Philosophy 362
Crises of the Individual: Marx & Freud

Spring 2017
Amherst College

Professor: Rafeeq Hasan
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Office: 209 Cooper House
Office Hours: Tu 2:00-3:30pm, Wed 3:30-5:00pm (or by apt)
Meetings: Tu/Th 11:30-12:50pm
Class Room: MERR 315

Course Description

In modern Western thought, the autonomous individual forms the basic unit of conceptual analysis. We understand ourselves as beings who act based on reasons that we endorse. Our desires constitute the core of our real selves. Reflection on those desires is fundamentally transparent, i.e., we can tell what it is that we want when we want it. Who we are and what we do is the product of our private inner worlds.

Sometimes this form of self-understanding feels obvious and inevitable—nothing more than common sense. At other times, it feels false to the complexities and crises of human experience. Yet it is not so easy to let go of the concept of the autonomous individual, for it is deeply woven into our economic relations, legal institutions, and cultural forms. Nor is it clear what would be gained by wholesale rejection of this concept.

Two of the greatest thinkers of the nineteenth century—Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)—challenge conceptual individualism, without ignoring its potential and promise. Marx focuses on the economy and Freud the unconscious. Read together, they reveal how the modern sense of self is the product of deep structures whose essential nature is necessarily misrecognized by agents governed by those structures. Yet, for both thinkers, we must retain aspects of the modern self in order to create a better future. By reading Marx and Freud, we will gain the vocabulary necessary to submit our common sense self-understanding to the practice of critique.

Required Texts [Available at Amherst Books and at Frost Reserve]


Optional Texts [Available at Frost Reserve; excerpts will be made available via .pdf]


Other readings will be made available via Moodle and/or email. Please make sure that you bring hard copies of the relevant readings to class.
Requirements

1. Academic Honesty

Please read the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility, as well as the other information contained in ‘Academic Honesty and Plagiarism’ on the Dean of Students website <www.amherst.edu/campuslife/deanstudents/acadhonesty>. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic honesty or dishonesty, come speak to me about them.

2. Deadlines

If you find that you are unable to complete an assignment by the deadline because of a crisis or emergency, do contact me and let me know what is going on. Contact me on or before the deadline, for, once the deadline has passed, there is much less I can do to help. Do not assume, without contacting me, that you may turn an assignment in late.

Papers that are submitted late and without an extension will be marked down .3 down (see #7 for grading scale) for every day of lateness.

3. Attendance/Participation

You should attend class regularly, on time, and well-rested. If you should miss a class because of illness or family emergency, or some other pressing matter, please let me know ahead of time by email.

Attendance/participation will count for 25% of your grade. You may miss up to 1 class session without a legitimate excuse. There will be a .2 reduction in your overall participation grade for each subsequent day missed without a medical excuse.

Your participation grade turns on the quality, not the quantity of your contributions, and the extent to which you exhibit the respect and care necessary to promote good discussion. Contributions do not have to be in the form of “answers” or completed “theories” about a text or position—thoughtful questions are highly encouraged, and you will certainly not be penalized for a spirit of humility. While good contributions obviously vary immensely, I especially value comments and questions that pay close attention to the relevant text and those that build on, and reflect attention to, others’ contributions.

In addition to class meetings, there will be two mandatory film screenings, on 2/13 and 4/12.

Office hours: I will hold regular office hours from 2-330pm on Tuesdays and 330-500pm on Wednesdays. On Monday of each week by 10am I will post a sign-up sheet for those times blocked off in 20-minute slots. If you cannot make my posted office hours because of a work or class conflict, or if they are full, email me to schedule another meeting time. Please come by to sign the sheet yourself rather than emailing me to do so on your behalf.

4. Reading

This is a course about making, analyzing, and evaluating arguments, many of which are carefully laid out in our readings. Many of these readings are dense, and several are written in outdated language. Leave yourself ample time to complete the readings.

Take the reading process seriously: read actively, doing your best to think about, and respond to, the works you are reading. Active annotation (e.g., underlining, tabbing, note-taking) will help you track
down important passages when you come back to them later, such as in class or when writing a paper. If you encounter a passage that you don’t understand, re-read it a few times. If you still don’t understand it, pass over it! Try to get a sense of the whole instead of getting lost in the part. But do jot down any questions or confusions you have about any particular passage or argument and raise them in class.

(Note: if you’re nervous about speaking up in class, having a prewritten question on hand can help.) Second, skim over the reading again after class discussion. It should be much easier to understand at this point. If you’re still unclear about something, get help: ask other classmates, come by my office hours, etc.

10 times over the semester you will be given a short response assignment on the next session’s readings. Your response should be between ¾-1 page, double-spaced, 12 pt. font. Please print it out and bring it to class. I will not accept them via email.

These assignments will be graded on a v+, v, and v- basis. To receive a v+ you need not provide the “right” answer. Rather, a v+ indicates your having put serious effort into engaging with the text and organizing your response in a clear manner. The responses altogether will be worth 25% of your grade.

5. Assignments/Grading

1 5-7 page paper on Marx 25%
1 5-7 page paper on Freud 25%
10 ¾-1 page expository responses 25%
Class participation 25%

You will be given both a number grade and a letter grade for each assignment. Only the numerical grade is taken into account in determining your final grade. Numerical grades correspond to letter grades as follows: A 10-9.5; A- 9.4-9.0; B+ 8.9-8.7; B 8.6-8.3; B- 8.2-8.0; C 7.9 or below

6. Electronic Devices in the Class

All devices with an ON/OFF switch—laptops, phones, etc.—must be switched off during class, unless they are serving a medical purpose. All forms of electronic social commerce (e.g., texting, internet-surfing, emailing, and gaming) are strictly forbidden.

7. Disability Statement

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Charri Boykin-East, Senior Associate Dean of Students, at cjoykineast@amherst.edu or in Converse Hall 105. Only those students with a documented disability can arrange for accommodations, and it is the student’s responsibility to inform the professor of those accommodations once Dean Boykin-East has documented a disability. For more info, see: www.amherst.edu/campuslife/deanstudents/disability.

Reading Schedule

Note: This schedule is entirely provisional. We may speed up, slow down, skip readings, or add readings, depending on where our discussion leads and the interests of members of the class.

Marx
**Week 1: Introduction to Marx**

Tu 1/24: Introduction to the course. To have read before class:

“The Deadly Tin Inside Your Smartphone”

‘Working Anything But 9 to 5”

“Karl Marx: Yesterday and Today”


**Week 2: The Political Critique of Capitalism: Human Rights and Freedom**


**Week 3: The Ethical Critique of Capitalism: Alienation**

Tu 2/7: Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (.pdf), focus on pp. 1-3, 7-19, 42-45; Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, MER, pp. 66, 70-81


“Alienation and Social Classes,” MER, pp. 133-135

“Excerpts from James Mill’s Elements of Political Economy,” *Early Writings*, pp. 277-278 (.pdf)

“Capitalism, Alienation and Communism,” MER, pp. 292-293

Optional: Allen Wood, *Karl Marx*, pp. 3-60

**Week 4: Ideology and Historical Materialism/Marx and Political Action**


Optional: Wood, *Karl Marx*, pp. 61-100

Th 2/16: Guest lecture by Alex Gourevitch (Brown University); Reading TBD
Week 5: Laws of Capitalist Production I: Commodities and Value

T 2/21: Marx, *Capital*, MER, pp. 294-298, 302-312, 312-319; Essay 1 Assigned

Th 2/23: Marx, *Capital*, MER, pp. 319-329

Week 6: Laws of Capitalist Production II: Capital


Th 3/2: Missed class (conference travel) [Use this time to work on your essay!]

Week 7: Laws of Capitalist Production III: Exploitation/Marx and Race

M 3/6: Essay 1 Due via email @ 5pm

T 3/7: Marx, Capital Sale of labor-power; surplus value and exploitation: MER, pp. 336-361; MER, pp. 291-292


Th 3/9: Guest lecture by Vanessa Wills (George Washington University); Reading TBD

Spring Break: 3/11-3/19

Freud

Week 8: Introducing the Unconscious

(http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/11/magazine/teenage-girls-twitching-le-roy.html?_r=0)

“Freud’s Discontents” (https://www.thenation.com/article/freuds-discontents/)

“Freud’s Radical Talking Cure”
(https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/18/freuds-radical-talking/?_r=0)

Optional: “Therapy Wars: The Revenge of Freud”

Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, pp. 21-48 (Case Study of Anna O.)

Th 3/23: Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, pp. 135-181 (Case Study of Elizabeth von R.);

**Week 9: Dreams**

T 3/28:  

Th 3/30:  

Optional: Lear, *Freud*, Chapters 1 & 3, pp. 29-60, 94-121

**Week 10: Dreams, Trauma, and Sexual Life**

T 4/4:  

Th 4/6:  
Freud, *Introductory Lectures*. Chapters XIX-XX, pp. 354-396

Optional: Lear, *Freud*, Chapters 2 & 4, pp. 61-93; 122-147

**Week 11: Libido**

T 4/11:  
Freud, *Introductory Lectures*. Chapters XXI-XXII, pp. 397-444

W 4/12:  
Screening Alfred Hitchcock, *Vertigo* (1958). 7-915pm Keefe Campus Center Theater

Th 4/13:  
Missed class (conference travel)

**Week 12: Symptoms, Transference, the Death Drive**

T 4/18:  

Th 4/20:  
Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (excerpts)

Optional: Lear, *Freud*, Chapter 5, pp. 148-166

Marcuse

**Week 13: Psychoanalysis and the Critique of Capitalism**

T 4/25:  

Th 4/27:  
Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*. Chapters 4, 6, pp. 78-105, 129-139

F 4/28:  
**Essay 2 Due via email @ 5pm**

**Week 14: Psychoanalysis and the Critique of Capitalism (continued)**

T 5/2 (Make up): Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*. Chapters 10, 11, pp. 197-237