

WMNST 596 Capitalism in Feminist Thought

SPRING 2022

WOMEN'S STUDIES

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Dr. Jess Whatcott

Email: jwhatcott@sdsu.edu (best way to reach me, I respond M-F between 9 am – 5 pm)

Voicemail: 619-594-2861 (you may leave a message, I respond M-F between 9 am – 5 pm)

Office Hours: Thursdays, 2-3:30 pm. Other appointments available on Wednesdays and Fridays – email me to schedule.

Office Location: At least through the period of virtual instruction, which ends on February 4, I will be holding office hours over Zoom and ask students to sign up for a 15 minute appointment slot on Google Calendar (posted in Canvas). After that I will reassess my policy on in person, drop-in office hours. My office is in Arts and Letters 334.

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Scheduled Class Days/Time: Thursdays, 4-6:40 pm

Modality: Face to face seminar; virtual synchronous instruction will take place in line with university policy through February 4. The link to class is posted in Canvas.

Class Location: Arts and Letters 104

WHAT IS THIS CLASS ABOUT?

How does capitalism shape our daily lives in intimate and global ways? How have workers and people outside of the formal economy resisted exploitation, and imagined new ways to organize economic and social relationships? This class will provide students with concepts and frameworks for understanding capitalism not only as an economic arrangement, but also as a political and social system. We will study what feminists, critical race theorists, and disability activists have contributed to our thinking about capitalism, and how they have imagined alternative ways of meeting material needs that are people and planet centered. You will take a deep dive into applying feminist analysis to one of the contradictions of capitalism that affects women, queer/trans/non-binary and gender diverse people, such as:

- Domestic worker conditions
- Economic migrants and labor trafficking
- Economic or technological solutions to climate change
- Prison/Detention Industrial Complex

- Structural adjustment/austerity
- Contract work and the struggle for regularization (Uberization)
- Overreliance on cash crops or tourism industries
- Lack of affordable, quality childcare
- Undocumented workers
- Care work industries
- High debt, low-income countries
- Student loan debt
- Disaster capitalism

WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

By the end of this this course you will be able to:

- Describe capitalism as an economic system and a set of social relationships. Discuss Marx's theory of capitalism, as well as feminist Marxist, Black Marxist, and disability theories of how gender, race, and disability are created through capitalism.
- Synthesize your understanding of capitalist theory and collaborate with a group to generate a political education tool describing one core concept in capitalist theory.
- Analyze and appraise economic relationships historically and in the present, both in the US and globally, using intersectional feminist analysis. Debate real-world contradictions of capitalism, using intersectional feminist analysis.
- Conduct secondary research on a topic related to capitalist theory, distinguish quality sources, and compose your findings in a conference paper with a clear, organized argument supported by evidence.

WHAT WILL YOU READ?

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Smith, David and Phil Evans. 2014. *Marx's Capital Illustrated*. Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books.

- Hard copy available to check out on reserve at the SDSU library.
- This book is a graphic narrative summary of Karl Marx's massive (over 1,000 page) book *Capital, Vol. 1*. If you really want to nerd out on this, I recommend the Penguin Classics version of *Capital*, and I can also provide you with some suggestions about which chapters to focus on. I can also give you a pdf copy of chapters 26-end, which focus on the concept of primitive accumulation and are a bit easier to get through.

Russell, Marta. 2019. *Capitalism and Disability: Selected Writings by Martha Russell*. Ed by Keith Rosenthal. Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books.

- eBook available through the SDSU library.

Piepzna-Samarsinha, Leah Lakshmi. 2018. *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Arsenal Pulp Press.

- eBook available through the SDSU library.

Other additional required readings available through the library will be linked to Canvas.

WHAT ABOUT COVID-19?

Even though this was entirely preventable, we are unfortunately still in the midst of a global pandemic. Below I describe all the current university policies, but given the continued uncertainty with new variants, and the fact that some people live with children or immunocompromised people, or are care-givers for others, I will be as generous and as understanding as possible with you. I hope you can be as generous with me and each other. I also promise to be flexible in the face of change, and I ask you to do the same. I want to work with you to make it possible for you to finish this course. Please contact me as soon as you can to discuss any situations that come up, especially any emergencies such as isolation, quarantine, care-giving for someone who is ill, or if you need to travel to take care of a family member.

As of now, the university has temporarily moved most instruction online through February 4. That means our class will be meeting virtually, but synchronously for the first three class sessions. At that point we would resume face to face, in person instruction on week 4. However, the rules created by the university may change at any moment.

When we resume in person instruction, you will be required to wear a mask in class, and to stay home if you are experiencing any symptoms of illness, have tested positive for COVID-19, or are waiting for test results from an exposure to someone who tested positive. When we get to that point, if you need to stay home because you are sick, I will continue Zoom streaming class. Unfortunately, I am not willing to record class. I encourage you to get notes from a classmate if you miss.

If you have any symptoms of illness (even if you are vaccinated, and even if you feel well enough to come to class) you are advised to stay home EXCEPT to come to campus wearing a mask ONLY to get tested at the Student Health Center. You should then return home and wait for your test results. If you are directly exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, my personal advice (but not required by the university) is to stay at home for 3-5 days, take a PCR test, and then return to normal only once you have received your results back. If you test positive for COVID-19, please report this to SDSU so that contact tracers can do their jobs. Report here: <https://sacd.sdsu.edu/student-health-services/covid-19/case-reporting-forms>.

When we get to that point, you are required to wear a mask indoors on campus, and in all instructional spaces (even if outdoors). If you refuse to wear a mask in the classroom, you will be asked to leave and may be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities.

If you have a medical illness that puts you at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19, you are supposed to contact the Student Ability Success Center to make official arrangements. Even though the first weeks of the semester are alone, I still advise you to go through the SASC process. If at any point in the semester you have any kind of emergency situation, whether it is COVID-19 related or not, please know that you don't have to figure it out on your own and that there are resources to support you. Please reach out!

WHAT DOES THE PROFESSOR EXPECT OF YOU?

- 1. Read the assigned material prior to class.** Class time will revolve around collectively working to understand the concepts presented in the assigned readings. The more you commit to devoting time each week to reading, the richer our conversation will be
- 2. Check your e-mail regularly.** Any changes to reading assignments, instructions for completing assignments, and any other announcements will be sent via the e-mail address that is linked to your Canvas account. If you don't check your university account, you should go into Canvas and update your email settings.

3. **Regularly attend and participate in class.** Class discussion will be spent comprehending the arguments made in assigned material, analyzing and evaluating the material, and synthesizing and integrating ideas across assigned readings. It will be difficult to complete this class without attending regularly. However, if you need a week off for some reason, please take it without fear of consequence. *If you have an emergency or serious situation that requires you to miss more than 1 class period, especially if it is more than 1 week in a row, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss how to keep you on track. Please quarantine or isolate as necessary due to COVID-19 exposure or positive test.*
4. **Participate respectfully during class time.** We join the classroom from a variety of situations and from different life experiences. I ask that you make every attempt to join our class each week, and that you minimize as many distractions as can during the session. During these discussions, you will be asked to abide by some community agreements that we will create together during the first session.
5. **Complete all assignments to the best of your ability and on time.** You are responsible for keeping track of when assignments are due. **Late policy:** I am okay if you submit minor assignments (such as drafts) 1-3 days late, without penalty. Major assignments (political education tool and conference paper) will be accepted up to one week late, reduced by 15% so that the maximum grade is a B. No late work will be accepted beyond May 16, due to the turnaround in grading time. *If you have an extreme and unavoidable reason preventing you from turning in your assignments on time, please contact me. This includes COVID-19 related reasons.*

HOW WILL YOU KNOW YOU ARE LEARNING?

PARTICIPATION – 10 POINTS

The more you come prepared to class and ready to participate, the richer this class will be. There are a variety of ways to participate – speaking during group discussion is only one of them. You can also participate by joining in small group discussion, free writing, engaging in partner share, contributing to visual diagrams/brainstorms, and asking questions, both during and after class. Listening attentively to your classmates' presentations is also a form of participation. Participation will be assessed based on frequency and quality.

SOCIAL MEDIA/ANALOG CONTENT SURVEY – 10 POINTS

You will take turns bringing to class an example of social media content or analog content (such as a zine or pamphlet) that explains or explores at least one of the concepts that we are discussing in class that week. For example, if one of our keywords for the week is "bourgeoisie," you might bring in an Instagram post that gives statistics on wealth inequality in the US. On your week, you should be prepared to share this object with others (either by pulling it up on the projector, or passing a physical copy around) and to briefly explain why you think this illustrates the concepts for that week. Please also bring a way for others to find this content on their own, such as a social media handle. You will sign up for your turn the first week of class.

GROUP POLITICAL EDUCATION TOOL – 30 POINTS (5 POINTS FOR DRAFT/OUTLINE; 25 POINTS FOR FINAL CREATION)

In lieu of a midterm, you will work with a group of 2-3 students to create a political education tool to teach others about one concept we have learned about in this class. (If you would like to be put in a group, I can do that.) The keywords that are listed in the course schedule are a good place to look for what I mean by “concept.” How would you teach someone who is not in the class about what this concept means? What concrete examples or illustrations could you provide? What metaphors or analogies might be useful for explaining? The social media/analog content survey will give us some examples of how people have approached teaching this concept to others. Your tool can be analog, such as a mini-zine or pamphlet, or digital such as a TikTok video, a set of Instagram posts, a Twitter thread, or an infographic. **You should reference and cite at least two of the readings for class somewhere in your tool.** In addition to turning in your creation, you will also submit a ½-1 page reflection on your group process.

CONFERENCE PAPER AND PRESENTATION – 50 POINTS (5 POINTS EACH FOR LIST OF SOURCES, PAGE OF NOTES, OUTLINE/MIND MAP, AND DRAFT/PEER REVIEW EXERCISE; 30 POINTS FOR FINAL PAPER)

You will select a contemporary issue to analyze in-depth using the concepts and frameworks from class (see list of possible topics in the course description above to get you started, but you are not limited to this list). First, research. You should research at least 3 non-academic sources that give you some insight into the scope of your topic, such as newspaper articles, magazine articles, white papers, reports from non-partisan think tanks, or government reports (such as the US census). You will also research and read 3 peer reviewed sources (grad students will use at least 5 sources) about this problem. You will identify at least 2 of the readings for class that you can draw on in your paper. Somewhere in your research you should identify a social movement, union, or organization that works to respond to this problem.

You will then write a research paper in which you describe the issue, summarize the results of your research, and use key concepts and theories from class to analyze and evaluate the problem. Your paper should include 1) a summary of your topic/problem statement; 2) an argument/thesis statement; 3) evidence drawn from your academic sources and non-academic sources; 4) a conclusion; and 5) a references page/bibliography with complete citations.

Undergraduate papers should be at least 6-8 pages, and graduate student papers should be at least 10-12 pages. Your conference paper can be read aloud as is traditional at a conference, so consider your voice and style as you write. You will submit a rough draft of your paper to me for feedback two weeks before your presentation, and I will provide you with comments to help you revise it for final submission. You will present your paper in a mini-conference to class during the last two weeks of the semester. You can either read your paper aloud or develop a presentation that summarizes your main findings (If this terrifies you, come speak with me!)

OVERALL GRADES WILL BE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING POINTS EARNED:

Participation	10 points
Social Media/Analog Content Survey	10 points
Political Education Tool	30 points
Conference Paper and Presentation	50 points
Total	100 points possible

A = (94-100); A- = (90-93)

B+ = (87-89); B = (83-86); B- = (80-82)

C+ = (77-79); C = (73-76); C- = (70-72)

D+ = (67-69); D = (60-66); F= (\leq 59)

Note: At any point in the course, you can estimate your grade by adding up the points you have earned and compare that to the remaining points available.

OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

Students are responsible for being familiar with the university wide policies found at:

https://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/catalog/GC1617/143_UniPolicies.pdf.

CONTENT WARNING

A course on feminism, especially one centering women and queer people of color, necessarily requires us to encounter texts discussing sexual violence and state-sponsored violence. Please reach out for support from me or the following resources if you are experiencing distress due to this content.

- Campus-based Counseling and Psychological Services, M-F 8 am – 4 pm: 619-594-5220
- San Diego Access & Crisis Phone Line available 24/7: 1-888- 724-7240
- San Diego Access & Crisis Chat Line available M-F 4-10 pm: <https://svcrplv.uhc.com/sdchat/>

DISABILITY AND ACCESS INFORMATION

I invite all students to communicate their other access needs with me. If you have a campus accommodation letter, it would be helpful to get a copy as soon as possible.

If you think that you could benefit from an accommodation, even if you do not yet have a learning disability or psychiatric diagnosis, or if you are experiencing a new or temporary disability caused by injury, please contact the Student Ability Success Center and they will go through the process with you. Visit: http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/sds/services-overview.aspx. Voice: (619) 594-6473.

STUDENT PRIVACY AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) mandates the protection of student information, including contact information, grades, and graded assignments. I will use Canvas to communicate with you, and I will not post grades or leave graded assignments in public places. Students will be notified at the time of an assignment if copies of student work will be retained beyond the end of the semester or used as examples for future students or the wider public. Students maintain intellectual property rights to work products they create as part of this course unless they are formally notified otherwise.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

According to the University Policy File, students should notify the instructors of affected courses of planned absences for religious observances by the end of the second week of classes.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

I encourage students to study together and to talk about their ideas for the exams together. However, any work that you turn in **must be in your own words**. In order to be give credit to the ideas of others, any phrase, sentence or paragraph that is an exact copy of what somebody else wrote (or said) should be attributed to the author (or speaker) by name and include a page number. In addition, any idea from an author or theorist that you use in your work, even if it is not a direct quote, should also be attributed to that author by name. To present someone else's words as your own is considered plagiarism, whether you intended to steal their work or not.

Students who are found to be plagiarizing, whether intentionally or not, will be subject to penalty. This can include: receiving a zero on the assignment or exam, receiving a failing grade in the course overall, or being referred to student conduct.

SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All employees are required to report incidences of sexual assault and sexual harassment to the campus Dean of Students office. That means that professors and other employees who become aware of sexual assault or harassment must contact the Title IX office. HOWEVER, it would be YOUR choice to pursue any action beyond the initial report. You do not have to talk to the university at any point, even if a report is made about you. Anyone who would prefer to talk to someone confidentially about sexual assault or harassment can contact:

- Counseling & Psychological Services (see above)
- Campus-based Sexual Violence Advocate & Educator, [Calpulli Center](#), 2nd Floor, [\(619\) 594-0210](#)
- Center for Community Solutions (CCS), 24-Hour Hotline: [\(888\) 385-4657](#) (Bilingual)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Subject to change with fair notice, especially given the pandemic and changing circumstances. Any changes will be made through an announcement in class, and also posted and distributed through Canvas.

<i>WEEK/ DATE</i>	<i>READINGS</i>	<i>CLASS TOPIC/KEYWORDS</i>	<i>DEADLINES AND DUE DATES</i>
1 Jan 20 VIRTUAL		Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Overview of the class • Discussion agreements • Sign up for Social Media/Analog Content Survey dates 	Purchase, rent, borrow, or locate at the library the assigned books for the class as well as the readings in Canvas
2 Jan 27 VIRTUAL	<i>Marx's Capital Illustrated, "We Meet Marx" (starts on page 6), and sections 1-12</i>	Defining and theorizing capitalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commodity • Use Value • Exchange Value • Alienation • Labor • Commodity Fetishism • Capital accumulation • Means of production 	Social Media/Analog Content Survey starts with those who have signed up for this week
3 Feb 3 VIRTUAL	<i>Marx's Capital Illustrated, sections 13-18</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor Theory of Value • Surplus labor • Exploitation • Proletariat • Bourgeoisie • Surplus value • Class struggle • Labor power • Imperialism • Socialism <p>*Time in class to discuss with a partner your idea for conference paper topic</p>	

WEEK/ DATE	READINGS	CLASS TOPIC/KEYWORDS	DEADLINES AND DUE DATES
		*We will break early and you can watch the film <i>Salt of the Earth</i> (YouTube, Kanopy) on your own time	
4 Feb 10	<p>Excerpts from <i>Capital, Vol. 1</i> by Karl Marx (ch 26-28, 31-32)</p> <p>“Why Black Marxism? Why Now” by Robin D.G. Kelley (pages xi-xix, skim the rest if you want to learn more about Cedric Robinson)</p> <p>“The Atlantic Slave Trade and African Labor” from <i>Black Marxism</i> by Cedric J. Robinson</p>	<p>Racial Capitalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsistence • Primitive accumulation • Expropriation/Enclosure • Private property • Unfree labor • Divide and conquer, horizontal hostility <p>*Time in class to form groups for political education tool, choose concept to focus on</p>	Paragraph proposal for conference paper due
5 Feb 17	<p>“What is Social Reproduction Theory?” by Tithi Battacharya</p> <p><i>Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale</i>, chapter 3 by Maria Mies</p>	<p>Gendered racial capitalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of labor • Social reproduction/reproductive labor • Unpaid labor • Birth strike • Housewifization • Nuclear family <p>*Guest speaker librarian Laurel Bliss on conducting library research</p>	
6 Feb 24	<p>“How to Not Skip Class: Social Reproduction and the Global Working Class” by Tithi Battacharya</p> <p><i>Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World</i></p>	<p>Globalization, Neoliberalism, and Capitalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International division of labor; First World/Third World • Informal sector • Development • Consumption 	List of sources you will use for your conference paper due

WEEK/ DATE	READINGS	CLASS TOPIC/KEYWORDS	DEADLINES AND DUE DATES
	<i>Scale</i> , chapter 4 by Maria Mies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global supply chain • Outsourcing and off-shoring • Piece work <p>*Watch <i>Home Economics</i> (Kanopy)</p>	
7 March 3	<p>“Living in a Globalizing World” by Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey</p> <p>“Cuidadana X: Gender Violence and the Denationalization of Women’s Rights in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico” by Alicia Schmidt Camacho</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neoliberalism • Bretton Woods Institutions • Free Trade Agreement • Debt • Structural Adjustment • Austerity <p>*Time in class to talk about how to take notes</p>	Outline/draft of your political education tool due
8 March 10	Watch the film <i>Maquilapolis</i> (Kanopy)	No class today – use the time to work in groups on your political education tools and/or work on your conference papers	One-page of notes from your research for your conference paper due
9 March 17	<p><i>Marx’s Capital Illustrated</i>, “The Crash and After” (starts on page 175)</p> <p>“Life-Times in Fate Playing” by Neferti XM Tadiar</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speculation • Financialization • Surplus population/existentially surplus <p>*Strategies for outlining a paper in class</p>	Political education tools due
10 March 24	<i>Capitalism and Disability</i> , “Introduction” plus sections 1 and 2 by Marta Russell (especially chapters 1, 2, 3 and 8; okay to skim the rest)	<p>Disability and Capitalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social model of disability • Impairment • Disablement • Self-determination • Liberalism • Compulsory unemployment • Handicapitalism 	Outline/mind map of your conference paper due

<i>WEEK/ DATE</i>	<i>READINGS</i>	<i>CLASS TOPIC/KEYWORDS</i>	<i>DEADLINES AND DUE DATES</i>
		*Watch <i>Crip Camp</i> (YouTube via Netflix)	
Spring Break Mar 31	<i>No readings</i>	No class	
11 April 7	<i>Capitalism and Disability</i> , sections 3 and 5 by Marta Russell (chapters 9-10, 13-17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carceral industrial complex • Deinstitutionalization • Crip • War economy • Unnatural disasters 	
12 April 14	<i>Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice</i> , "Preface" through "Making Space Accessible" (pages 1-78) by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha	Feminist Disability Futures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Justice • Care webs • Access/Accessibility *Partner peer review of conference papers in class	Draft of conference paper due – also bring a copy to class
13 April 21	<i>Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice</i> , "Crippling the Apocalypse," "A Modest Proposal," "For Badass Disability Justice," "Crip Lineages, Crip Futures" by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair trade emotional labor • Kinship • Futurity *Watch <i>Sins Invalid: An Unashamed Claim to Beauty</i> (Kanopy)	
14 April 28	No readings	Mini-conference: Panels A, B, C and D	Panels A, B, C and D conference papers due
15 May 5	No readings	Mini-conference: Panels E, F, G and H	Panels E, F, G and H conference papers due
Finals Week	No assigned readings	No class	