

Hegel, Marx, & Universal Emancipation

Fall 2019, WF 11:35 - 12:55, Lea 210
Prof. Hasana Sharp

PHIL 445: 19th C. Political Theory

Office Hours: W 2-4, 912 Leacock
hasana.sharp@mcgill.ca

Description:

This course will consist in a study of two major texts in political philosophy: Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and Marx's *Capital*, vol. 1. Although many distinctions can surely be made between Hegel's and Marx's political theory, they both depart from the methodological individualism of 17th and 18th century social contract theory. Rather than beginning with individuals as atomic units that enter, one by one or all at once, into civil society, Hegel and Marx understand individuality as an historical achievement of modern social and political life. Their political philosophies are, first and foremost, theories of the *social*. That is, thinking about politics for these nineteenth century philosophers involves an examination of the *relations* that constitute society, individual and group agency, and state power. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* outlines multiple domains of social relations – for example, property and exchange, work, family, and the courts – through which spiritual beings seek recognition from one another. We will spend the first half of the course examining Hegel's rich and complex treatment of "right" as an expression of the wills of self-conscious beings struggling to find themselves reflected in a world of their making. We will also briefly consider some more recent appropriations and developments of Hegel's thought (Du Bois, Beauvoir, and Fanon).

The second half of the course will be dedicated to Marx's monumental first volume of *Capital*. Although not a direct examination of state power, *Capital* examines a major sphere of modern life – the economy – as a system of relations whose logic comes to pervade human existence (and much of nonhuman existence as well). Philosophy, the law, concepts of right and freedom, even our very perceptions of things come to be organized by the imperatives of capitalist exchange relations. Whereas the social contract tradition begins with an idea of solitary and natural man, Marx finds (mostly) men in relationship to one another. These relations are not, however, driven by the contradictions internal to self-consciousness. With Marx, the social is a domain of class struggle, the contradiction between different forms of practice. We will conclude this half as well with brief consideration of recent developments of Marx's critique of capitalism (DuBois and Weeks).

Note: There is a pre-requisite of at least one political philosophy course. I will accept political philosophy courses taken in other departments. If you are concerned about whether you have sufficient background and are debating when in your undergraduate career to take this course, be forewarned that these are exceptionally difficult (albeit exciting) books.

Texts:

G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, translated by A. White, Focus/R. Pullins.

K. Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, translated by B. Fowkes, Penguin/Vintage.

Other texts available on *My Courses*.

Available at "The Word" Bookstore at 469 Milton Street.

This Class is supported by *MyCourses*.

Requirements:

Evaluations will be based upon attendance & participation (10%); one short paper on Hegel (30%); a term paper proposal (15%), peer review (5%); and a final term paper (40% of grade). Late papers will be penalized.

Short Paper: A short paper on Hegel will be due around mid-term. The assignment will be posted on MyCourses two weeks before it is due. (1,000 words)

Paper proposal: The final paper will be on a topic of your choosing that treats Hegel's and Marx's texts together, or just Marx's *Capital* (since you will have already written a paper on Hegel). You may relate these texts to other philosophers you have studied, or to contemporary issues, if you like. Around 2/3 of the way through the term, you will turn in a prospective abstract describing your topic and suggesting a tentative thesis. It will also identify relevant parts of Hegel's and/ or Marx's texts for your argument. The proposal is not a contract and it is okay if your final paper mutates into a different shape, but this will be an effort to envision your final paper sufficiently in advance and to receive feedback. Also, even though you will not be bound to its contents, it will be graded based on clarity, creativity, and appropriateness of the use of texts and source materials. (600-750 words, not including bibliography)

Peer Review: There will be a mandatory peer review workshop on the last day of class. This is an opportunity to get feedback on your paper before you submit it, and to practice providing feedback for others. You should have a rough draft of your paper and be prepared to read and reflect critically on a paper by one of your peers. Forms will be provided and must be attached to your final draft, along with your rough draft. Do your best to offer suggestions about the thesis and the ideas in the paper, although you may point out some mechanical improvements to be made.

Final paper: You will submit a final thesis-driven term paper that reflects your engagement with the course material. Further instructions and grading criteria will be posted on MyCourses no later than mid-term. (3,000 words, give or take 200 words)

General Grading Criteria:

An "A" indicates that all of the expectations and requirements have been met, but the work goes beyond them in significant ways. For instance, a paper of this quality may do one or more of the following: demonstrate an exceptional understanding of the wider questions and philosophical significance of the issues; present a research agenda of its own that promises to make a substantial contribution to the existing scholarship; is exceptionally well-composed and well-argued.

A "B" reflects having fully met all of the expectations and requirements with regard to deadlines, length, content, argumentation, and so forth. It demonstrates full and adequate understanding of the assigned readings, of the lectures, and of the specific task of the assignment. A "B" paper may, for example, propose a well-defined thesis and argument, yet it is not particularly original, challenging, or subtle.

Work that earns a "C" generally meets the expectations of the assignment and demonstrates adequate understanding of the course material, but falls short in crucial respects. For example, the work is too short, key concepts or aspects are not mentioned, the thesis statement of a paper is especially obvious, the argument lacks coherence or logical structure, the work is not well written and/or displays too many grammar and spelling errors, and so on.

A "D" assignment does not meet the general expectations and requirements of the assignment. While it endeavours to meet the specific criteria, it shows flaws and gaps in the understanding of the

course material that prevent it from being coherent or from taking into account the relevant sources, ideas, and arguments.

Work that receives an “F” is absent, incomplete, or makes no serious attempt to meet the formal and substantial requirements. The flaws and gaps in understanding are so grave that the reader cannot detect a concerted effort to appropriate and use the course material.

Academic Integrity:

McGill University values academic integrity. All students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information).

Other Notes:

- In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.
- In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.
- As instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. If you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.
- Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please be in touch early in the term to advise me.
- McGill University is on land which is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien’keha:ka (Mohawk), a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations.