

Sociology 190, Spring 2023

Is it Still Capitalism?

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Wed, 4-6pm

183 Dwinelle

Drop in Hours: for Undergrads, Monday 3:30-4:30pm

492 Social Science Building

This course will take stock of an emerging debate about "late stage capitalism" based on the control of information, rent, political extraction, and new ways of creating value. Many objections abound: are we just talking about a new cycle of finance capitalism, maybe we just mean the "tech" sector, maybe we just underappreciated the historical role of extraction in the first place, or maybe we are just talking about the global North. This course will explore these themes in theoretical works as well in concrete applications ranging from money supply creation, the rise of the enrichment economy in luxury goods and real estate, venture capital and the valuation of start-ups, the rise of debt, and the changing role of work.

REQUIRED READINGS

All readings will be providing as pdf on bcourses. However, we will be reading a few larger chunks of some books so you may want to purchase them (if possible for you) to add to your collection.

GRADING STRUCTURE

- Weekly Memo 25%
- Two Memo Compilations 25%
- Participation 15%
- Discussion Facilitation 10%
- Meeting about Final paper 10%
- Final paper Compilation 15%

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Participation.** Attending all seminars is mandatory. Participation will count for 15% of your grade. For full credit my suggestion is to (every class) ask questions, answer questions, share opinions and thoughts, share your memo questions, inquire about other student's questions etc. For those of you on the quieter side my suggestion is to push yourself and to supplement with office hours and small group discussion participation.

2. **Discussion Facilitation.** Each week (depending on how many students we have) two or three students will be responsible for leading discussions on that week's readings. You are expected to provide a brief overview of the readings, being sure to tie the readings to one another, but the main task is to be prepared with discussion questions. A good place to look are the memo's of other students (see below). You may find that a handout is useful, but this is not required. (If you do decide to use a handout, e-mail it to me ahead of time so I can distribute them). You are also free to use any media or additional information that you feel is relevant; for instance, short video or audio clips (YouTube!), images, memes, etc. could really liven up the discussion and provide context. Be as creative as you like! I will provide a sign-up sheet for this. I encourage you to meet with your partner ahead of time.
3. **Weekly Memo.** Each week you will write a memo about that week's reading and post it to Bcourses by noon on each Wed. You will pull out 3-5 quotations from the reading and offer a reaction to each of them. These quotes should be complete ideas from the author (usually between two sentences and a paragraph). Your reaction can be an a) interpretation of what the author is saying; b) something it makes you think of in real world; c) a connection you are making to another reading; and/or d) an opinion about what they are saying. These should be short, not to exceed a paragraph or two per quotation (12 point font, **SINGLE SPACE**, times new roman, 1-inch margins). The goal is to explain why the quote is interesting to you.
4. **Two Memo Compilation.** Here you will create a 3-5 page memo (12 point font, double space, times font, 1-inch margins) using excerpts from your weekly memos. This means that you will re-read your weekly memos and pull interesting things that you wrote that you want to link together or that you want to analyze. The challenge of these memos is to tie those interesting excerpts into a cohesive idea, opinion, and/or connection. This will require some new writing and re-writing of your original memos.
5. **Meeting with me about final paper.** Just that, in the weeks before reading week it will be your responsibility to meet with me to discuss your ideas for the final paper.
6. **Final paper.** Here you will compile writing from your two memo compilations to form a new final paper. The paper can be anywhere from 9-12 pages long. The task is to form an overall reaction to the course readings using the writing you have assembled along the way. As with the original compilations, this will require using old writing, rewriting, and some new writing. The final paper will be: 12 point font, double space, times font, 1-inch margins). References will be in addition to page count. You will use Chicago style citations.

Email

Before emailing me with a question about the course, please first make sure that your question is not already answered here in the syllabus. Almost everything you need to know about the course can be found here. If you have longer questions about the course material or assignments, sign up for office hours at the link on the first page of this syllabus. For questions not covered in the syllabus or that cannot be discussed in office hours, you may email me at armando@berkeley.edu.

Late Work Policy

Because each part of the course builds on the other, it is important to submit all work on time. If you have some kind of unusual and verifiable circumstance, please communicate with me and I can accommodate you.

Academic honesty

You must in no way misrepresent your work or be party to another student's failure to maintain academic integrity. If you have questions about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, you should consult Berkeley's code of academic integrity: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/student-code-of-conduct>. It is much better to hand in a bad paper, or not to hand in a paper at all, than to hand in a paper that is plagiarized or that does not otherwise reflect your own work. Written assignments must include a bibliography and follow proper citation practices. The standard penalty for violations of academic integrity in this course will be a grade of 0% on the assignment and reporting to Student Judicial Affairs.

Incomplete Grades

Students who have substantially completed the course but for serious extenuating circumstances, are unable to complete the preliminary research paper, may request an Incomplete grade. This request must be submitted in writing to the instructor. According to the policy of the university, Incomplete grades must be made up within the first three weeks of the next semester.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES AND POLICIES

Accessibility

If you require course accommodations due to a physical, emotional, or learning disability, contact UC Berkeley's Disabled Students' Program (DSP). Please notify me via email of the accommodations you would like to use.

Sexual Violence and Harassment

If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support from an advocate through the Center for Advocacy Resources and Education (CARE). You can also report sexual harassment, sexual violence, or gender discrimination directly to the University's Title IX Office, the Office for Prevention of Harassment & Discrimination at ask_ophd@berkeley.edu. Faculty can assist you in making a report or accessing resources as needed.

Please note: All professors, lecturers, and teaching assistants are considered Responsible Employees under the UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment policy. This means they must notify the Title IX office following a disclosure of sexual violence or sexual harassment. For more information about mandated reporting, visit <https://svsh.berkeley.edu/responsible-employee>

Economic, Food, and Housing Support

If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at The Basic Needs Center. You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via CalFresh or the University's Food Assistance Program. If you are in need of food immediately, please contact the UC Berkeley Food Pantry. The Basic Needs Center maintains a COVID-19 Living Guide with real-time updates that

aims to provide clear and direct information about how students can access Basic Needs Center services in the case of various scenarios. The UC Berkeley Financial Aid Office also offers Short-Term Emergency Loans, and provides a way to request a Cost of Attendance Adjustment. There is also an Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which aims to help stabilize housing for undergraduate and graduate students in emergency financial situations by providing them with a month's rent.

Childcare

Student parents are eligible for up to 64 subsidized hours of subsidized Back-Up Childcare per fiscal year.

Mental Health Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): Individual, group, and career counseling for students, crisis drop-in, and after hours assistance. Social Services (SOS): Counseling and case management for students pre-senting with alcohol/drug, sexual assault/rape, relationship, or other violence concerns; chronic or newly diagnosed medical conditions, pregnancy, medical withdrawals. Support and resources for family housing residents at University Village.

Course Schedule

January 18th

Course Intro

Still Capitalism or Something Worse?

January 25th

Mckenzie, Capital is Dead. P 1-76 (Available on Bcourses)

February 1st

Mckenzie, Capital is Dead. P 77-165 (Available on Bcourses)

February 8th

Morozov, Critique of Techno-Feudal Reason (Available on Bourses)

Recommended: Katherina Pistor on Ezra Klein Podcast.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/13/podcasts/transcript-ezra-klein-podcast-katharina-pistor.html>.

February 15th

Durand, Scouting Capital's Frontiers (Available on Bourses)

Recommended: Cecilla Rikap presentation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcakwaKLNno>.

February 22nd

Bjerg, Making Money. P 155-192 (Available on Bcourses)

March 1st

Bjerg, Making Money. P 193-249 (Available on Bcourses)

March 8th

Boltanski and Esquerre, Enrichment, Profit, Critique (Available on Bcourses)

Growth or No Growth?

March 15th Memo Compilation 1 due via bcourses at midnight

DeLong, Slouching Towards Utopia. P 1-27. (Available on Bcourses)

March 22nd

DeLong, Slouching Towards Utopia. P 427-484. (Available on Bcourses)

March 29th

Spring Break

April 5th

Brenner, Presentation (Available on YouTube).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMHDF3Hk9Bto>.

April 12th

Mazzucato, Measuring the Wealth of Nations. P. 75-100 (Available on Bcourses)

The Post-Covid Moment

April 19th. Memo Compilation 2 due via bcourses at midnight

Tooze, 6-part Polycrisis blog (Available on Bcourses)

April 26th

Durand, End of Financial Hegemony? (Available on Bcourses)

May 3rd

Reading week

May 10th

Final Paper due at 11:59pm on Bcourses.