Religion 662: Marx and Foucault

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Introduction
This course is designed to give graduate students an introduction to the thought of Karl Marx and Michel Foucault, to provide a sense of the critical reception of these texts over the 20th century, and to demonstrate examples of continuing engagements with their concepts and questions.

Why should graduate students, in religion or other departments, spend an entire semester on Marx and Foucault? For Marx, I can suggest 1) his contributions to the hermeneutic of suspicion (along with Nietzsche and Freud); 2) his questions of the inter-relation of subject and social formation; 3) his trenchant critique of identity politics avant la lettre; 4) his persistent questions of justice, social transformation, and democracy; 5) and the conceptual lineage of terms such as dialectics, alienation, commodity fetishism, reification.

For Foucault, I can suggest 1) the questions of method his work raises about what counts as philosophy, history, political theory, or sexuality studies; 2) his theorizations of power outside the rubrics of identity; and 3) the conceptual lineage of terms such as the unthought, episteme, archaeology, genealogy, pastoral power, capillary power, governmentality, biopower, and dispositif.

For this class, I am especially interested in the method of dialectic and the concept of reification, in our readings of Marx. For Focault, I am interested in the method of conceptual analysis in The Order of Things, and the place and role of religion in the development of his rubric of the flows of social power from pastoral power to biopower.

Expectations
I expect you to complete the readings for each week. The page count does go up as we move from Marx to Foucault, in part because the lectures are less formal and use more contemporary language than do Marx's essays.
I expect you to come to seminar (on time) with your own research interests in hand. To the degree it can be engaging and helpful to the seminar as a whole, I expect you to press against my and other's interpretations of the text with the questions and concerns that arise from your own doctoral research.
I expect you to complete the papers on time.
Weekly readings

MARX

January 21  Peter Stallybrass, “Marx's Coat”. Syllabus review, introductions, and discussion of reification and dialectic

January 28  “On the Jewish Question” (Tucker 26-52) and “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction” (Tucker 53-65).

Warren Breckman, “Karl Marx: From Social Republicanism to Communism”, ch. 7 of Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory.

Stathis Kouvelakis, “The Marxian Critique of Citizenship: For a Rereading of On the Jewish Question” (Blackboard)

Christopher Roberts, “On Secularization, Rationalization, and Other Mystical Things: The Unfinished Work of Marx's Religious Criticism” (Blackboard)

February 4  “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844”, (Tucker 66-125)

Selection from Kouvelakis, Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx (Blackboard)

February 11  “Theses on Feuerbach” (Tucker 143-145); “The German Ideology” (Tucker 146-200)

Sarah Kofman, “Marx: Black Magic” from Camera Obscura of Ideology (Blackboard)

February 18  first short response due

Capital (Tucker, 294-298, and 302-376)

Jean-Joseph Goux, “Marx and the Inscription of Labour” (Blackboard)

John F. Welsh, “Reconstructing Capital: The American Roots and Humanist Vision of Marx's Thought” (Blackboard)

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Universalism and Belonging in the Logic of Capital” (Blackboard)


March 4  Kevin Floyd, 1-78 (tentatively)

TRANSITION

March 11  Papers on Marx due. Transition week: handouts and lecture/discussion on Michel Foucault, Remarks on Marx.

FOUCAULT

March 25  The Order of Things (Foreword to the English edition and Part 1)

Interviews with Foucault, “The Order of Things" and “The Discourse of History” (Blackboard)
April 1  
*The Order of Things* (Part II)

[Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero, "The Biopolitical Imaginary of Species-Being" (Blackboard)]

April 8  
"The Discourse on Language", "Body/Power", "Truth and Power", "What is Enlightenment" (All on Blackboard)

Jeremy R. Carrette, selections from *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality* (Blackboard)

April 15  
**second short response due**  
Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, chapters 1-3, 11; *Security, Territory, Population*, chapters 1-2, 6-9, 13

Agamben, "What is an Apparatus?" from *What is an Apparatus and other essays* (Blackboard)

April 22  
*The Birth of Politics*, 1-3, 9-12

Ladelle McWhorter, "Sex, Race, and Biopower: A Foucauldian Genealogy"

April 29  
Wendy Brown, "Tolerance as Supplement: The ‘Jewish Question’ and 'the Woman Question'"  
Lynne Huffer, selections from *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory*

**Paper on Foucault is due by the last day of exams.**