

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
Department of History

History 574  
Mr. Meisner

Fall 1986  
Thurs. 4-6 p.m.

Seminar on the Marxist Theory of History

Much of what is significant in modern and contemporary historiography (and social theory) has been influenced by -- or is a reaction to -- the Marxist theory of history. Karl Marx's historical views and assumptions hardly are infallible but they are unavoidable for anyone who is serious about understanding the history of the modern world and modern historical writings. This seminar is offered to provide an introduction to Marxist historical theory through discussions based on critical readings of the original writings of Marx and Engles. Topics to be considered include: Marx's theory of alienation; the concept of the "mode of production;" the nature of socio-historical periodization; the theory of class struggle; Marx's analysis of capitalism; the Marxist theory of the state; Marx's conception of revolution, the notion of "the dictatorship of the proletariat," and his vision of communism; the theory of "the Asiatic mode of production," the notion of "Oriental despotism," and, more generally, pre-capitalist social formations; Marx's views on imperialism and colonialism; the question of the relationship between socialism and economic backwardness in Marxist theory and the place of the peasantry in modern history; and the relationship between Marxist historical theory and 20th-century Communist revolutions.

Seminar meetings will be devoted to discussions based primarily on readings of the original works of Marx and Engles, supplemented by a limited number of selections from secondary works. Such commentaries as may be offered by the instructor will be brief and informal.

Seminar participants are requested, although it is not obligatory, to prepare a short paper or oral report (10-15 minutes) sometime during the course of the semester relevant to one of the topics listed below. Such presentations should be brief, informal and provocative -- raising questions for discussion and debate.

Seminar members are required to write a paper of about 20 typewritten pages on an aspect of (or problem in) Marx's theory of history, on the modern history of the theory, or on the application of the theory to a specific historical situation or problem. It is assumed that the paper will reflect familiarity with assigned readings and seminar discussions. There will be no examinations. Some time will be set aside during the last month of the semester for discussion and criticism of papers (or initial drafts of papers).

You need purchase only The Marx-Engles Reader, second revised and enlarged edition, edited by Robert C. Tucker; (Norton, 1978); and Robert C. Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea (Norton, 1969). Other readings will be available on reserve in the History Department Library (4257 Humanities) and/or in Helen White Library.

Please Note: The seminar will not meet on Oct. 30 or Nov. 20. However, there will be additional meetings on Tuesday evening Nov. 4 and Tuesday evening Dec. 2.

### III. The Theory of Alienation and History as Alienation (Sept. 18)

#### Readings:

Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts," Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 66-125.

Marx, "Alienation and Social Classes" (from The Holy Family), Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 133-35.

Marx, selection from The Grundrisse, Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 292-93.

Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man (Ungar, 1961), pp. 43-58.

#### Supplementary Readings:

Istvan Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation (Harper)

Bertell Ollman, Alienation: Marx's Concept of Man in Capitalist Society  
(Cambridge)

Robert Tucker, Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx (Cambridge)

Herbert Aptheker, Marxism and Alienation (Humanities Press)

I. Wallimann, Estrangement (Greenwood Press).

### IV. The Concept of the Mode of Production (Sept. 25)

#### Readings:

Marx, The German Ideology, (Part I), Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 146-200.

Marx, "Preface" to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,  
Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 3-6.

Engels, Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 683-717.

Engels, Letters on Historical Materialism," Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 760-68.

Marx, selections from The Grundrisse, Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 222-46.

Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, Ch. 1

V. The Nature of Socio-Historical Transitions and Problems of Historical Periodization (Oct. 2)

Readings:

Marx, "Preface," Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 3-6

Marx, German Ideology (Part I), Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 146-200.

Marx, selection from The Grundrisse, Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 261-76.

Marx, Letter to the editorial board of Otechestvenniye Zapiski (1877),  
Marx and Engles, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy (edited  
by Lewis Feuer; Anchor, 1959), pp. 438-441.

Supplementary Readings:

Paul Sweezy, Maurice Dobb, et al, The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism (NY, 1967).

S. Avineri, Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, ch. 6.

VI. The Division of Labor and Social Classes (Oct. 9)

1. The Role of the Division of Labor in History

Readings:

Excerpt from Marx, Capital, Vol. I, Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 388-403.

Engels, "On the Division of Labor in Production," (excerpt from  
AntiDuhring), Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 718-24.

2. The Theory of Class Struggle

Readings:

Marx and Engles, Manifesto, Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 469-500.

Marx, The Class Struggles in France (excerpt), Marx-Engles Reader,  
pp. 586-93

Marx, excerpt from The Poverty of Philosophy, Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 218-19.

Supplementary Readings:

Karl Kautsky, The Class Struggle

Hal Draper, Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution Vol. II: The Politics of Social Classes (Monthly Review Press)

Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness (MIT Press)

Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society (Stanford)

VII. The Critique of Capitalism (Oct. 16)

Readings:

- Marx, Wage Labour and Capital, Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 203-17.  
 Marx, selections from Capital, Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 294-442.  
 Marx, selections from The Grundrisse, Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 247-92.  
 Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, Ch. 2

Supplementary Readings:

- Paul Sweezy, The Theory of Capitalist Development  
 Ernest Mandel, The Formation of The Economic Thought of Karl Marx  
 Eduard Bernstein, Evolutionary Socialism

VIII. The Marxist Theory of the State (Oct. 23)

Readings:

- Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,"  
Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 16-25.  
 Marx, "On the Jewish Question," Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 26-52.  
 Engels, Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,  
Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 734-59.  
 Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Marx-Engles Reader,  
 pp. 594-617.  
 Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 525-41.

Supplementary Readings:

- V.I. Lenin, State and Revolution  
 Hal Draper, Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution Vol. I: State and Bureaucracy  
 Ralph Miliband, The State and Capitalist Society  
 Nicos Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Class  
 Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, ch. 3.

IX. The Theory of Revolution and the Concept of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

NOTE: The Oct. 30 meeting will be held Tuesday evening Nov. 4  
(time and place to be announced)

Readings:

Marx and Engels, Manifesto, Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 469-500.

Marx and Engels, "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 501-11.

Marx, The Civil War in France, Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 618-52.

Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 525-41.

Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, ch. 3 (esp. pp. 73-91).

X. The Marxist Vision of the Future (Nov. 6)

Readings:

Marx, "Private Property and Communism" (in Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts), Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 81-93.

Marx, Manifesto, Civil War in France, "Critique of the Gotha Program," see IX above.

Bertell Ollman, "Marx's Vision of Communism: A Reconstruction," in S. Bialer (ed.), Radical Visions of the Future (Westview Press, 1977), pp. 35-83.

Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, ch. 7.

## XI. The Theory of the Asiatic Mode of Production (Nov. 13)

### Readings:

Marx, "The British Rule in India," Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 653-58.

Hal Draper, Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution Vol. I: State and Bureacracy, pp. 515-71, 629-64.

### Supplementary Readings:

Karl Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism (Yale)

Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State (New Left Books), pp. 462-549.

George Lichtheim, "Marx and the 'Asiatic Mode of Production,'" in Shlomo Avineri (ed.), Marx's Socialism (NY, 1973).

## XII. The Historical Role of Imperialism

NOTE: The Nov. 20 meeting will be held Tuesday evening Dec. 2 (Time and place to be announced).

### Readings:

Marx, "The British Rule in India," and "The Future Results of British Rule in India," Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 653-64.

Marx on China: Marx and Engels, On Colonialism (Moscow, 1974), pp. 19-26, 91-96, 101-05, 112-25, 214-26, 232-49.

Marx and Engels on Ireland: Marx and Engels, On Colonialism, pp. 253-57, 262-65, 273-90, 332-39.

### Supplementary Readings

V.I. Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism

Rosa Luxemburg, The Accumulation of Capital

Paul Baran, The Political Economy of Growth

Nov. 27 - Thanksgiving Recess

XIII. Socialism and Economic Backwardness (Dec. 4)

1. The Peasantry in Marxist Theory

Readings:

Engels, The Peasant War in Germany (excerpts in Marx and Engels, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, ed. by L. Feuer, pp. 413-37).

Also, review The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and the Manifesto in Marx-Engles Reader, op. cit.

2. Marx and the Russian Populists

Readings:

Marx, letter of 1877, in Basic Writings (ed. by Feuer), pp. 438-41.

Engels, "On Social Relations in Russia," Marx-Engles Reader, pp. 665-75.

Marx, "Reply to Vera Zasulich," Marx-Engles Reader, p. 675.

Teodor Shamin, Late Marx and The Russian Road (NY 1983), pp. 3-33.

Supplementary Readings:

David Mitraný, Marx Against the Peasantry

Alexander Gerschenkron, Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective

Adam Ulam, The Unfinished Revolution

A. Walicki, The Controversy Over Capitalism (Oxford, 1969), pp. 132-94.

---

Discussion of papers.

XIV. Marxism and Communist Revolutions (Dec. 11)

Readings:

Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, chs. 5 & 6.

---

Discussion of papers.

Final copies of papers are due no later than Friday, Dec. 12.



I. Introductory Meeting: Problems in the Study of Marxist Theory (Sept. 4)II. History and Revolution: The Marxian Historical Worldview (Sept. 11)Readings:

Introduction to The Marx-Engles Reader (edited by Robert C. Tucker;  
second revised and enlarged edition; Norton, 1978) pp. xix-xxxviii.

Marx and Engles, Manifesto of the Communist Party, Marx-Engles Reader,  
pp. 469-500.

Robert C. Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea, Ch. 1.

Supplementary Readings:

The more useful interpretative surveys of Marxist historical theory  
include:

George Lichtheim, Marxism: An Historical and Critical Survey (Praeger);

Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx (Cambridge);

M. Bober, Karl Marx's Interpretation of History (Harvard);

G.D.H. Cole, Socialist Thought: Marxism and Anarchism 1850-90 (MacMillan);

Maurice Cornforth, Historical Materialism

William Shaw, Marx's Theory of History (Stanford)

Robert C. Tucker, The Marxian Revolutionary Idea

Hal Draper, Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution