MLA Program
Marxism and the Subject of Capitalism
Winter 2016
Thursdays, 6:00-9:00
Gleacher Center, Room TBA

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Required Texts
At the Gleacher Center Bookstore
The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert C. Tucker
Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place
Jamaica Kincaid, Lucy
Slavoj Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology

PDF's on Chalk site
Karl Marx, Grundrisse (Introduction)
Karl Marx, Capital Vol. 2
Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"
Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I-Function, as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience"
Lauren Berlant, "After the Good Life, An Impasse"

Films (to be found online or ordered by students)
Human Resources (Ressources humaines) (Lauren Cantet)
Time Out (L'emploi du temps) (Lauren Cantet)

Schedule

Jan. 7 No Class -- I will be in Austin at a conference

Jan. 14 Intro to the course
Discussion of Marx, Grundrisse, Introduction

Jan. 21 Marx, from Capital Vol. 1: Reader pp. 302-336

Jan. 28 Marx, from Capital Vol. 1: Reader pp. 344-376; 388-392
1-page writing assignment due, in class

Feb. 4 Marx, from Capital Vol. 2: pp. 15-70; note that this is very difficult reading; if you start getting bogged down, concentrate on 15; 28-35; 36; 50-middle of 51; 58-63

Feb. 11 Kincaid, A Small Place

Feb. 18 Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"
2-page writing assignment due, in class

March 3  Kincaid, Lucy

March 10  Zizek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, selection TBA

March 17  Cantet, Human Resources and Time Out

Supplemental Class TBA
Berlant, "After the Good Life, An Impasse"

Final paper (9-10 pp.), due date TBA

Course Requirements

This is a course built around difficult and challenging readings. The first requirement of the course is to read all of the texts with care, to think about what is dense or interesting or hard in the texts and the questions the texts raise, and to come to class prepared to discuss them. The same goes for the films we will discuss.

To help jumpstart our discussions, the second requirement of the course is a minimum of one post per week to the discussion board on the course Chalk site, to be entered by midnight the night before class so that everyone can read each other's posts before class. Each post should raise a pointed question about the reading, together with reference to the place or places in the text that raise the question, and some preliminary lines of thought about it. These can be fairly brief. The idea is not to produce a mini-paper, but to open up topics for class discussion. Since you will be reading your colleagues’ posts, feel free to respond to them beyond the 1-post weekly minimum.

The third requirement is completion of the three formal writing assignments. The first two assignments will be quite brief and targeted exercises meant to help develop the skill of unpacking the concepts and arguments of this dense and difficult material. The final assignment will be a longer treatment of a topic of your choosing, based in the readings for the course (i.e. it is not a research paper), and developed in consultation with me.