



COMMUNISM IN THE MODERN WORLD

Seminar Leader: **Sandro Rochikashvili**

House Leader: **Ryo Ota**

Course Description

Communism has had enormous influence on the unfolding of much of the twentieth century. The influential ideology shaped the development of Russia and China, two of the largest countries in the world, and gave rise to powerful but oppressive regimes. Yet the actual implementation of communism in practice differed significantly from the way it was envisaged by Karl Marx himself. Furthermore, the modern world has gone very far from the conditions that gave rise to the ideology. In this seminar, we will examine communism as an ideology and institution, compare and contrast it with capitalism and look at its history, all in an effort to answer the question: why is communism attractive and is it still relevant today?

Schedule

Day 1: *Communism and Capitalism*

On the first day, we will introduce the concepts of Communism and Capitalism. We will discuss the pros and cons of each of them, talk about Socialism and how it differs from Communism. We will discuss the following questions: What is the goal of a nation? What is the agenda of capitalism and communism and their differences. Are equality and fairness more important than economic growth and prosperity of a nation?

Day 2: *The History of Communism*

We will devote the second day to an in-depth examination of the history of Communism, mainly in Russia and China. The overview of the ideology as practiced in these countries will give the students a better idea of the problems of implementing Communism, and how the leaders of these countries approached these problems. We will also discuss the reasons for the fall of the Soviet Union.

Day 3: *Communism in the Modern Setting*

The third day will deal with modern examples of communist or socialist states such as China, Cuba, Sweden (capitalist but with strong socialist influences). We will also examine the problem of rising inequality in capitalist countries like the United States. We will pay particular attention to China, which shifted towards a market economy despite its communist leadership.

Day 4: *Debate*

On the last day, the students will debate the central question of the seminar: can Communism work in a modern setting? We will go back to the questions asked on the first day and see if our discussions of examples such as Russia, China, the U.S. and Sweden have changed our outlook on the goal of a nation. We will weigh the pros and



cons of both Capitalism and Communism/Socialism and try to decide which works better as an institution in the modern world.

Pre-Seminar Readings and Assignments

- Day 1
 - Selections from *The Communist Manifesto*.
 - Selections from *The Wealth of Nations*.
 - “Capitalism and Socialism: Crash Course World History” #33
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3u4EFTwprM>
- Day 2
 - Selection from Fitzpatrick, Sheila, *The Setting, The Russian Revolution*
http://mrreynoldsclasses.weebly.com/uploads/1/7/2/5/17254072/the_russian_revolution_-_sheila_fitzpatrick.pdf
 - The Great Leap Forward http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/great_leap_forward
- Day 3
 - *China Country Profile: Overview*
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13017877>
 - *The Nordic Model: Pros and Cons*
<http://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/100714/nordic-model-pros-and-cons.asp>
 - Selection from *The Swedish Model*
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704698004576104023432243468>
 - *Fueled by Recession, U.S. Wealth Gap Is Widest in Decades, Study Finds*
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/18/business/economy/us-wealth-gap-widest-in-at-least-30-years-pew-study-says.html?_r=0
 - *What is the Occupy Wall Street movement fighting for and how does it fit into the larger liberal ideology?* <http://us-liberal-politics.yoexpert.com/us-liberal-politics-general/what-is-the-occupy-wall-street-movement-fighting-f-13024.html>

Message from the House Leader

Hello everyone, my name is Ryo Ota and I am a senior at Hitotsubashi University studying International Relations but I have been studying at the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) this past semester. I grew up in LA but came back before middle school in Japan and have lived in Tokyo since. Communism is a very interesting subject to study as it is a concept we don't cover too much of in school. But it is crucial in understanding the history of the world and its diversity in comparison to capitalism. It might be an alien



Rochikashvili and Ota

subject to most of the students but I hope you will find it an interesting subject. I like to spend my free time watching movies and watching and playing soccer. I can't wait to see all of you and feel free to email me if you have anything you want to ask or run by me.

Message from the Seminar Leader

Hello everyone! I am Sandro, a rising junior at Princeton University majoring in international and public affairs. Apart from my major, I am taking classes in Russian literature, as well as learning Japanese. In fact, learning languages is one of my favorite things to do, and I am very excited to actually be in Japan this summer. I come from Georgia (the country, that is), which is part of the former Soviet bloc, which would explain my interest in the subject of this seminar. I've taken quite a number of courses approaching the subject of communism in Russia and China from a variety of different angles: history, sociology, literature, folklore, etc. I hope that by the end of the course you will know more about the ideology that played such an important role in the history of the twentieth century and, more importantly, will be motivated to learn even more about it. Hope to see you all soon!