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2001-2002 Term 1

Marxism: Historical Materialism

These lectures will critically assess Marx's theory of history: historical materialism. In addition to the writings of Marx, the main texts under consideration will be those of the 'analytical Marxists' most notably G.A. Cohen. Questions will be raised about the coherence and plausibility of the view presented by Cohen, and about its appropriateness as an interpretation of Marx. Alternative interpretations will also be briefly examined.

Cohen's work first appeared in his 1978 book *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (hereafter KMTH). He subsequently published a volume of essays called *History, Labour and Freedom* (1988) (HLF). That volume is now out of print, although the second edition of KMTH (2000) includes three of the most important essays.

General Readings

The best collection of readings from Marx is David McLennan (ed) *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (O.U.P). Second edition. Recommended secondary sources on Marx as a whole are Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx* and Allen Wood, *Karl Marx*. See also the entry by Michael Rosen on Marx in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Primary Sources for Historical Materialism

Marx

- 1* Preface to *A Critique of Political Economy* (1859 Preface)
- 2 *Grundrisse*
- 3 *The Poverty of Philosophy*
- 4* 'Letter to Annenkov' (1846)
- 5* *Capital* Vol 1 ch 26-32

Marx and Engels

- 6* *The Communist Manifesto*
- 7* *The German Ideology* Part 1

Engels

- 8* *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*

The starred items are the most helpful. 1 and 4 are in the McLennan collection, as are useful abridgements of 2,3,6 and 7. (A fuller, though still abridged, version of 7 is the 'students' edition edited by C.J. Arthur.) 8 is available as a separate pamphlet, and is included in various editions of

selections from Marx and Engels. **All of the texts are now available in free, electronic, downloadable versions from the amazing Marx/Engels internet archive www.marxists.org**
This is the only way I know of at present for getting the full version of 8, including the Introduction to the English edition, which is left out of some of the edited collections.

Secondary Sources (those marked* especially recommended)

Acton, H.B., *The Illusion of the Epoch*

Avineri, S., *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*

Ball, T. and Farr, J. (ed), *After Marx*

*Buchanan, A., 'Revolutionary Motivation and Rationality', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 9, 1979 Reprinted in M. Cohen, T. Nagel and T. Scanlon *Marx, Justice and History*

Callinicos, A (ed) *Marxist Theory*

Carver, T., *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, papers by R Miller and T Ball

*Cohen, G.A., *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*

*Cohen, G.A., *History, Labour and Freedom* essays 1, 4-10

*Cohen, J., Review of Cohen, G.A., *Journal of Philosophy* 1982

Conway, David, *A Farewell to Marx*

Elster, J., 'Marxism, Functionalism, and Game Theory', *Theory and Society*, 1982, and in Callinicos

Kolakowski, L., *Main Currents of Marxism* vol 1, esp ch 14

McMurty, J., *The Structure of Marx's World View*

*Miller, R., *Analysing Marx*

Miller, R., 'Producing Change' in Ball and Farr

Neilsen, K., 'On Taking Historical Materialism Seriously', *Dialogue* 1983

Plamenatz, J.P., *Man and Society* volume 2

Plekhanov, G., *The Monist View of History*

Rosen, M., and Wolff, J., 'The Problem of Ideology', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society: Supplementary Volume*, 1996.

Shaw, W., *Marx's Theory of History*

*Torrance, John 'Reproduction and Development: a Case for a 'Darwinian' Mechanism in Marx's Theory of History', *Political Studies* 1985

Van Parijs, P., 'Marxism's Central Puzzle', in Ball and Farr, reprinted in Van Parijs, *Marxism Recycled*

*Wright, E.O., Levine, A., and Sober, E., *Reconstructing Marxism* esp. Ch 2

Lecture Outline

October 2nd: The Idea of a Theory of History, Cohen KMTH Ch 1

October 9th: Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism, Marx 1859 Preface, Cohen KMTH
Ch 2 and 3, or Cohen HLF Ch 1

October 16th: Central Theses of Historical Materialism, Marx Letter to Annenkov, *German Ideology*, Cohen KMTH Ch 6, 7, 8

October 23rd: Functional Explanation, Cohen KMTH Ch 9, 10

October 30th: Fettering, Cohen KMTH 2nd edition Ch 12 or HLF Ch 6

November 6th: READING WEEK

November 13th: Social Change, Marx *Capital* Vol 1, Ch 26-32, Engels *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*

November 20th: Class and Revolution, Marx and Engels *Communist Manifesto*, Allen Buchanan, A., 'Revolutionary Motivation and Rationality'.

November 27th: Dialectical Materialism, Engels, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific* esp
II

December 4th: The 'Mode of Production' interpretation: Richard Miler. *Analysing Marx* Ch
7

December 11th: General Assessment: Cohen KMTH 2nd Edition Ch 13 , 14, HLF Ch 8,9