

Reading Politics: Ideology and Class



Reading Politics takes up class and ideology as related key concepts for understanding the challenges facing us in creating more just and equitable futures. This course will explore the contemporary uses of these concepts, with an eye to the ways they help us better understand how cultural forms and practices participate in producing and representing class. The course will start at the emergence of the idea of class and ideology in the work of Karl Marx, before delving into the ways Marx's work has been taken up and modified over the course of the 20th century in literary and cultural criticism. Investigating how developments in our understandings of class play out in film and literature, the course will be divided into four sections: Marxist Feminism, Critical Race Theory, Indigenous Politics, and Unemployment. In this course, we will develop a sense of class and ideology as concepts that change over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, in order to assess how they operate leading into the 21st. Particular attention will be paid to film, contemporary novels, and the rise of online critical journals.

Learning Goals

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- *Identify and understand various understandings and uses of ideology and class;*
- *Demonstrate understanding of the cultural, historical, and political contexts in which ideology subsists;*
- *Apply techniques of critical analysis as appropriate to literary forms, genres, and media;*
- *Use literary study to develop skills for careful reading and clear writing;*
- *Read and discuss literature on the levels of content, form, and politics.*

Required Texts

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels *The Communist Manifesto*
Dionne Brand *What We all Long For*
Marge Piercy *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Course Reading/Unit Schedule

***All readings not from the core texts will be posted on eClass ***

Week One | September 6 | Introduction: Reading Politics

Thursday | No Readings

Week Two | September 9 & 11 | On Ideology

Tuesday | Marx “The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret” (excerpt from *Capital*) and Engels “Letter to Mehring”

Thursday | Williams “Ideology” and Gramsci “The Intellectuals”

Week Three | September 16 & 18 | Introducing Class

Tuesday | *The Grapes of Wrath* (screening)

Thursday | *The Grapes of Wrath* (screening cont.)

Week Four | September 23 & 25 | Histories of Class

Tuesday | Marx and Engels *Communist Manifesto*

Thursday | Thompson “Preface” and Lukács, “Class Consciousness”

Week Five | September 30 & October 2 | Gender I

Tuesday | Dalla Costa and James *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (excerpts)

Thursday | Kosman “Dealing with Edmonton's misogyny problem” and Spring “Charitable Misogyny: The Rise of Men’s Rights in Canada”

Week Six | October 7 & 9 | Gender II

Tuesday | *Born in Flames* (Screening)

Thursday | de Lauretis “Aesthetic and Feminist Theory: Rethinking Women’s Cinema” and Friedberg “An Interview with Lizzie Borden”

Week Seven | October 14 & 16 | The Politics of Race

Tuesday | Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folk* (excerpts), Fanon *Black Skins, White Masks* (excerpts) and *Wretched of the Earth* (excerpts)

Thursday | Radhika Vyas Mongia “Race, Nationality, Mobility”

Week Eight | October 21 & 23 | Crosscurrents of Race

Tuesday | Brand *What We all Long For*

Thursday | Brand *What We all Long For*

Week Eleven | October 28 & 30 | Indigenous Politics

Tuesday | *Land of Oil and Water* (screening)

Thursday | Coulthard “Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the ‘Politics of Recognition’ in Canada”

Week Ten | November 4 & 6 | Unemployment

Tuesday | Essay Proposal Workshop

Thursday | Michaels “The Beauty of a Social Problem”

Week Eleven | November 11 & 13 | Misery and Debt

Tuesday | School Closed

Thursday | Endnotes “Misery and Debt”

Week Twelve | November 18 & 20 | Struggle for the Future

Tuesday | Essays Due | Le Guin “The Day before the Revolution”

Thursday | Piercy *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Week Thirteen | November 25 & 27 | Utopia

Tuesday | Piercy *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Thursday | Jameson “The Politics of Utopia”

Week Fourteen | December 2 | Course Review

Tuesday | Exam Review