

Marxism 2000-2001

Aims of Course:

The Marxism course contributes to the general aims and objectives of the Philosophy Department by enabling students to acquire a detailed understanding of the thought of Karl Marx and his major followers, from a philosophical perspective.

Objectives: Students completing both years of the course will:

- a) acquire a detailed knowledge of several of the key aspects of Marx's philosophy (which include his theory of alienation, his theory of the state, his theory of historical change and development, his labour theory of value, his theory of exploitation, his philosophical materialism, and his views on the nature of morality).
- b) acquire a general knowledge of the key developments in Marxist philosophy and Marxist political theory since Marx's death.
- c) have the opportunity to study the work of at least one major follower of Marx.
- d) be required in finals to answer questions to show knowledge of at least two of the areas listed under (a).

Course Structure

The course is in a two year cycle. Topics for this year are:

Term 1: Weeks 1 to 7

Wolff: Marx's Early Writings

The point of these lectures is to come to an understanding of the most important texts Marx produced during his intellectual formation. The concepts of alienation and alienated labour will be central to the study, together with Marx's criticisms of liberalism and contemporary society. These texts show Marx at his most philosophical.

Term 1 Weeks 8 to 10

Wolff: Marxism and Morality

An apparent paradox runs through Marx's thought about justice. On the one hand, his major works, such as *Capital* appear to be written from the standpoint of high moral outrage. Marx uses justice-based concepts - - 'exploitation', 'theft', 'robbery' and 'unpaid labour' - - to condemn capitalism. But on the other hand, Marx is often read as asserting that moral judgements are 'mere ideology'; 'obsolete verbal nonsense'. And Marx never says that capitalism is unjust. In fact, he says that it is just. What should we make of this tension?

Term 2

Wolff: Marx's Economic Thought

These lectures look at Marx's economic thought as presented in *Capital* Vol 1 and Vol 3; concentrating on the labour theory of value including its attempted justifications and applications. We also look at criticisms of the theory, especially in the light of more advanced applications from *Capital* Vol 3: the law of the falling rate of profit, and the transformation problem.