Paul M., Theory of Capitalist Development, Introduction and Ch. 1, 2, 3.
* Harvey, David, Companion to Marx's Capital, Introduction, ch. 1.

Additional Readings

1. Dobb, Maurice. Political Economy & Capitalism, Ch. 1, 3.
3. Howard & King. Political Economy of Marx, Ch. 2.
4. Itoh, Makoto. The Basic Theory of Capitalism, ch. 3.2.
8. Ollman, B. Alienation, Part III.
9. Itoh, Makoto. The Basic Theory of Capitalism, ch. 4.1, 4.2.

B. Extraction of Surplus Value

* Capital I, Ch. 4-9, 12-14, 15 sec. 1-2;
* Harvey, David, Companion to Marx's Capital, Ch. 3-8.
* Capital, Volume 2, Selections.

Additional Readings

1. Sweezy. TCD, ch. 4.
2. Harvey, David, Companion to Marx's Capital, ch. 3.
8. Braverman, Harry, Labor & Monopoly Capital, Ch. 1-10.

C. Accumulation and Crisis

* Capital I, Ch. 23, 24, 25 Sec. 1-4;  
* Sweezy, TCD, ch. 5, 6, 8-10, 11, 12.  
* Harvey, David, Companion to Marx's Capital, ch. 9, 10.  
* Wright, Erik, O., "Historical Transformations of Capitalist Crisis Tendencies," in Class, Crisis and the State.  

Additional Readings

1. Capital I. Ch. 25 Sec. 5.
2. Capital III, Ch. 13-15.
10. Skott, Peter, "Imperfect Competition and the Theory of the Falling Rate of
16. Itoh, Makoto, Value and Crisis, Ch. 4, 5.
23. Bleany, Michael, Underconsumption Theories.

D. Value-Price, Transformation Problem

* Sweezy, TCD, ch. 7.

Additional Readings

1. Capital, III, Ch. 1, 2, 8, 9, 10.
2. Robinson, Joan, Essay on Marxian Economics, Ch. 3.
9. Morishima, M., Marx's Economics, Ch. 7-8, 12-14.
10. Steedman, Ian, Marx after Straffa.
12. Foley, Duncan, Understanding Capital, ch. 6.
19. Fine, Ben; Lapavitsas, Costas; and Saad-Filho, Alfredo, "Transforming the Transformation Problem: Why the 'New Interpretation' is a Wrong Turning,"

E. Distributions of Surplus Value

* Foley, Understanding Capital, Chapter 7, Division of Surplus Value.

Additional Readings

1. Harvey, David. Limits to Capital, Chapters 9-11.

4. Capitalism - Spatial and Temporal Configurations (Nov 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 30)

A. Capitalism - Space

(i) Imperialism

* Lenin, V.I., Imperialism, ch. 4-7.
* Harvey, David, Limits to Capital, Chapter 13 [Crises in the Space Economy of Capitalism: The Dialectics of Imperialism].
2003.

Additional Readings

12. Brewer, Anthony, Marxist Theories of Imperialism, ch. 6, 7, 9-12.
13. Bukharin, Nikolai, Imperialism and World Economy

(ii) Urban Form

* Harvey, David. The Urban Experience, Ch 1 and 2.

Additional Readings
Lefebvre, Henri, *The Urban Revolution*.  
Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*.  

(iii) Varieties of Capitalism  


**B. Capitalism - Time**  

(i) Regulation School  


*Additional Readings*  


(ii) Social Structures of Accumulation  


*Additional Readings*
5. Harvey, David, A Brief History of Neoliberalism, 2005.

5. Capitalism and Ecology (Dec 1, 8, 10)


Additional Readings