

Sociology 428: Capitalism and Crisis

General Information

Term: *Winter 2026*
Credits: *3*
Class time: *Friday: 2:45 PM-5:30 PM*
Classroom: *H 625 SGW*

Instructor Information

Name: *Erik Chevrier, Ph.D.*
Website: *<https://erikchevrier.ca/course/capitalism-and-crisis>*
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Office Hours: *Friday: 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM (by request)*
Office Location: *H 556*

Territorial Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today.

Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community. (Indigenous Directions Leadership Group, Feb. 16, 2017) This course examines food and culture through decolonial and social justice perspectives. As part of the course, and in keeping with decolonial approaches to transforming capitalism, students will read [Red Paper on Land Back by the Yellowhead Institute](#).

Course Description from Concordia Calendar

This course offers an advanced study of the contemporary dimensions of capitalist society from an approach known as political economy, emphasizing the interconnectedness of those areas of social life that are conventionally differentiated as the economy, politics and culture. The course focuses on the dynamics of crisis — the breakdown of socio-economic systems — and investigates crisis, in its various expressions, as a built-in dynamic of capitalist societies.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Critically analyze capitalism as a political, economic, and cultural system, including its intersections with colonialism, imperialism, and power.
- Examine crises—economic, social, and ecological—as inherent dynamics of capitalist societies.

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- Assess the impact of social movements and collective actions that challenge capitalism, including labour, cooperative, and landback initiatives.
- Reflect on personal economic practices and situate them within broader social, cultural, and political contexts.
- Explore and evaluate diverse economies approaches as tools for understanding and negotiating ethical forms of labour, transactions, finance, property, and enterprise.
- Critically analyze economic systems and approaches that seek to transcend capitalism, including degrowth, ecosocialism, community economies, social and solidarity economies, and other alternatives.
- Understand the history and philosophies of capitalism and political economy and communicate them effectively in written and oral forms.
- Apply frameworks from different theoretical approaches to analyze contemporary issues such as housing crises, authoritarian politics, and ongoing colonial dynamics.
- Incorporate social justice and decolonial perspectives into evaluations of economic systems and policies.
- Examine the relationships between economic systems and planetary boundaries, including ecological limits and environmental crises.
- Identify multiple forms of value in economic systems—including cultural, experiential, spiritual, intellectual, natural, and social—and analyze conflicts and trade-offs.
- Reimagine economic systems embedded in society and the biosphere through local, community, and cooperative initiatives.

Instructional Method

This course will be conducted in person and run primarily as a seminar, fostering a collaborative and interactive learning environment. Each class will begin with a brief presentation and discussion led by Professor Erik Chevrier, Ph.D., who will introduce key themes, provide practical examples, and offer critical perspectives on weekly topics that extend beyond the assigned readings.

All students are expected to complete the required readings before class and actively participate in discussions, interactive activities, and hands-on exercises. Students will also lead two student-led seminars during the term, with each group presenting for 30–45 minutes and facilitating discussion based on the readings.

Required Course Materials

Students are required to complete the weekly readings before attending class. To ensure the workload is manageable, some weeks with heavier reading assignments will involve smaller reading groups, where Professor Erik will assign different chapters or sections to each group. This approach allows for a comprehensive discussion while making the readings more accessible. All required readings have been reserved as e-copies through the Concordia Library for online access.

Course Schedule, Class Topics and Readings

Date	Topics	Readings Due (please complete the readings before class)
Jan 16	Introduction to Course	No Readings
Jan 23	Situating Capitalism	<p><u>Stanford, J. (2015) Economics for Everyone: A Short Guide to the Economics of Capitalism, Pluto Press.</u> <i>(I requested an e-version of the reading but was only granted a hard copy for the library)</i></p> <p>Part 1: The Preliminaries: (pp. 1 – 61)</p> <p>Introduction (pp. 1 – 14) Chapter 1: The Economy and Economics (pp. 15 – 30) Chapter 2: Capitalism (pp. 31 – 40) Chapter 3: Economic History (pp. 41 – 51) Chapter 4: The Politics of Economics (pp. 52 – 62)</p> <p>(or)</p> <p><u>Chang, H. (2014) Economics: The User's Guide</u> <i>(An e-version of this book is available by following this link)</i></p> <p>Part 1: Getting Used to It (pp. 15 – 147)</p> <p>Chapter 1: Life, the Universe and Everything: What is Economics? (p. 15 – 22) Chapter 2: From Pin to PIN; Capitalism 1776 and 2014 (pp. 25 – 34). Chapter 3: One Fucking Thing After Another: What Use is History? (pp. 37 – 78) Chapter 4: Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom: How to “Do” Economics (pp. 81 – 122) Chapter 5: Dramatis Personae: Who are the Economic Actors? (pp. 124 – 144)</p>

Jan 30	Capitalism, Society and Economic Systems	<p><u>Polanyi, K. (1944 & 2001) The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time, Beacon Press (2001 version).</u> <i>(Language bias declaration: this text contains male language biases whereby; people are referred to as Man). (I requested an e-version of the reading but was only granted a hard copy for the library)</i></p> <p>Chapter 4: Societies and Economic Systems (pp. 45 – 58) Chapter 5: Evolution of the Market Pattern (pp. 59 – 70) Chapter 6: The Self-Regulating Market and the Fictitious Commodities: Land, Labour and Money (pp. 71 – 80)</p>
Feb 6	Capitalism and Crisis	<p><u>Zhou, M. (2024) Study on Economic Crises Under Capitalism, International Journal of Frontiers in Sociology, 2024, 6(9); doi: 10.25236/IJFS.2024.060916.</u></p> <p><u>Vargas, N. C. (2024) Exploiting the Margin: How Capitalism Fuels AI at the Expense of Minoritized Groups, AI and Ethics, vol. 5, no. 2, June 2024, pp. 1871–76. doi.org/10.1007/s43681-024-00502-w.</u></p> <p><u>Queiroz, F. (2022) The Future of Capitalism: A Critical Reflection on Capitalism Based on the Works of Bernard Maris and Wolfgang Streeck, Social Sciences, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2022, pp. 180-187. doi: 10.11648/j.ss.20221103.17</u></p> <p><i>Recommended Reading</i></p> <p><u>Grinin, L., Korotayev, A., Tausch, A. (2016) Economic Cycles, Crises, and the Global Periphery, International Perspectives on Social Policy, Administration, and Practice, Springer.</u></p>

Feb 13	Capitalism and Ecological Crises	<p><u>Angus, I. (2016) Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System</u></p> <p>Part 1 – A No-Analog State (pp. 38 -106)</p> <p>Chapter 1 – A Second Copernican Revolution (pp. 27 – 37) Chapter 2 – The Great Acceleration (pp. 38 – 47) Chapter 3 – When did the Anthropocene Begin? (pp. 48 – 58) Chapter 4 – Tipping Points, Climate Chaos and Planetary Boundaries (pp. 59 – 77) Chapter 5 – First Near-Catastrophe (pp. 78 – 88) Chapter 6 – A New (and Deadly) Climate Regime (pp. 89 – 106)</p> <p>(or)</p> <p><u>Kitzmann, N., Caesar, L., Sakschewski, B., Rockström, J. (2024) Planetary Health Check 2025: A Scientific Assessment of the State of the Planet, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.</u></p>
Feb 20	Decolonizing Economies	<p><u>Dutt, D., Alves, C., Kesar, S., Kvangraven, I, H. (2025) Decolonizing Economics: An Introduction, Polity.</u></p> <p>Chapter 1: Introduction Chapter 2: The Foundation of a Eurocentric Discipline Chapter 3: Colonization of the Discipline: From Political Economy to Contemporary Economics</p>
Feb 27	Decolonizing Economies	<p><u>Dutt, D., Alves, C., Kesar, S., Kvangraven, I, H. (2025) Decolonizing Economics: An Introduction, Polity.</u></p> <p>Chapter 4: Development Economics: A Failed Attempt to Break from Colonial Roots Chapter 5: Heterodox Economics and the Decolonization Agenda Chapter 6: Towards a Decolonization Agenda</p>
Mar 13	Decolonizing Economies	<p><u>Dutt, D., Alves, C., Kesar, S., Kvangraven, I, H. (2025) Decolonizing Economics: An Introduction, Polity.</u></p> <p>Chapter 7: Exploring the Decolonization Agenda Chapter 8: What Can Be Done? <u>Red Paper on Land Back by the Yellowhead Institute.</u></p>
Mar 20	Transforming Capitalism	Readings determined by students.
Mar 27	Transforming Capitalism	Readings determined by students.

Apr 10	Transforming Capitalism	Readings determined by students.
Apr 14	Course Wrap-Up	No readings

Evaluation

Participation

The participation grade is based on attendance, involvement in discussions, engagement in classroom activities and completion of supplemental tasks. Students are expected to attend the course regularly and actively participate in discussions, demonstrating that they have completed and understood the assigned weekly readings.

Student-Led Seminars

Students will lead two seminars in small groups. Each group will guide a discussion on key course themes related to capitalism, crisis, and transformation.

For the first seminar, groups will read an assigned chapter from *Decolonizing Economies* to engage with decolonial critiques of mainstream economic thought. For the second seminar, groups will choose their own reading on transforming capitalism, subject to approval, to explore alternative economic models, frameworks and/or practices.

Each seminar will include three groups, with each presenting for 30–45 minutes. Presentations should be interactive and discussion-focused.

Students are expected to:

- Clearly identify and explain the central claim(s) of the reading(s)
- Situate the reading within course themes
- Synthesize key arguments clearly
- Generate discussion questions and facilitate class discussion
- Provide examples or case studies that support or challenge the arguments

Groups must submit a copy of presentation materials (notes, outline, or slides) on the day of their seminar. Evaluation is based on analysis, clarity, facilitation of discussion, and engagement with course themes.

Blog 1/Essay: Crises of Capitalism (600-1000 words):

Students will write a short essay critically analyzing a topic related to the crises of capitalism. These may be economic, social, or environmental and could include subjects such as planetary limits (e.g., climate change, biodiversity loss), economic cycles (e.g., Kondratieff or Juglar cycles), limits to capital (e.g., overaccumulation, debt crises), inequality (e.g., wealth gaps, labor precarity), or contemporary issues such as AI, automation, gig work, corporate consolidation, housing, and food insecurity.

The blog must be written in a clear, concise, and engaging manner. Although the format is a blog, the content must be based on research rather than personal opinion. To achieve an A grade, the blog must include references to at least six course readings. Students with production skills may choose to create a video or podcast instead of a blog, but this alternative must be approved by Professor Erik beforehand.

Blog/Essay 2: Transforming and Transcending Capitalism (600–1000 words)

Students may complete this assignment through one of the following two options.

Option 1: Blog / Short Essay

Students will write a blog or short essay that examines alternatives to capitalism and approaches that seek to transform or transcend it. Topics may include landback movements; social, economic, and environmental justice; degrowth; ecological economics; ecosocialism; diverse economies; community economies; social and solidarity economies; cooperative movements; and related frameworks. These approaches may be connected to contemporary issues such as housing, basic income, Green New Deal proposals, landback initiatives, participatory budgeting, and similar strategies.

The blog must be written in a clear, concise, and engaging manner. Although the format is a blog, the content must be research-based rather than personal opinion. To achieve an A grade, the assignment must reference at least six course readings. Students with production skills may propose a video or podcast instead of a written blog, with prior approval from Professor Erik.

Option 2: Action-Research Project (Autoethnography or Community Research Report)

As an alternative, students may complete an action-research project involving direct engagement with a community group, organization, or initiative working toward social, ecological, and environmental justice. Students may create a project, participate in an existing initiative, or collaborate with a community partner.

Students completing this option must submit either an autoethnography that critically reflects on their participation and learning in relation to course concepts or a research report produced for or with a community group that addresses a concrete issue related to social and/or ecological economics.

Grading System

Summary of Assignments and Grades

Name of Assignment	Due Date	% of final grade
Participation	Ongoing	20
Student-Led Seminar 1	Feb 20-March 13	15
Student-Led Seminar 2	March 20-April 10	15
Blog/Essay 1	February 20	25
Blog/Essay 2	April 21	25

Letter Grade Equivalency

A+	95 – 100	B+	80 – 84.9	C+	67 – 69.9	D+	57 – 59.9	F	0 – 49
A	90 – 94.9	B	75 – 79.9	C	63 – 66.9	D	53 – 56.9	NR	No report
A-	85 – 89.9	B-	70 – 74.9	C-	60 – 62.9	D-	50 – 52.9		

Extraordinary Circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances and pursuant to the Academic Regulations, the University may modify the delivery, content, structure, forum, location and/or evaluation scheme. In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, students will be informed of the changes.

Class Cancellation

Classes are officially considered cancelled if an instructor is 15 minutes late for a 50-minute class, 20 minutes late for a 75-minute class, or 30 minutes late for longer classes.

Intellectual Property

Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the [Academic Code of Conduct](#) and/or the [Code of Rights and Responsibilities](#). As specified in the [Policy on Intellectual Property](#), the University does not claim any ownership of or interest in any student IP. All university members retain copyright over their work.

Behaviour

All individuals participating in courses are expected to be professional and constructive throughout the course, including in their communications.

Concordia students are subject to the [Code of Rights and Responsibilities](#) which applies both when students are physically and virtually engaged in any University activity, including classes, seminars, meetings, etc. Students engaged in University activities must respect this Code when engaging with any members of the Concordia community, including faculty, staff, and students, whether such interactions are verbal or in writing, face to face or online/virtual. Failing to comply with the Code may result in charges and sanctions, as outlined in the Code.

Late Assignment and Submission Policy

Unless you are given permission in advance, late assignments will not be accepted without adequate documentation of medical or personal emergencies. All assignments must be submitted in hard copy on the due date. Assignments that are received electronically will have 30% deducted from the grade of the assignment.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity means that every student must be honest and accurate in their work. The Academic Code of Conduct includes rules and regulations students must follow. Unacceptable practices include the following

- Copy from ANYWHERE without saying from where it came.
- Omit quotation marks for direct quotations.
- Let another student copy your work and then submit it as his/her own.
- Hand in the same assignment in more than one class without permission.
- Have unauthorized material in an exam, such as cheat sheets, or crib notes. **YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE CAUGHT USING THEM - JUST HAVING THEM WILL GET YOU INTO TROUBLE!**
- Copy from someone else's exam.
- Communicate with another student during an exam by talking or using some form of signals.
- Add or remove pages from an examination booklet or take the booklet out of an exam room.
- Get hold of or steal an exam or assignment answers or questions.
- Write a test or exam for someone else or have someone write it for you.
- Hand in false documents such as medical notes, transcript or record.
- Falsify data or research results.

PLAGIARISM: The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct (see link below) is plagiarism, which the Code defines as "**the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement.**"

This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, such as an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, or a paper or assignment completed by another student. It could be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone. It can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. Plagiarism is not limited to written work. It also applies to oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. In simple words: **DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU OBTAINED IT!**

Take care to inform yourself of the rules, regulations and expectations for academic integrity.

List of Student Services

[Academic Code of Conduct](#)

[Academic Integrity](#)

[Access Centre for Students with Disabilities \(ACSD\)](#)

[Advocacy and Support Services](#)

[Campus Services](#)

[Conduct on Campus](#)

[Counselling & Psychological Services](#)

[Dean of Students Office](#)

[Financial Aid & Awards Office](#)

[HOJO \(Off Campus Housing & Jobs\)](#)

[International Students' Office](#)

[Library Services](#)

[Library Citation and Style Guides](#)

[Ombuds Office](#)

[Otsenhákta Student Centre](#)

[Safety and Security](#)

[Sexual Assault Resource Centre](#)

[Student Academic Services](#)

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Hub](#)

[Student Success Center](#)