

CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
WINTER SEMESTER 2021

M.A. OPTIONAL COURSE: PO 511

COURSE TITLE: **PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN MARXISM**

INSTRUCTOR: DR RAJARSHI DASGUPTA

Credits 4

Scheme of Evaluation: 2 mid-semester assignments (50%) and an End-semester examination (50%)

This course offers a broad outline of the ideas of Marx and aims to familiarize students with some key philosophical themes and issues in Marxism. The first theme is the idea of the human being in Marx, framed as a labouring subject who becomes alienated from its own essence under capitalism. The political program of overthrowing capitalism thus becomes a necessary condition to overcome alienation and realize human existence. The second theme is the philosophical critique of ideology, which conceals the nature of reality in complex and psychological ways and makes people into ready instruments of a system of exploitation. The third theme is the philosophy of history, which provides the basis for an understanding of progress and social evolution through ages and the expectation of structural transformation leading to a classless society in future.

*Apart from taking part in regular discussions in the class, students will be expected to present and submit one long or two short assignments/term papers and take a mid semester and one end semester examination. 25% of the credit will be based on assignments, 25% on the mid semester exam and 50% on the end semester exam.

THEMES AND READINGS

1. THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, 1848

Supplementary Readings

Lenin, *The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism*

Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, 1845

Marx, 'Idealism and Materialism' from *The German Ideology*, 1845

Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, 1880

2. ALIENATION

Marx, 'Estranged Labour', *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*.

Marx, 'Private Property and Communism', *EPM*

Marx, *The German Ideology*, 1845

Marx, 'The Fetishism of Commodities', Chapter 1, *Capital*, vol. 1

Supplementary Readings

Georg Lukács, Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat, 1923

Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 1938

Herbert Marcuse, *Marx on Alienated Labour*, 1941

István Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 1970

Geoffrey Pilling, *Marx's notion of commodity fetishism*, 1980

William Pietz, 'Fetishism and Materialism: The Limits of Theory in Marx' in William Pietz and Emily Apter eds., *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, Cornell University Press, NY, 1995.

Jacques Derrida, 'What is Ideology?' in *Specters of Marx, the state of the debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, translated by Peggy Kamuf, Routledge 1994.

3. IDEOLOGY

Marx, *The German Ideology*

Marx, 'The Fetishism of Commodities', Chapter 1, *Capital*, vol. 1

Georg Lukács, 'Class Consciousness' from *History and Class Consciousness*, 1923

Louis Althusser, *Selections on Ideology from Lenin and Philosophy*, 1971

Supplementary Readings

Terry Eagleton, 'Introduction' to Eagleton, ed. *Ideology*, 1994.

Raymond Williams, 'Ideology' from *Marxism and Literature*, 1977

Roland Barthes, 'Myths Today' from *Mythologies*, 1973.

Clifford Geertz, 'Ideology as a Cultural System' from *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 1973.

Perry Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review*, 1976, www.wprkersliberty.org/files/anderson.pdf

Slavoj Žižek, 'How did Marx invent the Symptom?' in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 1989.

4. PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Selections from GWF Hegel, *Philosophy of History*

Charles Taylor, Chapter XV, 'Reason and History', from Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Allen Wood, 'Hegel and Marxism' in F.C. Beiser ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

Supplementary Readings

Fredric Jameson, 'Marxism and Historicism', *New Literary History*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Anniversary Issue: II (Autumn, 1979), pp. 41-73

Dwight E. Lee and Robert N. Beck, 'The Meaning of "Historicism"', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Apr., 1954), pp. 568-577

Hayden V. White, 'Historicism, History, and the Figurative Imagination', *History and Theory*, Vol. 14, No. 4, Beiheft 14: Essays on Historicism (Dec., 1975), pp.48-67

George H. Nadel, 'Philosophy of History before Historicism', *History and Theory*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1964), pp. 291-315

Walter Benjamin, 'Thesis on the Philosophy of History'

Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History*

* Most readings can be accessed from the website www.marxists.org

***Please note that the course content is intended for a regular one semester course (four months). If there are changes in the duration of the semester, corresponding modifications will be applied with reference to the topics, class lectures and readings.**