

BA Marxism 2001-2002

Intercollegiate Lecture Course

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, 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) 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 presently in a one and a half year cycle. Topics for this year are:

Term 1: Wolff: Historical Materialism

These lectures will critically assess Marx's theory of history: historical materialism. The main texts under consideration will be those of the 'analytical Marxists', most notably G.A. Cohen. In addition to selections from Marx's own work, Cohen's book *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* will be the main point of reference. Questions will be raised about both the coherence and plausibility of the view of history presented by Cohen, and about its appropriateness as an interpretation of Marx. Alternative interpretations will also be briefly examined

Term 2: Weeks 1 to 3 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: Weeks 4 to 10 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.