

DEAD THEORISTS

A spectre is haunting the university — actually, it's 4 spectres. The ghosts of Karl

Marx, Simone De Beauvoir, Michel Foucault, and W.E.B. Du Bois have inexplicably taken residence on campus.

Exorcisms, séances, and cleansing rituals don't seem to affect these ghosts. They can't depart this earthly plane until they've completed some unfinished business: training one last protégé.



In *Dead Theorists*, you play as one of 4 great (but deceased) thinkers seeking to recruit your final and greatest disciple from the ranks of students on one college campus. But you've encountered two challenges you didn't expect:

First, the forces of neoliberalism have been hard at work dismantling the education system. It will be tough to enlist a final protégé from within today's business-oriented university.

Second, you've got competition! Other spirits have also awoken and they're dead set on halting your progress and advancing their own pedagogical agendas. Who can say how much time you have to complete your unfinished business—and to be the first one to do it!

Dead Theorists is a turn-based card game. Each player plays as a different dead theorist, occupying the spectral forms of Marx, De Beauvoir, Foucault, or Du Bois. On each turn, players do what they can to find proof of their success in swaying a new pupil.

You'll know you're affecting your new protégé when you start revealing the trappings of a life of the mind: Collect and display books, apparel, and other miscellaneous academic accoutrements that your protégé has adopted. You'll also need to prove that they've mastered key concepts from your repertoire.

Each of these is represented by a distinct card type. *Item* cards are yellow:



The 3 types of items (books, apparel, & misc.) are denoted by corresponding symbols in the top right corner.

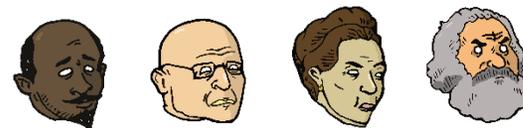


Concept cards are purple:



Each concept card can only be played by one of two players (except *Historical Analysis*,

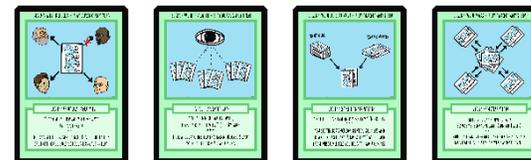
which can be played by any player). Concept cards depict the images of whichever players can play them:



Players may also play green *event* cards:



Most event cards disrupt the actions of others and can be played during any player's turn. In addition, each player starts with their own *special event* with unique effects:



Instant cards are blue. These represent non-player ghosts who can randomly appear to influence the game with different effects:



If you draw an *instant* ghost card on your turn, apply its effects immediately. This does not count as your draw/turn. After applying its effects, draw again to continue your turn.

SETUP

Remove the following cards from the deck:

- All 4 character cards
- All 4 special event cards
- The *Blood Moon* instant card

Each player must select 1 *character* card: De Beauvoir, Du Bois, Marx, or Foucault. This is your character for the remainder of the game. If there are fewer than 4 players, set aside all unused character cards.



Then, each player takes the *special event* card that corresponds to their character. The top of these cards lists to whom they are assigned. Any unassigned *special event* card (for characters that are not in use) should be shuffled back into the deck. Each player's assigned *special event* card will start in their opening hand. (After you eventually play this card, place it in the discard pile. It may then be used by any player who draws it.)

Next, the deck should be shuffled and set face down between all players. Place *Blood Moon* at the bottom of the deck, also face down, so that it is the last card in the deck.

Lastly, each player draws 3 cards from the deck. This gives everyone a 4-card starting hand: the 3 cards they just drew + the 1 *special event* card for their character. (Never hold *instant* cards in your hand. If you drew one at the start of the game, shuffle it back into the deck and draw again.)

Now you're ready to begin!

GAMEPLAY

Whichever player really, really wants to go first can go first. On each turn, you will:

1. Draw from the deck *or* the discard pile. You may *either*: (a) Draw as many cards as it takes to replenish your hand to 4 cards, **or** (b) If you already have at least 4 cards, only draw 1.
 - If you draw an *instant* card, you must immediately apply its effects! This doesn't count as drawing *or* playing a card for your turn. After you apply its effects, draw a new card to fill the spot that it would have filled in your hand.
2. Then, *either*: (a) Play any 1 *item*, *concept*, or *event* card, **or** (b) Refresh your hand by discarding any number of cards and drawing that many cards from the deck (you may not draw from the discard pile during this step).

If an *item* or *concept* card is played, it is placed face up in front of the player to signify that their protégé has acquired that item or mastered that concept. If an *event* card is played, follow the text on the card to determine its effects.

Once the 2 steps listed above are completed, the player's turn is over and play proceeds clockwise. Or counter-clockwise. Just be consistent.

Keep in mind these *special considerations*:

- You may draw from anywhere in the discard pile (not just the top). However, the pile must always remain face-down, and players may not look through the cards in it.
- Always defer to the text on the card. E.g., some cards (*Party Foul*, *Temp Staff Mix-Up*, or *Library Closed*) affect *all* players. Other cards (*Structural Analysis* or *Funding*



Award Letter Arrives) are used defensively and do not count as a standard play.

- If you play an *event* card during your own turn, you decide which player it affects. If you play one during another player's turn, it must affect *the current player* (unless it is a defensive card, in which case it protects you from them).
- You may not play more than 1 *event* card against any 1 other player per turn (no single player can "unload" on another).
- If a card instructs you to discard 1 or more cards from play, but you don't have the proper type or number of cards in play, you're off the hook for the ones you don't have!
- Players may only play the number of *item* or *concept* cards needed to win (no stockpiling).
- A card is in play as soon as it touches the table. E.g., if someone places down an *event* card before you place an *item* card, the effects of the event card must be applied first.

When the deck runs out, shuffle all cards from the discard pile together (including *Blood Moon* and any *special event* cards that may be in the discard pile). This is the new deck. Play continues until a winner emerges.

WINNING THE GAME

The first player to have all of the following items and concepts in play is the winner.

In a 3- or 4-player game:

- 1 book *item* card
- 1 apparel *item* card
- 1 miscellaneous *item* card
- 2 *concept* cards

In a 2-player game:

- 2 book *item* cards
- 2 apparel *item* cards
- 2 miscellaneous *item* cards
- 2 *concept* cards

Success!

You trained your protégé well. They'll continue in your image while you finally get some well-earned rest.

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– Ahem.

Thanks for playing!

DEAD
THEORISTS

Special thanks to everyone who helped me brainstorm ideas for this game. This includes (but is probably not limited to) Karyn, Alex, Hannah, Marianna, Peter, Kyle, Jess, Andrew, Eric, and possibly others who have slipped my mind at the moment. Anyways, any lame jokes are most likely mine, so don't blame them.

–Mike