

WGSS 493M/693M: Conversations with the Ghost of Marx

Professor K. Asher (kasher@umass.edu)

Semester: Fall, 2018

Time: Tu 1-3:30pm

Place: E480 South College

Office: W467 South College **Office Hours:** Thurs 11:30am- 1:00pm (Open hours).

Appointments: Tues 3:30-4:00pm, Weds: 11am-noon, 1-2pm. Check **Moodle for updates.**

Classlists: wgss-493m-01-fal18@courses.umass.edu; wgss-693m-01-fal18@courses.umass.edu

Seminar focus and goals: In *Europe and the People without History*, Eric Wolf, the late anthropologist notes that, "... the social sciences constitute one long dialogue with the ghost of Marx." Feminists and anti-colonialists are among the many advocates of social justice who have engaged with Karl Marx's writing and fierce criticism of capitalism. This advanced seminar focuses on an exegesis of some of Marx's oeuvre and the historical and current scholarship that draws on, critiques, and pushes its boundaries. In addition to selections from Marx's key works, we will read the writings of his important interlocutors such as Silvia Federici, Donna Haraway, Antonio Gramsci, Stuart Hall, CLR James, Rosa Luxemburg, Gayatri Spivak, Raymond Williams, and others. Our discussions will emphasize the need to understand the parameters and debates about uneven capitalist development and its transnational, raced and gendered dimensions.

Prerequisites: This is an **advanced** seminar and requires you to have a solid analytical knowledge and transnational understanding of **feminisms** (syllabi of WGSS courses are on our website), **political economy**, and **social theory**. **In addition, students should also be familiar with some of Marx's writings and the context within which he critiqued capitalist political economy.** You can refresh your understanding of these terms by consulting material covered in the background readings listed below. In addition, students should also be familiar with some of Marx's writings and thinking. Without these pre-requisites, students will be unable to keep up with the term of the course. This is not the space to gain an introduction to Marx's writing or Marxist thought.

Course Approach: During the first five weeks of the semester, we will read selections from Marx's oeuvre and those of his interlocutors. We will revisit them in the second half of the semester. Each student must lead two seminar discussions (one before the midterm and the second after). Your two reading reviews must be based on one or more selected readings from that session. Post your reading reviews on Moodle 24 hours before the start of the seminar, and hand in a hard copy to me at the start of class. Given that there are fewer weeks than students, multiple students will be responsible for each session. You may coordinate with each other to lead seminar discussions or let things flow organically. Of course each of you is responsible for writing your own reading review. Details about writing reviews are below.

After the midterm, we will collectively choose readings for the second half of the semester. While there is flexibility in what we read and how we approach the seminar, the central focus of our endeavors is an exegesis of Marx's writing and how historical and current scholarship draws on, critiques, and pushes its boundaries.

Selected required Readings:

- ❖ Anderson, Kevin. 2010. *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- ❖ Marx, Karl. 1867/1976. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol I. Penguin.
- ❖ Spivak, Gayatri. 2012. *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Harvard UP.
- ❖ Tucker, Robert. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. WW Norton.
- ❖ <https://www.marxists.org/> [Note: you may need to cut and paste the link. It is buggy]

Selected Background readings (On Reserve)

- ❖ Hall, Stuart et al. eds. 1996. *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers. (Especially recommended: Introductions to Parts I, II and III; Chpts 1, 3, 5, 12, 13, 17, 19)
- ❖ Lemert, Charles, ed. 2013. *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Fifth Edition. Westview Press.
- ❖ Osborne, Peter. 2006. *How to Read Marx*. NY: WW Norton.
- ❖ Wolf, Eric. 1982/1997. *Europe and the People without History*. CA: UC Press.

Assignments and Grades

- ❖ Attendance & Participation 25%
- ❖ Two Reading Reviews (details below) 20%
- ❖ Midterm (due Oct 11, details on Moodle by Oct 3) 25%
- ❖ Final Assignment (due Dec 14, details on Moodle by Dec 5) 30%

Attendance and Absences: The success of the class depends on the instructor and students being physically and intellectual present in class. Being a little late occasionally is understandable. However, if you are more than 10 minutes late, you will be marked absent. If you have to miss a seminar session because of legitimate reasons (illness, injury, death of a loved one), excuse your absence in writing within a week of the missed session. Over two absences will automatically result in the lowering of your overall grade, as even excused absences will affect your participation grade (you get 2 points for each day you are present, and 1 point for late or excused sessions).

If you miss class unavoidably, it is still your responsibility to keep up with the readings, write reading responses, and catch up on what you missed. Set up a “study buddy” with whom you can exchange notes, review material, and check in about intellectual or logistical issues related to the class.

Study Buddy 1: _____

Study Buddy 2: _____

Reading and Preparation: Good participation and great conversations rest on good preparation. Learn to develop a practice of reading closely (<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/how-do-close-reading>) to identify main theme(s) and examine the premise of an argument critically. I recommend that you write critical responses on the assigned readings and bring hard copies to each class.

Participation: Good participation means active and mindful engagement with the course material and class participants, including your peers. Active and mindful engagement goes beyond agreements and disagreements to foster collective learning through critical dialogues about the topics and ideas generated by the course material. Critical dialogues entail listening, thinking, talking, and asking questions of the material and of each other. The best classrooms conversations are ones that expand your knowledge and understanding, and bring the intense pleasure of intellectual inquiry. It is a skill that requires practice and like other academic skills it is useful far beyond the classroom. For other key campus resources see <https://www.umass.edu/studentlife/single-stop>

Notes: Learn to keep notes on what you read. Instructions on writing critical reading responses provide guidelines on how to take good notes. For example, identify central claims, highlight key quotes (note the full citation with page numbers), understanding how an author develops an argument, how the terms of one article relate to the broader course themes. Notes are a good place to flag **what you don't understand and on confusing** points, which we can discuss and clarify in class. So bring your readings and notes to class!

These notes are for your own use (or to share with your peers/study buddies). You may NOT sell these notes or critical reading responses to outside vendors, nor make audio or video recordings of class lectures and discussions without my permission.

Using smart phones in class is decidedly un-smart as it invites me to fail you. When in class **turn OFF your mobile devices**. You may seek permission to use your computer in class to refer to readings and notes, and to take notes. However, please do not connect to the Internet.

Online communications and Email etiquette: Instructions, study questions, and updates about the course will be posted on **Moodle** and/or sent through the class lists (see above). So ensure that your university email (yourname@umass.edu) works, and check Moodle regularly. I welcome appropriate email queries and will respond to them within a reasonable amount of time (24-48 hours is normal). For a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate email, familiarize yourself with [Emails as Professional Correspondences or Email Etiquette](#). In addition, review the syllabus and Moodle to check whether your question has already been answered. For example, office hours, due dates, assignment instructions, etc. are listed in the syllabus and on Moodle. All changes to readings, assignments, due dates, etc. are also listed on Moodle.

Office Hours (listed at the top of the syllabus and updated on Moodle) are for students. So do stop by with questions about class material, brainstorm research ideas, talk about topics that spark your intellectual curiosity, or discuss your performance in class.

However, office hours are not the space to review course material you missed or entertain inquiry such as “I was absent, what did I miss?” Talk to your study buddies first and then follow up with me to discuss specific queries.

Research: Go beyond wikipedia and google! [UMASS libraries \(click the Menu button on the upper right\)](#) have excellent resources and amazing professional staff to help you meet your learning goals. [So learn to use them and to do](#) library research.

Writing is a crucial tool for learning and an invaluable skill for communicating what you learn. So learn to write well. Check out <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>, one of the most extensive lists of handouts on writing and research help. You can also get free writing help at the [Writing Center](#), and from the WGSS writing tutor (check Moodle for office hours). Take a copy of the assignment instructions, the course writing checklist and grading criteria along with your draft response to your session. Engage your editing process by articulating what you want the tutor to focus on in addressing your work.

Lastly, pay attention to the comments on your graded assignments, especially the reading reviews so that you can learn from them to do better on longer papers.

Written Work: There will be two short reading reviews, and two longer writing assignments (a midterm and a final) for this seminar. The midterm will involve your writing an essay in which you describe, review and critically evaluate readings discussed thus far in the seminar. The nature and form of the final assignment is something we will determine together after the midterm.

Reading Reviews are critical reflections (**3-4 pages each excluding references**) on one or more selected readings from the week that students lead discussions. Post your reading reviews on Moodle 24 hours before the start of the seminar, and hand in a hard copy to me at the start of class. Your readings should identify, annotate and then evaluate the arguments discussed in the week's readings. Reading reviews differ from annotations (if you haven't taken classes with me before or need to know how to write an annotation – see Moodle) in that an analysis and thoughtful critique follows a concise identification and summary of arguments. Remember that neither blanket criticism nor untempered praise is a good critical response. Avoid over generalized or banal statements, and make sure you have a fair and clear understanding of the ideas you wish to flesh out or critique. Attach a list of references cited in your review, and make sure to give your review an appropriate title.

All **Written assignments:**

- ❖ May be discussed with your peers, tutors, or with me during my office hours
- ❖ Must be submitted **by the stated deadlines**. By handing in assignments late you forfeit your right to comments and lose half a letter grade for every day that your work is late. So learn to manage your time <http://www.studygs.net/shared/mgmt.htm>
- ❖ May be revised and resubmitted accepted within two weeks of receiving comments back from the instructor. Submit hardcopies of your substantially revised written work along with the original submission(s). Note that resubmitting a paper does not guarantee a higher grade. In fact, cursorily rewritten work may receive a lower grade than the original.
- ❖ Should comply with the **Checklist of Written Work guidelines** (see below).
- ❖ Will be graded according to the **criteria** listed below.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING WRITTEN WORK

- A = a well organized, lucidly written paper free of mechanical errors (or oral argument) that indicates your thorough understanding of the material and your interesting insights or critical responses to it. In a phrase, an A paper is a “perfect 10” paper.
- B = a paper (or presentation) that offers evidence of your understanding of the material, but in which your points are obscured due to mechanical errors, lack of organization, inadequate evidence and/or insufficiently developed arguments.
- C = a paper in which the student’s understanding and response to the material is unclear or largely obscured due to any one or more factors listed under B.
- D, F = indicate that students are submitting unacceptable work.
- Slash grades (B/B+): Sometimes I give slash grades This means that the assignment is tending towards the higher grade but is not there yet. If you do better in the next assignment of a similar nature, the prior one will automatically be graded higher.

GRADE CHART

	Out of 10	Out of 5	GPA
A	9.3 - 10	4.7 - 4.9	4
A-	8.6 - 9.2	4.3 - 4.6	3.7
B+	7.9 - 8.5	4.0 - 4.2	3.3
B	7.2 - 7.8	3.6 - 3.9	3.0
B-	6.5 - 7.1	3.3 - 3.5	2.7
C+	5.8 - 6.4	3.0 - 3.2	2.3
C	5.1 - 5.7	2.6 - 2.9	2.0
C-	4.4 - 5.0	2.3 - 2.5	1.7
D+	3.7 - 4.3	2.0 - 2.2	1.7
D	3.0 - 3.6	1.9 - 1.7	1.0
F	2.7 - 2.9		

Academic Honesty Statement: Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at UMass. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/).

Accommodation Statement: Disability Services (DS) on campus keeps documentation on file of physical, psychological, or learning disability and provides services to students with disabilities: <http://www.umass.edu/disability/>. They also act as a liaison between students

and professors. If you need accommodations related to disabilities, please contact DS and me within the first two weeks of the term (before the add/drop period ends) so that we can work together to meet your learning needs. *A letter from Disability Services is not sufficient excuse for late or missed work or absences.* If, after consulting the syllabus, you anticipate missing classes or think you will need alternative formats and timelines for assignments, please communicate with me in person during office hours so that we can make mutually agreeable arrangements.

Pronoun Statement: I will gladly address you by the name you prefer and use the gender pronouns that correspond to your gender identity. Please advise the class and me on your name and pronoun preference, and the proper pronunciation of your name.

Checklist for Written Work for Prof Asher, AKA her 20 COMMANDMENTS!

1. My paper has a title. It tells my reader what my paper is about.
2. I have a central argument or a main point. I state it clearly.
3. I define the key terms on which my argument is based.
4. I have developed my argument systematically and my ideas are well organized. That is, my points follow from each other and speak to my central argument.
5. After stating my claims, I substantiate them with supporting evidence. This includes drawing on relevant course readings, and citing them in a correct and consistent format. Prof Asher prefers the author-date style: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
6. My entire paper is clear and focused with clear transitions between paragraphs and sections.
7. The passive voice has not been used by me. Instead, I use the active voice.
8. My sources are formatted correctly and consistently, as is my Reference List.
9. In my introductory and concluding remarks, I neither over generalize nor make banal claims. Rather, I begin and conclude with insightful remarks about my topic.
10. I have proof read my paper to ensure that it is free from repeated errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and I have used short sentences and made sure that my sentences do not run on like this one does.

Logistical and Mechanical details checklist

1. My name, course name and number, type and number of the assignment, and the date of the paper appear single-spaced in the upper left hand corner of the first page.
2. I have used a legible font, double-spaced my writing, and used 1.25-inch margins.
3. I have numbered all the pages of my assignment
4. I have STAPLED all the pages of my assignment. Paper clips are not staples.
5. I am NOT including a cover page or a report cover with my assignments.
6. I have submitted my paper on time and in the format indicated on the assignment. Rubric for naming electronic documents: Your Last Name_Assignment_Course#_Term, e.g. Asher_Final_493M_Fall2018.
7. I know the penalties for submitting assignments late, and acknowledge that Prof Asher does not accept papers via email.
8. I have avoided plagiarism: <https://plagiarism.duke.edu/procedures/table.php>.
9. I have (or will) conferenced my assignment with the WGSS writing tutor or at the Writing Center (<http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/>).
10. I have or will check out Section V of Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* (on Moodle). (PS: The White here is E B White, author of *Charlotte's Web*)

Course Schedule: This is a working course schedule and is subject to change. For example, readings may be added or substituted at the professor's discretion. The readings listed under each week are for that week. That is, please read the listed material before coming to class.

Week 1, Tu, Sept 4: Introduction to the seminar through discussion of the following

- ❖ The context and relevance of Marx for feminist and other political projects
- ❖ Structure of the seminar
- ❖ Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People without History* (Introduction/Chapter 1 in Moodle)
- ❖ Hobsbawm, Eric. 2011. *How to Change the World: Reflections on Marx and Marxism. Introduction.* Yale University Press. (Moodle)
- ❖ Marx, K and F. Engels. The Communist Manifesto (excerpt from the Norton Edition of the ME Reader) or via Marxists.org
- ❖ Spivak, Gayatri C. 2016. *Global Marx?* Public lecture at ICSI. Available at <http://www.criticalsocialinquiry.org/publiclectures/2016/8/8/gayatri-spivak-global-marx-at-the-institute-for-critical-social-inquiry-icsi>

Supplemental

- ❖ Jacqueline Rose's review of Rosa Luxemburg's letters <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n12/jacqueline-rose/what-more-could-we-want-of-ourselves>
- ❖ Benjamin Kunkel. 2011. How Much Is Too Much? *London Review of Books* 33 (3): 9-14. | 7281 words (review of David Harvey's *The Enigma of Capital: And the Crises of Capitalism*, and *A Companion to Marx's 'Capital'*)

Week 2, Sept 11: Locating/Contextualizing Marx and his Oeuvre

- ❖ Introduction to participants and why each of us wants read to Marx, which works?
- ❖ Preface and Intro to Marx-Engels Reader
- ❖ Ernest Mandel's introduction to *Capital vol I*
- ❖ Marx, K. Wage, Labour, Capital. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*
- ❖ Marx, K. "The Commodity," in *Capital*, vol. 1, 125-77 (New York: Vintage)
- ❖ Spivak, Gayatri. "From Haverstock Hill to US Classroom." Pp. in *What's Left of Theory: New Works on the Politics of Literary Theory*.

Week 3: Sept 18: Imperialism and Capitalism

- ❖ Anderson, Kevin. *Marx at the Margins*.
- ❖ Marx, *Imperialism in India*, in The ME Reader

Supplemental (or for second half of semester)

- ❖ Wolf, Chpt 10 Europe and the People without History
- ❖ Luxemburg, Rosa. *Accumulation of Capital*.
- ❖ Osborne, Peter. 2005. So-Called Original Accumulation and Colonialism: the Hideous Pagan Idol of Progress. Pp. 101-121 in *How to Read Marx*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- ❖ Selections from Kevin Anderson's bibliography
- ❖ J. A. Hobson. [1938]. 1999. *Imperialism: A Study*. University of Michigan.

- ❖ Lenin, V. I. [1939]. 2002. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. NY: International Publishers. Brewer, Anthony. 1980/1990. *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*. NY: Routledge.

Week 4, Sept 25: Marxist Feminisms and Feminist Marxisms

- ❖ Engels *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), pp. 734-759 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*
- ❖ Marx, Wage Labour and Capital (1847), pp. 203-218 in *The ME Reader*.
- ❖ Marx, The Secret of Primitive Accumulation (1847) pp. 432-438 in *The ME Reader*
- ❖ Hartmann, Heidi. 1979. The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more progressive union. *Capital and Class* vol 3: 1-33 (Moodle)
- ❖ Brown, Heather. <https://monthlyreview.org/2014/06/01/marx-on-gender-and-the-family-a-summary/> and the review article on it and Federici's work: <https://monthlyreview.org/2016/01/01/marx-the-feminist/>.

Supplemental (or for second half of semester)

- ❖ Haraway, Donna. 1991. 'Gender' for a Marxist Dictionary: The Sexual Politics of a Word, pp. 127-148 in Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. NY: Routledge. (Moodle)
- ❖ Selections from Dorothy Smith, Diane Elson, Kathi Weeks, Silvia Federici, Maria Mies, Cindi Katz, Spivak, G. 1995. *Ghostwriting*

Week 5, Oct 2: "Postcolonial" Marxism

- ❖ Spivak, Gayatri. 2012. *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. (Introduction, Chpt 4: The Double Bind Starts to Kick in, Chapter 8: Supplementing Marxism, Chapter 16: Imperative to Reimagine the Planet.) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Chapter 4 and 16 are optional)
- ❖ James, C.L.R. 1947. *Dialectical Materialism and the Fate of Humanity via Marxists* *Internet Archive* (Marxists.org)
- ❖ Looking forward to what we want to do in the second half of the semester. On Moodle, I have posted what students have selected in past seminars. Please note they are FYI only. You should focus on what you want to do and we can discuss and finalize themes and readings for this group.

Oct 9: Monday schedule, no CLASS, Midterm due by noon Oct 11

Week 6: Oct 16

- ❖ Wolf, Eric. *Europe and the People without history. Chapter 3 (Modes of Production)*
- ❖ Marx, Karl. Chapters 2 and 3 from *Capital, vol I*
- ❖ Topics and readings for Weeks 6-13 to be decided collectively. For example, we could continue reading *Capital, Vol I* (that's why I ordered it), or we could do read on various topics. See Moodle for some reference lists and potential readings. Whatever we decide to read, everyone should submit a prospectus for their final assignment by noon on Thursday before Thanksgiving break. The final assignment will be due on Dec 14.

Week 7: Oct 23

Week 8: Oct 30:

Week 9: Nov 6:

Week 10: Nov 13:

THANKSGIVING BREAK- No Class

Week 11: Nov 27

Week 12: Dec 4

Week 13: Dec 11: A collective closure