Course description:
At the turn of the century, there were pundits who proclaimed the end of history – and of Marxism. But in recent years, a spectre has been haunting Europe (and other parts of the globe). This course, which will be conducted as a seminar, will be devoted to discussing and critiquing the ideas of Karl Marx and some of the major thinkers who have been influenced by Marx. We will begin by exploring Marx’s analysis of alienation, his understanding of history, and his notions of the state and of class. We’ll turn next to discussing both Marxism in the era of the Second International, with particular attention to the Revisionist Debate between Eduard Bernstein and Rosa Luxemburg, and the political ideas of Vladimir Lenin. I intend, in a somewhat later section of the course, to devote sustained attention to the development of Western Marxism, including the contributions of figures like Lukács, Korsch, Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, and Marcuse, many of whom attempted to explain why the revolution predicted by Marx had not (yet) taken place. Finally: we will end this course by examining Marxist thought in the latter portions of the 20th century, and the first years of the 21st. I expect that we will cover a work by Louis Althusser, and hope to also discuss relevant portions of the thought of Slavoj Žižek. Throughout the semester, we will engage in a close examination of key texts, and will debate the extent to which the ideas we will discuss (and the controversies which they generated) can be explained by knowledge of the contexts in which they arose. We will also explore the degree to which the ideas of the thinkers whose works we will read help to illuminate contemporary issues.

Course requirements:
Students will be expected to attend classes, to read all assigned material, to participate in class discussions, to make an in-class presentation, and to write a substantial research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the professor.

Course outline:
Jan. 30: Introduction
Feb. 6: Marx
Required reading:
Suggested secondary sources:

Feb. 13: Marx  
*Required reading:*  
*Suggested secondary sources:*  

Feb. 20: Engels  
*Required reading:*  
*Suggested secondary sources:*  

Feb. 27: Bernstein  
*Required reading:*  
*Suggested secondary sources:*  

March 6: Luxemburg  
*Required reading:*  
*Suggested secondary sources:*  

March 13: Lenin  
*Required reading:*  
*Suggested secondary source:*  
March 20: Lukács

Required reading:

Suggested secondary sources:

March 27: Korsch; The Council Communists

Required reading:

Suggested secondary sources:

April 3: Gramsci

Required reading:

Suggested secondary sources:

April 10: Horkheimer and Adorno

Required reading:

Suggested secondary sources:

April 17: Benjamin

Required reading:

Suggested secondary sources:
April 24: SPRING BREAK. NO CLASS.

May 1: Marcuse

*Required reading:*

*Suggested secondary sources:*

May 8: From Althusser to Žižek

*Required reading:*

*Suggested secondary sources:*