

THE COLUMBIA CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL THOUGHT

AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

SEMINAR ON CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL THOUGHT: MARX 13/13

CPLS 8866 & LAW 8866
(SPRING 2025)

Bernard E. Harcourt
Isidor and Seville Sulzbacher Professor
Law, Political Science, and ICLS
Jerome Greene Hall, Suite 603
beh2139@columbia.edu
(212) 854-1997

CCCCT Executive Coordinator
Ricardo Lombera
Jerome Greene Hall
rlombera@law.columbia.edu
(212) 854-2688

WEDNESDAYS 6:15 PM TO 8:45 PM

Seminar Description

Each year, this seminar focuses on a different set of topics at the heart of contemporary critical thought. During the 2015-2016 academic year, the seminar focused on Michel Foucault's Collège de France lectures and produced the [Foucault 13/13 series](#). During the 2016-2017 academic year, the seminar focused on critical readings of Friedrich Nietzsche and produced the [Nietzsche 13/13 series](#). During the 2017-2018 academic year, the seminar focused on modalities of uprisings and produced the [Uprising 13/13 series](#). During the 2018-2019 academic year, the seminar focused on the relationship between critical theory and praxis, and produced the [Praxis 13/13 series](#). During the 2019-2020 academic year, the seminar returned to the fundamental texts of critical theory, and produced the [Critique 13/13 series](#). During the 2020-2021 academic year, the seminar went completely virtual due to the pandemic and focused on the history, theory, and future of abolition, and produced the [Abolition Democracy 13/13 series](#). During the 2021-2022 academic year, the seminar focused on the ideas and manifestos of 13 "worldly philosophers" who ignited revolutions, and produced the

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[Revolution 13/13 series](#). During the 2022-2023 year, we explored different experiments and models to reorganize society to address head on our current crises, and produced the [Utopia 13/13 series](#). Last year, we focused on experiments in cooperation, and the seminar produced the [Coöperism 13/13](#) series.

This semester, we turn to the writings of Karl Marx in a seminar titled [Marx 13/13](#). Marx's writings contain many of the most impactful ideas that have transformed—and still today continue to transform—the course of human history. Marx's ambition for philosophy, namely to change the world, has inspired critical thinkers and activists for over a century now and around the globe. His ideas have motivated social movements and stirred political action in progressive directions ranging from revolutionary class struggle and worker autonomy movements to feminist, Black, queer, transgender, and other forms of Marxist and progressive thought.

Today, there is still so much more to mine in Marx's work for the advancement of solidarity, equality, social justice, and cooperation. In these times of crisis, with the mounting threat of right-wing extremism, the weakness of liberal centrist parties, and the cataclysmic risks associated with global climate change, it is essential to return to Marx to rethink and catalyze what is to be done and how to move forward.

In Marx 13/13, we turn to Marx's key texts and read them through the lens of world-historical interpretations that pushed Marxian thought and praxis in new directions: toward operaismo or workerism, Black Marxism, feminist, queer and transgender theories, postcolonialism, cultural studies, Freudian or Foucauldian strands of Marxism, as well as Leninist, Maoist, and social democratic forms of Marxism. This public seminar series will reread the original Marx texts chronologically, in conversation with formative interpretations of the texts that have shaped different branches of Marxism or progressive thought, with the guidance of brilliant contemporary critical philosophers.

Each seminar of Marx 13/13, then, will triangulate one key Marx text with one formative interpretation that shaped critical theory and praxis, in conversation with one brilliant critical philosopher:

1. The primary text will be one of the classic writings of Marx (or Marx and Engels). We will begin with the famous debate on the thefts of wood and early articles from the *Rheinische Zeitung* and the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, then proceed to the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and the *German Ideology*, read the *Communist Manifesto*, the essays on class struggle and civil war in France and the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, and finish with the mature economic writings, including the *Grundrisse* and the volumes of *Capital*,

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before concluding with the “late Marx” of the *Critique of the Gotha Program* and the letter to Vera Zasulich.

2. The secondary text will also be a classic, but a classic interpretation of the primary Marx text by a later critical philosopher who used that first text as a springboard to open a new path for Marxism or contemporary critical thought. This text will serve both as an exegesis of the first text (a close reading, engaging the actual text, not just Marx’s work generally) and as a window into an entire interpretive theory of Marx that shaped history. These will include wide-ranging and diverse thinkers and approaches, including philosophers like Louis Althusser, Ernst Bloch, Angela Davis, W.E.B. Du Bois, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Stuart Hall, Jacques Lacan, Claude Lefort, Vladimir Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Herbert Marcuse, Toni Negri, Cedric Robinson, and Monique Wittig.
3. And then, of course, to triangulate and illuminate these pairing of texts, we will hear from brilliant living critical philosophers to comment on the Marx readings and provide a contemporary, cutting-edge take on these paired works. We will be joined by eminent critical philosophers, including Amy Allen, Cinzia Arruzza, Étienne Balibar, Tithi Bhattacharya, Bruno Bosteels, Jean Louise Cohen, Jules Joanne Gleeson, Michael Hardt, Rahel Jaeggi, Sandro Mazzadra, Nancy Fraser, Judith Revel, Martin Saar, Renata Salecl, Gayatri Spivak, Brandon Terry, and Kendall Thomas.

The graduate student seminar will be structured to frame a series of 13 formal seminars at which one or more guests, from different disciplines, will be invited to discuss the readings and present on the themes of the seminar. Each formal seminar will host contemporary critical theorists from across the disciplines. It will also frame and interrelate with a [Paris critical theory seminar at the EHESS](#) that will run alongside the seminar. The graduate student seminar thus will serve as the vehicle to enrich the formal 13/13 seminars and support the intellectual apparatus that will accompany those formal seminars. This seminar will function as an advanced graduate research seminar.

We will be holding the formal 13/13 seminars on Wednesday evenings this coming year, generally from 6:15pm to 8:45pm EST, at Columbia University. Students will be expected to be present at the seminars at the seminar table, ready to go at least 5 minutes before the seminars start.

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Books and Texts

All reading materials will be posted to the [Marx 13/13 website](#).

Requirements

Students are expected to read the assigned materials prior to the formal seminar and should be prepared to offer public comments to facilitate seminar discussion. There should be no absences. If a student has an excused absence, please e-mail Ricardo Orlando Lombera (rl3343@columbia.edu) by 10:00 a.m. of the day of the seminar.

For students who are registered in the 1-credit seminar, students should submit (a) one *ex ante* 5-page book review or pre-seminar blog-post providing guidance on the writings we will be reading that week or on the theories and practices we will discuss, and (b) one *ex post* 5-page blog-post discussing and elaborating on the intellectual discussion at one of the 13/13 seminars. No use of AI. Please submit your written essays to Professor Harcourt and Ricardo Orlando Lombera (rl3343@columbia.edu).

For students who are enrolled in the seminar for 2 credits, students should submit those same two 5-page essays (see paragraph above), but also submit a 10-page research paper on a topic of your choice (related to the seminar) by May 1, 2025. No use of AI. Please submit your written essays to Professor Harcourt and Ricardo Orlando Lombera (rl3343@columbia.edu).

Professor Harcourt will hold office hours. Please contact his assistant, Ricardo Orlando Lombera (rl3343@columbia.edu), to schedule an appointment. Office hours are by appointment only.

Laptop Policy

Please note that you *may only use* your laptop for three purposes: (1) as a *word processor* to take and read notes; (2) as a *reader* to consult assigned course materials that are on-line or saved on your hard drive; or (3) to do any research directly related to our seminar. You *may not* use your laptop during the seminar, ever, to write emails, shop on-line, or for any other purpose that is not seminar related. If you are the kind of person who cannot resist temptation, please leave your laptop at home. It is *very distracting* to one's peers when someone else is shopping on-line. Please respect your peers and this policy.

Statement Regarding Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Columbia University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work. The complete Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity can be found at: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity-statement> and the Columbia University Undergraduate Guide to Academic Integrity can be found here: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

Disability Statement

Columbia Law School is committed to the full inclusion of students with disabilities in the life of the University. In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), CLS provides accommodations and supports to students with documented disabilities on an individual, case-by-case basis. To request disability accommodations for this course, students must first be registered with Disability Services (DS). Detailed information is available regarding the registration process, drop-in hours schedule, documentation requirements and important deadlines online here at <https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services>.

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BACKGROUND MATERIALS

We have already held five Marx 13/13 seminars that you can review and learn from, and which take us from the early Marx of 1842 to the *German Ideology* of Marx and Engels of 1845. Please feel free to read and watch!

[Marx 1/13 | Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* and Ernst Bloch with Étienne Balibar](#)

[Étienne Balibar](#) discussed Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* and Ernst Bloch's *Commentary* from *The Principle of Hope*, on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, at the Columbia Global Paris Center

[Marx 2/13 | Marx on the *Thefts of Wood* and Foucault on *The Punitive Society* with Judith Revel](#)

[Judith Revel](#) discussed Marx's *Debates on the Law of Thefts of Wood* and Michel Foucault's *The Punitive Society* on Tuesday, October 22, 2024, at the Columbia Global Paris Center

[Marx 3/13 | Marx's *Critique of Hegel* and *On the Jewish Question*, and Claude Lefort, with Jean Cohen](#)

[Jean Louise Cohen](#) discussed Marx's "[Introduction](#)" to his Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and "[On the Jewish Question](#)" in conversation with Claude Lefort's "[Politics and Human Rights](#)" on Thursday, November 14, 2024 at Columbia University

[Marx 4/13 | Marx's Manuscripts of 1844 and Jacques Lacan with Renata Salecl](#)

[Renata Salecl](#) discussed Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and Lacan's *Formations of the Unconscious* (1958) on Tuesday, November 26, 2024, at Columbia University

[Marx 5/13 | Marx's *The German Ideology* and Monique Wittig with Jules Joanne Gleeson](#)

[Jules Joanne Gleeson](#) discussed Marx's *The German Ideology* and Monique Wittig's *The Category of Sex* on Monday, December 9, 2024, at Columbia University

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SEMINAR SCHEDULE AND READINGS

January 22, 2025: Marx 6/13 | [Cinzia Arruzza](#), [Tithi Bhattacharya](#), and [Nancy Fraser](#) read and discuss Marx and Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) and Vladimir Lenin's *April Theses* (1917), in conversation with their book, *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto* (2019)

Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2025

In-person location: [Jerome Greene Annex](#), Columbia University, New York, 10027

Time: 6:15 PM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT -5)

READINGS

Primary text:

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848)

- in *Later Political Writings*, trans. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- in *The Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 6* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2014)
- online at www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto

Secondary text:

Vladimir Lenin, *The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution* (1917)

- in *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 24 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), pp. 19-26.
- also available online at marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/04.htm

Additional Resources:

Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser, *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto* (New York: Verso, 2019)

Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983)

- also available online at legalform.blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/davis-women-race-class.pdf

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January 29, 2025: Marx 7/13 | Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reads and discusses Marx's [The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850](#) and W.E.B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America*

Date: Wednesday, January 29, 2025

In-person location: [Jerome Greene Annex](#), Columbia University, New York, 10027

Time: 6:15 PM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT -5)

READINGS

Primary text:

Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850*

- in *The Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 10* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2014)
- online at marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/

Secondary text:

W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Free Press, 1998)

- also available online at tinyurl.com/4szhhjzk

Additional text:

Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, (New York: International Publishers Co., 1971), Chapter 10

- also available online at marxists.org/archive/gramsci/prison_notebooks/

February 12, 2025: Marx 8/13 | Marx and Engels on The Counter-Revolution in Germany 1848 & The Eighteenth Brumaire and Herbert Marcuse's Counterrevolution and Revolt — in these early days of a Counterrevolution

Date: Wednesday, February 12, 2025

In-person location: [Jerome Greene Annex](#), Columbia University, New York, 10027

Time: 6:15 PM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT -5)

READINGS

Primary text:

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852)

- in *Later Political Writings*, trans. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 31-127.
- in *The Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 11* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2014)
- online at marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire

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Secondary text:

Stuart Hall, [*Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*](#), (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016)

Additional Resources:

Stuart Hall, [*The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*](#), (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2021)

February 19, 2025: Keynote | Seyla Benhabib discusses Hannah Arendt's reading of Marx

Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025

In-person location: [Jerome Greene Annex](#), Columbia University, New York, 10027

Time: 6:15 PM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT -5)

February 26, 2025: Keynote | Guillaume Le Blanc and Judith Revel return to Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* in conversation with Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2025

In-person location: [Jerome Greene Annex](#), Columbia University, New York, 10027

Time: 6:15 PM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT -5)

March 5, 2025: Marx 9/13 | Michael Hardt and Sandro Mazzadra read and discuss Marx's [Grundrisse](#) and Antonio Negri's *Marx Beyond Marx*, and *Marx in Movement*

Date: Wednesday, March 5, 2025

In-person location: [Jerome Greene Annex](#), Columbia University, New York, 10027

Time: 6:15 PM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT -5)

READINGS

Primary text:

Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*

- [trans. Martin Nicolaus](#) (New York: Penguin Classics, 1993)
- in *The Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 28-29* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2014)

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- online at marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse

Secondary text:

Toni Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*, (London: Pluto Press, 1978)

- online at grupeggrundrisse.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/marx-beyond-marx-lessons-on-the-grundrisse1.pdf

Toni Negri, *Marx in Movement: Operaismo in Context*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021)

Additional Resources:

Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

March 12, 2025: Marx 10/13 | The philosopher Cornel West and Bernard E. Harcourt read and discuss Marx's *[A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy](#)* and *[Capital Vol 1](#)* in conversation with Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism*

Date: Wednesday, March 12, 2025

In-person location: [Jerome Greene Annex](#), Columbia University, New York, 10027

Time: 6:15 PM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT -5)

READINGS

Primary text:

Karl Marx, *Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1959)*

- in *Later Political Writings*, trans. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 158-162.
- in *The Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 28* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2014)
- online at marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm

Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1*, Part VIII

- from [trans. Ben Fowkes](#) (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992)
- in *The Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 35* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2014)
- online at marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1

Secondary text:

Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism* (1983)

April 8, 2025: Marx 11/13 | The Late Marx and Degrowth Communism with Kohei Saito

Date: Tuesday, April 8, 2025

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In-person location: [Jerome Greene Annex](#), Columbia University, New York, 10027
Time: 6:15 PM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT -5)

READINGS

Primary text:

The Late Marx (TBD)

Secondary text:

Kohei Saito, *Slow Down: The Degrowth Manifesto* (2024)

April 16, 2025: Keynote | Eduardo Cadava on *Politically Red*

Date: Wednesday, April 16, 2025

In-person location: [Jerome Greene Annex](#), Columbia University, New York, 10027
Time: 6:15 PM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT -5)

April 23, 2025: Marx 12/13 | Bruno Bosteels reads and discusses Marx's *The Civil War in France* with Voltairine de Cleyre's "The Commune is Risen" and Plotino Rhodakanaty's "The American Commune"

Date: Wednesday, April 23, 2025

In-person location: [Jerome Greene Annex](#), Columbia University, New York, 10027
Time: 6:15 PM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT -5)

READINGS

Primary text:

Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*

- in *Later Political Writings*, trans. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 163-207.
- in *The Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 44* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2014)
- online at marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france

Secondary text:

Voltairine de Cleyre, "The Commune is Risen," in *Mother Earth*, (1912)

- online at theanarchistlibrary.org/library/voltairine-de-cleyre-the-commune-is-risen

Plotino Rhodakanaty, "The American Commune" in *El Combate*, (1877)

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Kristin Ross, [*Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*](#), (New York: Verso, 2016)

May 27, 2025: Marx 13/13 | Étienne Balibar reads and discusses Marx's [*Critique of the Gotha Program*](#) and [*Letter to Vera Zasulich*](#)

Date: Tuesday, May 27, 2025

In-person location: Columbia Global Paris Center, Salle des Conférences, 4 rue de Chevreuse, 75006, Paris

Time: 16h30 Paris time (GMT+2) or 10:30 AM New York time (EDT, UTC/GMT - 4)

READINGS

Primary text:

Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*

- in *Later Political Writings*, trans. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 208-226.
- in *The Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 44* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2014)
- online at marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha

Karl Marx, Letter to Vera Zasulich (and drafts)

- online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1881/zasulich/>

Secondary text:

Additional Resources:

Maccello Musto, *The Last Years of Karl Marx: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020)