

Radical Political Thought

<p>POLI 364 Winter 2024</p> <p>ENGMD 280 T/TH 10:05-11:25</p>	<p>Professor Yves Winter yves.winter@mcgill.ca Office: 418 Ferrier Office hours: TH 1:30-2:30 and by appointment</p> <p>TA: Michael Denigris michael.denigris@mail.mcgill.ca</p>
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Description

Most modern social and political institutions make explicit or tacit claims to embody principles of freedom, justice, equality, and/or solidarity. Radical political theories fundamentally contest these claims, offering trenchant critiques of the unfreedom, power, and domination characteristic of modern social life. This course introduces students to key themes, concepts, and arguments in the analyses of unfreedom and injustice, focusing on the Marxist tradition which has been central to radical political thought from the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries.

The course is organized around a series of central concepts, building on the critique of political economy and its political-theoretical implications. Among the concepts we will study are inequality, exploitation, alienation, the capitalist state, ideology, social democracy, democratic socialism, racial capitalism, social reproduction, and crisis.

Prerequisites

This is a 300-level course. In accordance with departmental regulations, this means that students must have taken a 200-level course in the same field (normally POLI 231 or equivalent).

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase from [Paragraph Books/ Librairie Paragraphe](#).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, ed. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. Simon. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994

Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*. London: Verso, 2022

All other readings will be available on **myCourses**.

Assignments and Grades

Written assignments for this course will consist of **two essays** (1500 words each) and a **final exam**.

Final grades are calculated according to the following schedule. Note that you must receive a passing grade (D) in each of the following four grade categories in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

First Essay	20%
Second Essay	20%
Final Exam	45%
Conference Participation	15%

All assignments are due on the dates indicated in the syllabus. They are to be submitted in **PDF** format on myCourses. **Late assignments** will be docked one third of a letter grade for every 24 hours late, including weekends. Extensions are available only for serious and documented reasons, and they must be requested ahead of time. No extensions will be granted on (or after) an assignment's due date. Do not send assignments by email unless otherwise instructed.

Formatting: All of your written work should be spell-checked and proof-read for syntax, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. It should be double-spaced with 1-inch margins and 12pt font and use proper reference citation. I do not care which of the established reference citation system you use, as long as you are consistent and complete. Please number your pages. Any multi-page document that is required in hard copy should be stapled.

Your written work will be graded on originality, reasoning and argument, organization, clarity of exposition, and style. Essays will be marked according to the following rubric:

Paper Grading Rubric				
	A	B	C	D
Use of Course Material (Evidence and Analysis)	Applies course material in an especially thoughtful, skillful, or original manner. Fresh and cogent analysis. Demonstrates genuine depth of engagement with ideas from the course going beyond lectures & conferences.	Good, solid application of concepts from course. Demonstrates solid understanding of texts, ideas, and problems. Claims backed up by appropriate textual evidence.	Uses course material but inappropriately or in a cursory fashion. May have some factual, interpretive, or conceptual problems.	Paper shows inadequate engagement with course material, and/or demonstrates major errors in use of concepts.
Quality of Thesis	Strong argument. Original, clear, plausible, substantive, and contestable thesis.	Substantive and clear thesis.	Weak or vague/unclear thesis.	Thesis difficult to identify.
Quality of Reasoning (Execution)	Thorough, and insightful analysis. Skillful development of the argument.	Satisfactory and consistent analysis. Fulfills the assignment and deals with major issues in assignment.	Analysis and reasoning unclear; ideas undeveloped or underdeveloped. Addresses assignment, but not fully or not in an appropriate manner.	Doesn't address the assignment or otherwise fails to respond to the requirements of the analysis. Ideas undeveloped. Frequent recourse to narrative.
Writing Quality (Presentation, Organization, Style, Mechanics)	Eloquently written, in clear and concise prose. Fun to read. Well-organized. Free from errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage	Readable, concise, coherent, organized, and clear, but could be improved with a few minor changes.	Problems with presentation, coherence, organization, clarity, word choice, grammar or proofreading.	Not appropriate for college level writing; major problems with presentation, organization, clarity.

The Department has a regrade policy. If at any point you feel like your written work has not been graded fairly, you can ask for a regrade.

This course includes **mandatory conferences** which will start on January 18/19 and continue until April 4/5. If you want to stay in this class, you must enroll in and attend one of the four conference sections. Conferences have a **strict attendance** policy. Students with two or more absences should not expect a passing participation grade.

There are six conferences throughout the term (80 minutes each) and they are scheduled for the following dates/times. Note that two of the conference sections overlap with the usual Thursday lecture slot. This is because, **in conference weeks, there will be no lecture on Thursdays.**

Day	Time	Dates	Location	Instructor
Thurs	10:05-11:25	18 Jan; 1 Feb; 15 Feb; 29 Feb; 21 Mar; 4 Apr	ENGMD 280	Y. Winter
Thurs	10:05-11:25	18 Jan; 1 Feb; 15 Feb; 29 Feb; 21 Mar; 4 Apr	TBC	M. Denigris
Thurs	TBC	18 Jan; 1 Feb; 15 Feb; 29 Feb; 21 Mar; 4 Apr	TBC	M. Denigris
Friday	TBC	19 Jan; 2 Feb; 16 Feb; 01 Mar; 22 Mar; 5 Apr	TBC	M. Denigris

Conference participation is marked according to the following rubric:

Participation Grading Rubric			
A	B	C	D
Student is always prepared for class and advances the discussion by sharing thoughtful ideas or asking questions more than once per class	Student is always prepared for class and contributes proactively at least once per class	Student offers occasional contributions	Student offers little to no contributions

Grading Scale

All work in this course will be graded on the standard letter grade scale (A to F), equivalent to the 4-point GPA scale. An A on a course component is worth 4 points, an A- is worth 3.7 points, etc. To calculate your final grade, the grade points you earn on each course component will be multiplied by the relative weight of that component, and then the scores will be added to get your final grade-point average. That average will determine your final letter grade for the course. The table below sets out the official scheme used by McGill to convert letter grades to grade points. For example, if your overall grade-point average is a 3.4, you would earn a B+ in the course. Do not rely on the calculator in MyCourses for computing your final grade, as that calculator by default aggregates grades according to the 0-100% scale and will not display the accurate final grade you have earned in this course.

Grade	Grade Points	Grade Range
A	4.0	3.85-4.00
A-	3.7	3.50-3.84
B+	3.3	3.15-3.49

B	3.0	2.85-3.14
B-	2.7	2.50-2.84
C+	2.3	2.15-2.49
C	2.0	1.85-2.14
D	1.0	1.0-1.86
F	0.0	0.00-0.99

Other Policies

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. This involves maintaining teaching spaces that are respectful and inclusive for all involved. To this end, offensive, violent, or harmful language on discussion boards, in chat rooms, but also in user names or visual backgrounds may be cause for disciplinary action.

If you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and [Student Accessibility & Achievement](#)

Accommodations are possible for students who experience barriers (including disabilities, medical conditions, as well as other obstacles). **Students who need accommodations should contact me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as possible after the barrier arises.**

Please let me and your fellow students know your preferred pronoun. Your preferred name should appear on the class list if you have entered it in [Minerva](#).

McGill University values **academic integrity**. Therefore, 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 www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). Please note that I take plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty seriously. Work submitted for evaluation as part of this course will be reviewed for potential plagiarism issues and may be checked with text matching software.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant-e a le droit de soumettre **en français ou en anglais** tout travail écrit devant être noté.

In the event of **extraordinary circumstances** beyond the instructor's or the university's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change. Note: in view of the pandemic, this is not just a prosaic routine notice. It is **a distinct possibility** that there will be substantial changes to the course.

All slides, video recordings, lecture notes, and handouts are to be used strictly for your own learning. You are not permitted to share these materials or place them into the public domain; doing so may violate both University regulations and Canadian law and could be cause for disciplinary action.

Class Schedule

- 4 Jan **Introduction**
- 9 Jan **Inequality**
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, Preface & Part One
- 11 Jan **Inequality**
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, Part Two
- 16 Jan **Alienation**
Karl Marx, "Alienated Labour," in Selected Writings, 58-67
- 18 Jan **Conferences**
- 23 Jan **Class, Bourgeoisie, Proletariat**
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Manifesto of the Communist Party," (Parts I and II) in Marx, Selected Writings, 157-176
- 25 Jan **Commodity, Value, Exchange**
Karl Marx, Capital, Preface, chaps. 1, 2, 3 in Selected Writings, 214-255
- 30 Jan **Labour Power, Surplus Value, Capital, Exploitation**
Karl Marx, Capital, chaps. 4, 6, 7 in Selected Writings, 255-294
- 1 Feb **Conferences**
- 6 Feb **Materialist Conception of History**
Karl Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, in Selected Writings, 98-101
Karl Marx, "Preface to A Critique of Political Economy," in Selected Writings, 209-213
Karl Marx, Capital, chaps. 26, 32 in Selected Writings, 294-300
- 8 Feb **Counterrevolution, Bonapartism, Dictatorship of the Proletariat**
Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, in Selected Writings, 187-208
Karl Marx, The Civil War in France, in Selected Writings, 301-314
- 13 Feb **Capitalist State**
Ralph Miliband, The State in Capitalist Society, 1-7, 49-59, 68-76, 87-96
- 15 Feb **Conferences**
- 20 Feb **Ideology: False Consciousness and Fetishism**
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The German Ideology, in Marx, Selected Writings, 129-130
Reread Karl Marx, "Preface to A Critique of Political Economy," in Selected Writings, 209-213
Reread Karl Marx, Capital, chap. 1, §4 "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret," in Selected Writings, 230-243
Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, 46-55
- 22 Feb **Ideology: Imaginary and Apparatuses**
Louis Althusser, For Marx, 232-234
Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays, 127-173

- 27 Feb **Dilemmas of Democratic Socialism**
 Eduard Bernstein, The Preconditions of Socialism, 140-144
 Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Capitalism and Human Emancipation." New Left Review 167 (1988): 3–20
- 29 Feb **Conferences**
- 1 Mar **First essay due 6:00pm (PDF format, myCourses)**
- 5 Mar **Reading Week**
- 7 Mar **Reading Week**
- 12 Mar **Dilemmas of Social Democracy**
 Adam Przeworski, "Social Democracy as a Historical Phenomenon." New Left Review 122 (1980): 27–58
- 14 Mar **Capitalism Expanded**
 Nancy Fraser, Cannibal Capitalism, Preface, chaps. 1-2
- 19 Mar **Racial Capitalism**
 Cedric Robinson, "Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalist Development" in Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition, chap. 1
 Reed, Adolph, Jr. "The Limits of Anti-Racism." In No Politics but Class Politics, 45-52
 Cedric Johnson, After Black Lives Matter: Policing and Anti-Capitalist Struggle, 1-34
- 21 Mar **Conferences**
- 26 Mar **Social Reproduction**
 Nancy Fraser, Cannibal Capitalism, chap. 3
- 28 Mar **Crises**
 Nancy Fraser, Cannibal Capitalism, chaps. 4-5
- 2 Apr **Political Capitalism**
 Dylan Riley and Robert Brenner "Seven Theses on American Politics" New Left Review 138 (2022): 5–27
- 3 Apr **Second essay due 6:00 pm (PDF format, myCourses)**
- 4 Apr **Conferences**
- 9 Apr **Futures**
 Nancy Fraser, Cannibal Capitalism, chap. 6
 Wolfgang Streek, "How Will Capitalism End?" New Left Review 87 (2014): 35–64
- TBC **Final Exam** (scheduled by Exam Office)