

Department.: Political Science

Course number: POLS 206W

Title: Western Marxist Tradition

Credits: 3

Contact Person: Jennifer Sterling-Folker, Associate Professor

Catalog Copy: "POLS206W. Western Marxist Tradition. Either semester. Three credits. Prerequisite: ENGL 105 or 110 or 111 or 250. Exploration of the social and political theories of Marx and Engels, and of later interpretations and modifications of their ideas."

W Criteria :

a. This course is an introduction to the evolution of Marxist political thought in Europe. Currently students must complete four take-home paper assignments (5-6 pages each). These papers are graded for both content and writing skills. The papers involve textual exegesis, in which the students translate arguments in a text or two into the students' own worlds and images. In addition, the instructor requires a dozen weekly in-class essays, which are graded for content only. The 10-minute essays are to be quick think pieces, which help students learn to think through writing (the writing process is stressed more than the final product). Depending on the year, the various writing activities count from 70 to 80 percent of the total course grade, so that students who fail the writing component fail the course. The final examination normally counts for the remainder.

b. The instructor writes comments on and copyedits the first three papers and returns them within 10 days of their submission. The final paper, which usually is due the final day of classes, is copyedited as well, but not in as much detail because of deadlines: the need to grade finals and to calculate and submit final grades. On the title page of each paper, the instructor also discusses (1) the student's current strengths as a writer and (2) possible ways to enhance the student's writing. In addition, there is formal instruction for the entire class. Each week the class spends 15-25 minutes discussing a particular topic in grammar and style (e.g., "omitting needless words" or "parallel construction"). The instructor also assigns 20-30 pages

of Constance Hale's *Sin and Syntax: How To Craft Wickedly Effective Prose* to the students every week. The book prepares the students for the weekly classroom discussions on writing strategy.

c. The number of writing assignments required in the course ensure that students have ample opportunity to work on and revise their writing. They are expected to respond to the instructor's comments on previous paper drafts and to apply lessons to their next writing assignments.

Role of Grad Students: The department has not relied on graduate students to teach W courses or sections in the past, nor does it intend to do so in the future.