

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE  
SOCIALISM

**Terms and concepts to know:**

Karl Marx	Three perspectives of Marxism
Ontological idealism / materialism	Hegelian dialectic (spirit / idea)
Thesis – antithesis – synthesis	Relations of production
Capitalists / bourgeoisie	Workers / proletariat
<i>Das Kapital / Communist Manifesto</i>	Surplus value
Societal superstructure	False consciousness / alienation
Lenin / imperialism	The “vanguard”
Stalin	Democratic socialism
Fabian socialists	The Frankfurt School

**Study and discussion questions:**

1. Discuss and debate the three perspectives on Marxism. Of the three, which appear to be the most useful or least useful for understanding the world?
2. What are your thoughts on the Socialist Alternative’s Statement on Trump’s loss last November? Where is their analysis right or wrong in your opinion?
3. Discuss the Marxian concept of “surplus value.” How would Marx respond to the idea of increasing wages for the proletariat?
4. Discuss the concept of “false consciousness.” How does it relate to the fundamental philosophical doctrine of ontological materialism? Consider his ideas on “alienation.” Does modern industrial society alienate us?
5. Are Marxist organizations necessarily authoritarian?
6. Is democracy a barrier to, or a precondition for, a viable socialism? What is the relationship between socialism and democracy?
7. Is socialism necessarily utopian? Is this a problem? Why or why not?
8. Analyze the discussion led by Kshama Sawant on Malala Yousefzai, the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Where do you find areas of agreement or disagreement?
9. What are the various points extended by Hirthler on socialism’s past, present, and future (as elaborated by Richard Wolff)? Can you find points of agreement or disagreement with this argument?
10. In May 1949, Albert Einstein wrote an essay for *Monthly Review* entitled: Why Socialism? What are the salient points and did you agree with the central thesis? Why or why not?

**Readings:**

Hoffman and Graham: Chapter 10 and WEB.

**Video:**

*No Gods, No Masters (Part 1 of 3).*