**Critical Theory: On Debt**

Dr. Rocío Zambrana  
zambrana@uoregon.edu  
Office Hours: MW 4-5

PHIL 343  
Time: MW 2:00pm-3:50pm  
Venue: MCK 121

**Course Description:**
Debt is a social relation. It has received cosmological, theological, and economic articulation for centuries. Yet at its core, debt is a social bond, hence a form of binding. This course will examine debt as an economic, social, and political relation. We will explore the very idea of a critique of debt by examining debt’s role in the articulation of as well as resistance to race/gender/class hierarchies. The course will serve as an introduction to varieties of critical theories by focusing on debt and some paradigmatic cases.

**Required Texts:**
We will work with a coursepack available on Canvas.

**Course Structure and Requirements:**

**Attendance:**
Please attend classes regularly and promptly, ready to participate in constructive dialogue about the assigned text with your peers. To that end, please bring one question about the text to be discussed per class.

**Papers:**
Please hand in a 4-page paper on *Monday of weeks 3, 6, and 9*. You should reconstruct and critically evaluate one concept or problem discussed in the weeks prior to the due date. You will hand in a fourth 4-page paper assessing practices of resistance to contemporary debt crises on *Wednesday of finals week*.

All papers are due in the Department of Philosophy (SCH 211). All of your work must be typewritten (12 pt. font, double-spaced). Please cite texts that you are using appropriately, including secondary literature and online resources. *No late papers will be accepted, unless accompanied by proof of illness or emergency.*

**Statement on Plagiarism:**
Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional unacknowledged use of someone else’s work as one’s own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, and so on). Plagiarized material may be derived from books, journals, Internet postings, student or faculty papers, and so on including the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. *Plagiarism is grounds for failing the course.* See http://www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/.

**Grading:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papers (4)</td>
<td>80 % (20% each)</td>
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Criteria for Evaluating Papers:
• clarity: the paper should have a clearly defined topic and thesis.
• fairness: the paper should present an author’s position adequately.
• assessment: the paper should evaluate the author’s position, and bring to bear on the text or issue your own view; you must defend your view.

Grading Standard:
A+ = superb. No mistakes, well-written, well-researched, and pursues an original thesis.
A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
C = OK. Some errors, but basic grasp of the material.
D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or complete lack of effort.

Accommodation for Disability:
If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please work with the Accessible Education Center as well (https://aec.uoregon.edu/).

Senate Task Force to Address Sexual Violence and Survivor Support:
The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Visit safe.uoregon.edu or call 541-346-SAFE.

Recording Sessions:
If you need to record class sessions, please provide justification beforehand and obtain my permission. Any recording is for personal use and should not be disseminated.

Schedule of Classes and Readings:
The schedule is subject to change. Changes will be announced in advance via email.

Wk. 1
M Introduction to the Course and Syllabus
    Recommended: David Graeber, “Debt, Violence, and Impersonal Markets”
W Karl Marx, “Comments on James Mill”

Wk. 2
M Nietzsche, "'Guilt', 'Bad Conscience', and Related Matters," Genealogy of Morals
W Benjamin, “Capitalism as Religion”
Wk. 3  
M Ian Baucom, “Liverpool, a Capital of the Long Twentieth Century,” chap. 1 of *Specters of the Atlantic*  
   Recommended: “‘Madam Death! Madam Death!’ Credit, Insurance, and the Atlantic Cycle of Capital Accumulation,” chap. 3 of *Specters of the Atlantic*  
W Christina Sharpe, “The Ship” and “The Hold” chaps. 2 and 3 of *In the Wake*

Wk. 4  
M Liliana Obregón, “Empire, Racial Capitalism and International Law: The Case of Manumitted Haiti and the Recognition Debt”  
W Frantz Fanon, “By Way of Conclusion,” *Black Skin White Masks* and selections of “On Violence,” *The Wretched of the Earth*

Wk. 5  
M Discussion of race, debt, capital with reference to Baucom, Sharpe, Obregón, and Fanon  
W Marieke de Goede, “Mastering Lady Credit,” chap. 2 of *Virtue, Fortune, Faith*  
   Recommended: “A Genealogy of Finance,” chap. 1 of *Virtue, Fortune, Faith*

Wk. 6  
M Maurizio Lazzarato, “Genealogy of Debt and the Debtor”  
   Recommended: “The Political Consequences of the Debt Crisis”  
W Rocío Zambrana, “Colonial Debts” and “On the Indebted Woman,” from *Colonial Debts: The Case of Puerto Rico* (book manuscript)  
   Recommended: Ariadna Godreau-Aubert, “Nosotras que no nos debemos a nadie,” in *Las propias: apuntes para una pedagogía de las endeudadas*

Wk. 7  
W Maurizio Lazzarato, “The American University: A Model of Debt Society,” chap. 2 of *Governing by Debt* and Fred Moten, “Debt and Study,” chap. 4 of *The Undercommons*

Wk. 8  
M Federica Gregoratto, “Debt, Power, and the Normativity of Interdependence”  
W Angela Mitropolous, “Mutuum, Mutare,” chap. 13 of *Contract and Contagion*

Wk. 9  
M Anita Chari, “Occupy Wall Street: Challenging Neoliberal Reification,” chap. 7 of *A Political Economy of the Senses*  
   Recommended: “A Political Economy of the Senses,” intro to part 3 of *A Political Economy of the Senses*  
W Macarena Gómez-Barris, “Beyond the Pink Tide,” introduction to *Beyond the Pink Tide*

Wk. 10  
M CARICOM, Ten Point Plan for Reparatory Justice (online)  
   Recommended: Committee for Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (online)  
W Strike Debt, Rolling Jubilee; Se acabaron las promesas and La puerta (Puerto Rico) (online)