

Marx and Communism

ARU Syllabus

Last updated: March 23, 2025

COURSE TITLE: Marx and Communism

COURSE YEAR AND QUARTER: 2024-25, Q3

PREREQUISITE COURSES:

300-level courses require that a student has completed the “16-Week Objectivism Seminar” or the “Intensive Seminar on Objectivism”.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

One of the most influential thinkers of all time. The political movement for which millions were ready to kill, and die for. Welcome to the ARU course on Karl Marx and communism! Together, we will get a firm grip on the basic ideas of Marx around capitalism, history, and human nature. Then, we will travel across the turbulent 20th century, through a prism of intellectual inquiry and historical commentary. Our guide in this tour will be a former card-carrying Marxist, Nikos Sotirakopoulos, aided by more members of the ARU faculty. Get on board!

COURSE DURATION: 8 Weeks

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor:

Nikos Sotirakopoulos

Dr. Sotirakopoulos is a visiting fellow at the Ayn Rand Institute. Dr. Sotirakopoulos received his PhD in political sociology from University of Kent in the UK, and before joining ARU he taught in UK universities for 10 years. He has written two books: *The Rise of Lifestyle Activism: from New Left to Occupy*, and *Identity Politics and Tribalism: the New Culture Wars*.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

- Week 1: Marx and his world
- Week 2: Marxism as a philosophy
- Week 3: The economics of Marxism
- Week 4: Marxism and revolution

- Week 5: Lenin and 1917
- Week 6: The USSR: from Stalin to the fall
- Week 7: The Cold War: Communism vs the West
- Week 8: Red China

READINGS

You need to buy the following three books. The rest of the readings will be from freely available online sources:

1. Leszer Kolakowski, [*Main Currents of Marxism*](#)
2. David McLellan, [*Karl Marx: Selected Writings, 2nd Edition*](#)
3. Sergey Radchenko, [*To Run the World: The Kremlin's Cold War Bid for Global Power*](#)

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES

Students are required to submit a weekly assignment, with a maximum length of 500 words. The assignment question will be posted on the website following the live class on Tuesday. Submissions are due by 9 PM PT on Sunday of the same week.

Homework will be graded on a 1-5 scale. Weekly assignments will constitute the entire final grade. For the policies regarding late submissions and requests for extensions, please see the ARU Student Handbook.