

The work of Karl Marx (1818-1883) provides crucial footholds for understanding the past two centuries of "religion" in its various conceptualizations and iterations (institutions, narratives and practices). Marx famously said, "the critique of religion is the beginning of all critique," and also that "religion is the heart of a heartless world." He thus grasped both the material benefits devolving from religion and also the social and personal costs of taking those benefits for granted or at face value. Because Marx was so well versed in the philosophy of his day, his writings are oriented toward classical philosophical registers, even as he tries to cement them to the material, quotidian life outside his window. This double orientation toward generalization and particularization allows his writings to have direct bearing on questions religion scholars continue to raise about the production or effects of things like truth, fact, belief, ritual, and belonging (as well as body, nature, and identity)—and to do so in ways attuned to the contingencies of history and to the entwining of 'truth' with power or social location. The postmodern salvo that 'all description is always already evaluation' can be found in the poignant writings of the young Karl Marx.

Many scholars have assumed that Foucault had no interest in Marx, but the assumption is patently wrong. Foucault had little interest in critique as name-calling and finger pointing, and it is this form of critique that he thought most prevalent in the French Communist Party (to which he belonged, briefly, in the early 1950s under the influence of his teacher Louis Althusser). But not only did Foucault's training bring him into intimate contact with the writings of Marx and the lineage of Marxism, but Foucault continued to think with the *schemata* of Marx by asking general questions about the conditions of possibility of capitalism, the social norms and practices required to sustain and intensify it, and the forces of friction that are not "contradiction" but nevertheless do operate in a similar intensifying and explosive manner to generate historical change (though in a networking and never bifurcating—or dialectical—manner).

This seminar requires a large amount of reading. It is my strong contention that interdisciplinary and intersectional analyses require *more* reading work and *patient* re-reading than other methodological approaches. If we wish to understand Marx and Foucault, to bring them into conversation with the field of religion, and to do so in ways that are attentive to gender and race (registers that are especially abysmal or lacking in these two theorists), then we need to read, re-read, and read in light of other theorists.

I also will be asking much of you in terms of writing and responding to the theory in play. I have included four films that will serve as contemporary events or *dits* through which we can titrate the writings of Marx and Foucault. The films are not *examples* of Marxist or Foucaultian theories, but rather in order better to feel and tease out the contours of their usefulness and limitations.

REL 662, "Marx and Foucault"

Hamner, Fall 2104

Required Texts

1. Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, U. Chicago, 0226007863
2. Isaiah Berlin, *Marx*, Princeton UP, 0691156506
3. Terry Eagleton, *Marx* (Great Philosophers Series), Routledge, 0415923778
4. Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, Semiotext(e), AISBN: B000E1EUQA
5. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Vintage, 0679752552
6. Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, Routledge, 041592362X
7. Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, New Press, 1565844343
8. Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital*, 1844674541
9. Marx, *Capital v. 1*, Penguin classics, 0140445684
10. Robert Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, W.W. Norton, 039309040X

Recommended texts (we'll be reading selections; on reserve at Bird)

1. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 0879755598
2. John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*, Monthly Review Press, 1583670122
3. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude*, Penguin, 0143035592
4. David Harvey, *Companion to Marx's Capital*, Verso, 1844673596
5. Foucault, "Society must be Defended", Picador, 0312422660
6. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, Picador, 0312203608
7. Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Picador, 0312425708
8. Fredric Jameson, *The Hegel Variations*, Verso, 1844676161
9. Christian Marazzi, *Capital and Affects*, Semotext(e), 1584351039
10. Antonio Negri, *The Labor of Job*, Duke UP, 0822346346
11. Shapiro and Schwann, *How to Read Foucault's Discipline and Punish*
12. Gayatri Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Harvard, 0674177649
13. Gayatri Spivak, *Aesthetic Education*, Harvard, 0674072383

Assignments:

1. **Each week you need to write on the primary text(s).** The secondary texts may be brought in as commentary or to reframe part of the primary text, but I need you to focus on articulating in a manner as succinct as it is comprehensive the argument being made by Marx or Foucault. For some texts this can be done in a sentence or two; for others, it may take a page or two. I need to see that you can restate the theoretical *work* being performed by a text: the questions it raises, the values it forwards, the way it makes its argument, the conclusions it draws. Sometimes I will ask that you grade each other's papers (including deciding on what counts as 'grading'), and sometimes I will grade them.
2. **In addition to the weekly papers, you will write two short (3-5 page) papers on two of the four films.** These papers provide the opportunity to constellate primary texts with secondary readings and one of the films.

3. **Finally, you will compose a longer paper at seminar's end** *which I expect to be an expansion and reworking* of one (or more) of your weekly writings, of one of your papers on film, or both. Please schedule a meeting with me around midterm to discuss ideas for this final paper.

Syllabus of readings: **We will prioritize these together based on participants' needs.**

1. August 26 **Biographical and historical frames for Marx's "religion":**
 - Robert Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Introduction and one of the following:
 - i. Terry Eagleton, *Marx*
 - ii. Isaiah Berlin, *Marx: His Life and Environment*
 - Jameson, "Religion as Cultural Superstructure," Ch. 10 of *The Hegel Variations: On the Phenomenology of Spirit* (scan)
 - Ludwig Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity* (selections) (scan)
 - Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" (Tucker)
2. September 2: **Religion as bodily marker, as identity:**
 - [Watch *The Square* \(Jehane Noujaim, 2013\)](#)
 - Marx, "On the Jewish Question" (Tucker)
 - Marx, Preface to his "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*" [selection](#) (Tucker)
 - Marx, 1844 Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, [selection](#) (Tucker)
 - Wendy Brown, "Tolerance and/or Equality? The 'Jewish Question' and the 'Woman Question'" (scan)
3. Sept. 9: **Religion as representation of the unrepresentable:**
 - Marx, *Capital* Part I
 - Marx, *Capital* "On the Working Day" and "Machinery"
 - Jameson, *Representing Capital* Chapter 5
 - Select one of the following, depending on your training toward philosophy or anthropology:
 - i. Spivak, *Critique of Post-colonial reason*, 67-111 (also sections from *The Aesthetics of Education*)
 - ii. William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish" (1985); "The Problems of the Fetish II: The Origin of the Fetish" (1987); "The Problem of the Fetish III: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of the Fetish" (1988)
4. Sept. 16: **Religion as social relation of subject (soul/body) and system (church/mosque/synagogue/temple):**
 - [Watch *The Headmaster and the Headscarves* \(Elizabeth C. Jones, 2005\)](#) or (if that doesn't arrive) [American Jihadist](#) (Mark Claywell, 2011)

- Marx, Communist Manifesto (Tucker)
 - Marx, Grundrisse, [selections](#) (Tucker)
 - Spivak, "Terror: A Speech after 9/11"
 - Hardt and Negri, *Multitude* [selections](#)
 - Christian Marazzi *Capital and Affect*, [selections](#)
5. Sept. 23: **Religion as structure of desire (navigating contradiction)**
- Marx, *German Ideology*, [selection](#)
 - Jameson *Representing Capital*, Chapters 1-4
6. Sep. 30: **Religion as cosmography:**
- Marx, reprise of 1844 manuscripts and *German Ideology* (body and nature; species being, utopia)
 - Negri *The Labor of Job*, [selection](#)
 - Foster, *Marx's ecology*, [selection](#)
7. Oct 7: **Transition to Foucault**
- Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*
 - "Méthodologie pour la connaissance du monde: comment se débarrasser du marxisme" (*Dits et Ecrits* II. P. 595-618; look for "political spirituality").
 - "Problematics" in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews 1961-1984*, 416.
8. Oct 14 **Religion as discursive boundary and origin**
- "Discourse on Language"
 - "Heterotopias"
 - "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"
9. Oct 21 **Religion as a disciplinary technology**
- *Discipline and Punish*
 - S. Shapiro/A. Schwann, *How to Read Foucault's Discipline & Punish*.
10. Oct 28 **Religion as a conduit of power**
- [Please watch *The Gatekeepers* \(Dror Moreh, 2012\)](#)
 - Selections on pastoral power and biopower in "*Society Must Be Defended*" and *Security, Territory, Population*
 - Interviews on institutions in *Dits & Ecrits*
 - Jeremy Carrette, *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality*, 1-24.
11. Nov 4: **Religion as a technology of self and society** (writings on Iran):
- Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, [selections](#)

REL 662, "Marx and Foucault"
Hamner, Fall 2104

- Ladelle McWhorter, "Foucault's Political Spirituality"

12. Nov 11: **Religion as a practice of desubjection**

- [Please watch *God Loves Uganda* \(Roger Ross Williams, 2013\)](#)
- Zen Buddhism and subjectivation (Foucault, *Religion and Culture*)
- lectures on sexuality and power delivered in Japan (ibid)
- Lecture on Critique (scan)

13. Nov 18: **Religion as/and ethics**

- Subject and Power (1982 *Critical Inquiry*)
- What is Enlightenment (in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*)
- Technologies of the self (ibid.)
- Genealogy of a work on Ethics (ibid.)
- *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, selection.
- Jana Sawicki, "Queering Foucault and the Subject of Feminism", in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (2nd ed.)
- Lynne Huffer, "The Persistence of Unreason: Michel Foucault's Mad Melodrama" *Criticism* 55:4 (2013), 637-653.

14. Nov 25: AAR/Thanksgiving Break

15. Dec 2: Presentation of paper drafts