

THEOCRIT 9540

Species-Beings: Young Marx in the Post-Anthropocene

Description: This course gives a broad view of Marxism, but from a very specific starting point, that of the discussion of alienation and species-being in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, concepts that then appear to vanish from his later work. Written at the start of Marx's revolutionary career, the *Manuscripts* were unpublished until the 1930s. Subsequently, "alienation" and "species-being" have had a tumultuous history: embraced by Lukacs and the Frankfurt School, dismissed by Althusser, both implied and rejected in Deleuze and Guattari, they are now again being revised in the light of climate catastrophe, artificial intelligence, and other current capitalist cataclysms. We will take these categories as keys to Marx and Marxism, examining both how they are transmuted in Marx's major works, such as *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, and revived by critical theorists staging a twenty first century encounter between Marxism and ecology, biopower, black lives, feminisms, accelerationism and de-accelerationism, animal rights, and the so-called Anthropocene. Or, perhaps better, post-Anthropocene; for as Donna Haraway remarks, the *Manuscripts* show Marx "both at his most humanist and at the edge of something else" This, then, is a course on Marx from beginning to end, in at least three senses: it is 'all Marx, all the time'; it runs from the young Marx to the Marx who dies writing *Capital*; and from the start of Marxism as a nineteenth century revolutionary project to a moment when its canonical forms end, starting something new.

Time & Place: Friday 9:30-12:30, CSTC Seminar Room

Instructor: Nick Dyer-Witford, ncdyerwi@uwo.ca. **Office Hours:** Zoom, by appointment.

Requirements:

1 in class presentation: 25%

1 paper proposal: 700 words including bibliography 10%

1 major research paper 7000 words including bibliography 50%

Seminar participation: 15%

For further information see "Notes on Evaluation" below.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

This schedule may be adjusted after the first week of classes to reflect participant interests.

Readings are available as downloadable PDFs on the seminar OWL site.

Week 1 Jan 12. Problematic: Species-Being & Alienation

Required Readings: Marx "Estranged Labour". Recommended: Dyer Witford "The Return of Species-Being: 1844/2004/2044" and "Biocommie".

Week 2 Jan 19. Sources: Hegel and Feuerbach

Required Readings: Hegel "Lordship and Bondage"; Feuerbach "Extracts"; Buck-Morss "Hegel and Haiti"; Fanon "The Negro and Hegel"; Burnham and Lamb "Chap 3 Alienation" plus short section on "Species-Being". Recommended: Badiou "Hegel's Master and Slave"; Chitty "Capital and Species Being"; Held: "Marx via Feuerbach: Species Being Revisited".

Week 3 Jan 26. 1844: The Young Marx

Required Readings: Marx *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*; Marx "Theses on Feuerbach"; Federici; "Marx and Feminism". Recommended: Brown "Marx on Gender and the Family": Engels *Condition of the Working Class in England*

Week 4 Feb 2. Dispute: Foundation or Break?

Required Readings: Marcuse "The Foundation of Historical Materialism": Althusser "Marxism and Humanism"; Marx "Grundrisse: The Fragment on Machines"; Marx "Capital: The Direct Production Process". Recommended: Holland "Spinoza and Marx".

Week 5 Feb 9. Machines: Alien Life

Required Readings: Rikowski "Marx and the Future of the Human"; Deleuze and Guattari *Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Chapter 1*"; Haraway "A Cyborg Manifesto". Recommended: Crane "Process and Industry"; Mejat "Deleuze and Guattari as Readers of Marx"; Kim, "Deleuze, Marx and Non-human Sex".

Week 6 Feb 16 Nature: Anthro-Troubles

Required Readings: Foster "The Anthropocene Crisis"; Butler "The Inorganic Body in the Early Marx"; Morton "Humankind". Recommended: Moore: "Our Capitalogenic World"; Read "Anthropocene and Anthropogenesis".

Week 7 Feb 23. Reading Week. No seminar

Week 8 March 1. Acceleration: Prometheus Unbound

Required Readings: Srnicek and William: "#Accelerate Manifesto"; Nicolai "Alienation, Abduction, Jailbreak & Contingency"; Negarastani "The Labour of the Inhuman Parts I & II". Recommended: Steinhoff: "Marxism and Transhumanism"; Brassier "Strange Sameness" and "The Compulsion of the Human".

Week 9 March 8. Gender: Xenoflicts

Required Readings: Labora Cuboniks "Xenofeminism A Politics for Alienation": Lewis "Antiwork Abortion Anthrogenesis"; Federici "Beyond the Periphery of the Skin" Recommended: TBA

Week 10 March 15. Degrowth: Red Earth

Required Readings: Saito "Marx as a Degrowth Communism"; Barca, "The Labor(s) of Degrowth"; Foster and Clark: "Marx and Alienated Speciesism"; Decompositions "Tragic Theses". Recommended: TBA

Week 11 March 22 Revolutions: Free Association. Required and Recommended Readings TBA

Week 12 March 29. Official Holiday.

Week 13 April 5. Closing Plenary

Notes on Evaluation

Participation: Being there counts. There will be an attendance sheet; sign it. Come to all, or at least ten, seminar sessions. Attend having done the course readings, ready for constructive conversation.

Presentation: Your presentation should introduce the seminar to a text relevant to its main themes. The aim is to lead the seminar into an open, accessible discussion of the chosen topic, and its implications.

The presentation should be on a topic different from that of your final essay.

A presentation on a text should not be just an exposition of its content, but also contextualize the work and assess it in relation to discussions and situations in which it intervenes.

You have 20 min. (max) to talk (if you pair up with someone else to cover a topic, 10 min. each) and 20 min for discussions, questions and debate.

The presentation will be scheduled for point in in the semester where it relates well to the overall themes and course readings; the precise timing can be negotiated, but should roughly fit in with the syllabus.

Email me your presentation notes or slides immediately after delivery to help with feedback: notes don't have to be polished, just comprehensible.

Your presentation can be on any of the texts included in the reading list, other than those listed as required weekly readings. You may also present on a text (broadly defined—it can be academic work but also a work of art, music, video) not included in the reading list, providing you clearly identify how it relates to the seminar theme.

If you are having difficulty deciding what to present on either; a) just pick something that seems ds interesting or b) contact me and we'll discuss what might mesh with your interests.

Email me your preferred topic, and a second choice, no later than Jan 16.

Paper Proposal: Approx. 750 words including reference list. The proposal should define your topic, your line of inquiry and argumentation , and the body of thought that you will engage. It is due no later than midnight, March 29; early submissions get early feedback. In the final sessions of the course you will present and discuss this proposal in the seminar.

Term Paper: Approx 7000 words including bibliography. An original and exciting piece of writing *that makes direct use of seminar materials.*

Papers relating seminar themes to your own specializations in theory and criticism welcomed.

Explore one body of theory or one theoretician in depth, critically analyze compelling theoretical intersections between authors, or a body of theory on alienation and/or species-being to a cultural object or social practices.

The must contain a clear and developed argument. It will be marked for analytic substance, organizational form and writing style.

For ongoing students, the paper is due no later than midnight April 28. For students wishing to graduate in Spring convocation, the paper is due no later than midnight April 10.

Overdue papers lose 10% of the possible grade per day, and will not be accepted more than three days late. Deadline extensions for medical or compassionate reasons require proper academic accommodation.

Academic Offenses: Scholastic offences are taken seriously. See

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Every assignments must, in order to receive a passing grade, differ from and significantly surpass what Chat GPT or similar AI can achieve on the topic at hand.

Accessible Education Western (AEW). Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Readings

Readings, required, recommended, or as possible presentation topics, will be drawn from the following sources:

Althusser, Louis (1969) *For Marx*, London: New Left Books.

Althusser, Louis (2003) *The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings*. London: Verso.

Arthur, Chris (1986) *Dialectics of Labour*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

Barca, Stefanie (2019) 'The Labor(s) of De-Growth', *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 30:2
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2017.1373300>

Berardi Franco "Bifo" (2009) *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*. New York: MIT Press

Brassier, Ray (2018) "Concrete-in-Thought, Concrete-in-Act: Marx, Materialism and the Exchange Abstraction" *Crisis & Critique* 5:1 <https://crisiscritique.org/2018h/brassier.pdf>

Brassier, Ray (2019) "Strange sameness: Hegel, Marx and the logic of estrangement" *Angelaki* 24 (1):98-105, <https://philpapers.org/rec/BRASS-7>

Buck-Morss, Susan (2009) *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*. University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh.

Butler, Judith (2019) 'The Inorganic Body in the Early Marx. A Limit-Concept of Anthropocentrism'. *Radical Philosophy* 2.06. www.radicalphilosophy.com, 5 February 2020.

Chatterjee, Ipsita (2023): Marx's "Species Being" as an Ontological Revolution Against the "Green City/Global City" Agenda: Two Possible Moments of Reclaiming "Species Life", *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2023.2165986>

Chitty, Andrew (2009) 'Species-Being and Capital', in A. Chitty and M. McIvor (eds.), *Karl Marx and Contemporary Philosophy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Crane, James (2021) "Process and Industry: the Pre-history of Desiring-Production from the 1844 Manuscripts to Anti-Oedipus", Substack, <https://jamescrane.substack.com/p/process-and-industry-the-pre-history>

Decompositions (2023) "Tragic Theses"
<https://decompositions.noblogs.org/post/2023/03/09/tragic-theses/>

Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Félix (1983) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. New York: Viking.

Dubeau, Mathieu (2018) 'Reclaiming Species-Being: Toward an Interspecies Historical Materialism', *Rethinking Marxism* 30:2 186-207
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2018.1502307>

Dubeau, Mathieu (2019) 'Species-being for whom? The five faces of interspecies oppression' *Contemporary Political Theory* <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-019-00363-7>

Dyer-Witheford, Nick (2004) '1844/2004/2044: The Return of Species Being', *Historical Materialism* 12.4 3-25.

Dyer-Witheford (2023) 'Biocommie: Power and Catastrophe', *Platforms, Populisms, Pandemics and Riots*, <https://projectppr.org/populisms/biocommie-power-and-catastrophe>

Fair, Hannah and McMullen, Matthew (2023) 'Toward a Theory of Nonhuman Species-Being', *Environmental Humanities* 15:2 <https://read.dukeupress.edu/environmental-humanities/article/15/2/195/380194/Toward-a-Theory-of-Nonhuman-Species-Being>

Federici, Sylvia (2018) "Marx and Feminism" *tripleC* 16(2): 468-475, <http://www.triple-c.at>

Feuerbach, Ludwig (1841) *The Essence of Christianity*
<https://libcom.org/files/The%20Essence%20of%20Christianity.pdf>

Grant, Judith (2005) 'Gender and Marx's radical humanism in the economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844', *Rethinking Marxism* 17:1, 59-77.

Harvey, David (2000) *Spaces of Hope*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Hegel Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1807) *Phenomenology of Spirit*,
http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Marxist_Philosophy/Hegel_and_Feuerbach_files/Hegel-Phenomenology-of-Spirit.pdf

Hudson, Laura (2008) 'The Political Animal: Species-Being and Bare Life', *Mediations* 23:2 89-116.

- Klotz, Marcia (2006) 'Alienation, Labor, and Sexuality in Marx's 1844 Manuscripts', *Rethinking Marxism* 18:3, 405-413.
- Kolozova, Katerina (2015) *Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism: Marx and Laruelle*. Punctum Books.
- Laboria Cuboniks (2014) *Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation*
<https://www.versobooks.com/books/2887-the-xenofeminist-manifesto>
- Lukács, Georgy (1978) *Toward the Ontology of Social Being: Marx's Basic Ontological Principles*. London: Merlin Press.
- Marcuse, Herbert (1972) 'The Foundation of Historical Materialism', in his *Studies in Critical Philosophy*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Marx, Karl (1964) *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. Ed Dirk Struk., Trans. Martin Milligan, New York: International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl (1973) *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, translated by Martin Nicolaus, New York: Vintage Books.
- Marx, Karl (1977) *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*, translated by Ben Fowkes. New York: Vintage.
- Méjat, Guillaume (2012) 'Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari readers of Marx: the Marxist inspiration of the conception of desire developed in Anti-Oedipus', *Philosophique* 693
<https://doi.org/10.4000/philosophique.693>
- Moore, Jason (ed.) (2016) *Anthropocene or Capitalocene: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. New York: PM Press.
- Mulhall, Stephen (1993) 'Species-Being, Teleology and Individuality. Part 1. Marx on Species-Being', *Angelaki: A New Journal in Philosophy Literature and the Social Sciences*, 3, 1: 9–21.
- Musto, Marcello (2015) 'The 'Young Marx' Myth in Interpretations of the Economic–Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844', *Critique* 43:2, 233-260,
- Negarestani, Reza (2014) "The Labor of the Inhuman, Part I: Human" e-flux #52 <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/52/59920/the-labor-of-the-inhuman-part-i-human/>
- Negarestani, Reza (2014) "The Labor of the Inhuman, Part I: The Inhuman" e-flux #52 <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/53/59893/the-labor-of-the-inhuman-part-ii-the-inhuman/>
- Niccolai, Ivan (2015) "Alienation, Abduction, Jailbreak & Contingency" *Contingent Power*, <https://contingentpower.net/2015/01/09/alienation- abduction-jailbreak-contingency-notes-on-accelerationism/#more-131>
- Ollman, Bertell (1971) *Alienation: Marx's Concept of Man in Capitalist Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pasquinelli, Matteo (2014) 'The Labour of Abstraction: Seven Transitional Theses on Marxism and Accelerationism' *Multitudes* 26:1 <https://www.cairn-int.info/journal-multitudes-2014-1-page-49.htm>

- Pettman, Dominic (2011) *Human Error: Species-Being and Media Machines*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Read, Jason (2015) *The Politics of Transindividuality*. Leiden: Brill
- Rikowski, Glenn (2003), 'Alien Life: Marx and the Future of the Human', *Historical Materialism*, 11, 2: 121–64.
- Roelvink, Gerda (2013) 'Rethinking Species-Being in the Anthropocene', *Rethinking Marxism* 25:1.
- Saito, Kohai (2023) *Marx in the Anthropocene: Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sayers, Sean (2011) *Marx and Alienation: Essays on Hegelian Themes*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Spivak, Gayatri C. (1999) *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*.
- Tedman, G. (2004) 'Marx's 1844 Manuscripts as a Work of Art: A Hypertextual Reinterpretation', *Rethinking Marxism* 16, 4427-441
- Virno, Paolo (2004) *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms*. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Wendling, Amy E. (2011) *Karl Marx on Technology and Alienation*. London: Palgrave.