

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
MARXISM

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. In 1949, Albert Einstein wrote the opening essay for the socialist journal *Monthly Review*, that “the economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is...the real source of the evil.” How much do you think things have changed since that was written 71 years ago? Better? Worse?
2. 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?
3. Do you agree with Marx that theory should be both an explanation and a “call to action”? Why or why not?
4. Discuss how the “relations of production” differed in various historical epochs. Are you convinced that the historical dialectic *must* eventually replace capitalism?
5. Discuss the Marxian concept of “surplus value.” How would Marx respond to the idea of increasing wages for the proletariat?
6. 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?
7. Examine the differences between Marx and Lenin. Did Lenin and the Bolsheviks destroy Marxism? What is the relationship between orthodox Marxism and democratic socialism?
8. Heineman notes that, under Stalin and his successors, the Soviet Union became “the international center for subversive movements throughout the world.” This could be considered by leftists as a highly charged political statement! How might a socialist respond to such a charge? (*Killing Hope*)

Readings:

Heineman. *Political Science*, Chapter 5.
Stevenson. *Twelve Theories of Human Nature*, Chapter 9.

Video: *Marx Reloaded*