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University of Maryland
Government and Politics 845
Fall 2009

Tu: 3:30-6:15 p.m.

MARXIST POLITICAL THEORY

This course offers an introduction to and a critical analysis of the Marxist political theory. It will focus on the origins, dynamics and dilemmas of historical materialism both as a revolutionary doctrine, a philosophy of human emancipation, and a theory of politics and society. The course will discuss the emergence of critical directions within Marxism, the conflict between revisionist and orthodox schools of interpretation, as well as the relationship between Marxism, post-modernism and deconstruction. Special attention will be paid to the conflict between Western and Soviet Marxism, including a detailed discussion of Lenin's and Stalin's roles in the genesis of modern totalitarianism. Exploring the connection between the Marxian theoretical legacy and the varieties of contemporary revolutionary experience, the course discusses the mythological and utopian dimensions of Marxism. Special discussions will be organized on the Marxist theory of alienation and ideology, the "Critical Theory" of the Frankfurt School, the relationship between reason and revolution, and the post-Marxist approaches to the challenges of advanced industrial societies. We will examine the meanings of the revisionist critique of bureaucratic socialism, including theoretical endeavors of Cornelius Castoriadis, Claude Lefort, the Praxis Group, the Budapest School and, more recently, Slavoj Žižek.

The Structure of the Course.

Part I: The origins, the inner dynamics, and the major concepts of Marx's political theory (revolution and revolutionary party, class struggle, scientific versus utopian socialism, the new concept of man and history, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the critique of ideologies, the philosophy of praxis); the elaboration of the Marxian radical humanism; the theory of state and religion; the critique of political economy; Marx's theory of alienation.

Part II: The historical experience of Marxism during the 20th century: Lenin's concept of the vanguard party and the Bolshevik revolutionary theory; the emergence of Marxism-Leninism as an official state ideology; the institutionalization (bureaucratization) of Marxism: Leninism, Stalinism and the fate of socialism in Russia; early critics of Bolshevism (Rosa Luxemburg); Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and the criticism of bureaucracy. Understanding the Bolshevik mind.

Part III: The challenge of critical (independent) Marxism (Georg Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci, Karl Korsch, the Frankfurt School) to authoritarian Marxism; the rise and the significance of Marxist revisionism (the Budapest School, Leszek Kolakowski, the Yugoslav Praxis group); democratic socialism and reform Communism; the ideological crisis of Soviet-type regimes; Castro-Guevarism and the decline of the Third World Left (Jorge Castaneda); Jacques Derrida, the end of history debate and the return of "Marx's specters"; Castoriadis, Lefort, and other French neo-Marxists and post-Marxists.

Required Readings:

1. Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and The Leap into the Kingdom of Freedom*, Stanford UP
2. Robert C. Tucker, *Marx-Engels Reader*, Norton.
3. Robert C. Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea*, Norton.
4. Stephen Bonner and Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, Routledge
5. Raymond Taras, ed., *The Road to Disillusion*, M. E. Sharpe

Recommended Readings:

1. Frank Manuel, *A Requiem for Karl Marx*, Harvard UP.
2. Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*
3. G.R. Urban, ed., *Stalinism: Its Impact on Russia and the World*.
4. Robert C. Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*, Transaction Publishers.
5. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, Vol. II, The Golden Age, Vol. III, The Breakdown, Oxford. **New edition, Norton, 2005**
6. Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher, *The Postmodern Political Condition*, Columbia Univ. Press.

Course Requirements

1. Oral Presentation. Each student will make a presentation on a topic chosen with the approval of the professor. The subject of this presentation may be the analytical presentation of one of the assigned readings or a related-topic. This paper will count for the mid-term.
2. Final Paper. The final examination will consist of a research paper of no more than 25 typed, double-spaced pages. Bibliographic lists are expected as a mandatory component of a research paper. Several paper topics will be suggested in class by the professor. Students may write papers on non-assigned topics provided those topics are submitted in writing and approved by the professor. Generally, the mid-term paper can be the kernel of the final research paper.

Syllabus.

1. The genesis of Marxist political theory. The intellectual origins and the major components of the Marxist doctrine. Marx and Engels as revolutionaries and political philosophers: the Hegelian and utopian-communist heredity. Special focus on the Communist Manifesto.

The Marx Engels Reader.

The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, chapter 1.

Walicki, Chapter 1

Suggested: Kolakowski, Part I

Robert C. Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*

2. Political themes in the early Marxist writings: the critique of ideology, bureaucracy, and alienation. The Hegelian concept of totality and the romantic longing for total, apocalyptic revolution. Marxism as a secular religion, the revolutionary eschatology, the end of history and politics. The "Theses on Feuerbach" and the concept of revolutionary praxis. The Marxist philosophy of human emancipation.

The Marx-Engels Reader.

The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, chapter 3.

Walicki, 1 and 2

Suggested:

Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness.*

Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy.*

Lucio Colletti, *Marxism and Hegel.*

Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy*, chapters on Hegel and Marx.

3. The critique of political economy. Economic determinism and human freedom. Class-struggle and proletarian consciousness. Objectivity and partisanship in Marxism. The theory of class-struggle, dialectics, and human freedom. Marxism and the critique of liberal democracy.

The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, chapter 2.

Walicki, chapters 2 and 3

Kolakowski, chapter on Lukacs

4. The theory and the vision of communism. Marxism and anarchism. A new conception of morality and a radical program for the social-democratic movement: the institutionalization of Marxism and the rise of reformism. The Marxian concept of internationalism and world revolution. Political elites, radical intellectuals and mass movements. Marxism as a structural and systemic theory of political change.

The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, chapter 5.

The Marx-Engels Reader.
Walicki, Chapter 3
Alvin Gouldner, *Against Fragmentation*, parts 1 and 2.

Suggested: Robert C. Tucker, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia*.
Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*
Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current* (chapter on Sorel).

6. From Marx to Lenin. The strategy and tactics of social-democracy. Reform and revolution. Lenin's conflict with Menshevism. The Bolshevik party and the professionalization of revolutionary activities. Lenin's theory of the new type of party (the revolutionary avantgarde).

Walicki, chapter 4
Kolakowski, vol. II
Tucker, *Lenin Anthology*
Urban, interview with Robert C. Tucker

Suggested:
Kolakowski
Aleksander Yakovlev, *The Fate of Marxism in Russia*

7. Lenin's theory of imperialism, wars, and revolutions. Lenin's revision of Marx's revolutionary scenario and "Russianization" of the classical doctrine. Lenin's polemic with Kautsky and the doctrine of the new revolutionary state (the concept of "dictatorship of the proletariat.") The break with social-democracy and the foundation of the Comintern. Authoritarian-militaristic features of the Bolshevik political culture: Rosa Luxemburg's criticism of the Russian revolution. An assessment of Lenin's political and intellectual legacy.

Walicki, Chapters 4 and 5
Main Currents of Marxism, Vol. III.
Kolakowski, vol. II

8. Stalin's theory of "socialism in one country" and the dogmatization of Marxism. The Stalin-Trotsky debate: Trotsky's theory of the "betrayed revolution." Marxism-Leninism (the ideological justification of Stalinism) as an apologetic dogma: the suppression of criticism and the celebration of the totalitarian state. The main characteristics of Stalinist totalitarianism and its relationship to Leninism. Purges, show-trials and the Bolshevik mental universe. French existentialists and Stalinism.

Walicki, chapter 5
Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, Vol. III.
Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*.
Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*

9. Khrushchev and the disintegration of Stalin's myth. Titoism and the search for national Communism. The cycle "freeze-thaw" in Communist history: Khrushchev-Brezhnev-Gorbachev. Gorbachev's "neo-Bolshevism" and the struggle against the

Stalinist and Brezhnevite legacies. The attempt to reinvent socialism. The meaning of revisionism and critical Marxism in East-Central Europe.

Walicki, Chapter 6

Taras

Kolakowski

Tucker, *Marxian Revolutionary Idea*

Main Currents, vol. III.

Tismaneanu, *Crisis of Marxist Ideology in Eastern Europe*

10. Antonio Gramsci's alternative to Leninism: hegemony, political myth, civil society. Young Lukacs, Karl Korsch and the Hegelian-Marxist radicalism.

Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, Vol. III.

Arato and Breines, *Young Lukacs*.

Lucio Pellicani, *Gramsci*

11. Marxist theories of revolutionary warfare and violence: the political concepts of Maoism and Castroism. The Marxism of Ernesto "Che" Guevara. The rise of Third World political radicalism.

McLellan, *Marxism*, chapters 13, 16, & 17.

Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea*, chapter 4.

Tismaneanu, "Castroism and Marxist-Leninist Orthodoxy in Latin America," in Irving Louis Horowitz, *Cuban Communism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987), pp. 554-77.

12. The Frankfurt School and the foundations of "Critical Theory." Walter Benjamin's historical pessimism. The critique of Reason and Enlightenment by Adorno and Horkheimer. Herbert Marcuse's rehabilitation of negativity and the critique of the one-dimensional society. The concept of repressive tolerance. "What is dead and what is alive" in Karl Marx?

Main Currents of Marxism, Vol. III.

Bronner and Kellner

Kellner, *Critical Theory*

13-14. Pluralism, democracy and human freedom. Neo-Marxist endeavors to reconstruct a political theory of social emancipation. Derrida and the "new international." Castoriadis and the possibility of a post-Marxist radical critique. Zizek and the "return to Lenin."

Dick Howard, *Specter of Democracy*

Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

Isaac, *Democracy in Dark Times*

