

PHI 5150: Special Topics in Western Philosophy (Marx on Morality and Ideology)

Instructor: Li Hon Lam

H03-05 UCC 105

Introduction: This course examines Marx's view on morality and ideology.

Surely Marx condemns capitalism. Yet Marx has consistently refrained from condemning capitalism as unjust or immoral, despite his view that capitalists "exploit" the workers. The best Marxian scholars are divided as to whether or not Marx condemns capitalism as unjust or immoral. Yet this question is anything but academic. (Contemporary history in some countries could have been rewritten if those Marxists in power had held a different view on this question.) So we shall try to understand the nature of the issue, and attempt to answer the question: Does Marx condemn capitalism as unjust or immoral?

In discussing Marx's view on morality, one cannot possibly ignore the theory of ideology that Marx played a major role in developing. Does Marx think that any moral appraisal of capitalism is necessarily ideological or not?

A related historical-philosophical question is: How did Marx (and others) come to possess this "cynical" view of ideology? In this regard, we will examine the views of the Young Marx and his predecessors, and the metamorphosis of their views.

Pre-requisite:

Those who plan to take this course are strongly urged to read G. A. Cohen: *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 for background, before the First Term starts. (This book is the most important work on historical materialism, and in order to discuss Marx you must know something about Marx's theory of history. We will go through some parts of this book in first weeks of this course.)

Readings for the course will be drawn from:

Marx and Engels, *Selected Work in One Volume*.

Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. by Lawrence H. Simon.

Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, ed. by C. J. Arthur.

Marx, *Early Writings*, tran & ed. by T. B. Bottomore.

Kai Nielsen & Steven Patten, eds., *Marx and Morality*.

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

Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School*.

Allen Wood, *Karl Marx*.

Richard W. Miller, *Analyzing Marx: Morality, Power and History*.

Daniel Brudney, *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy*.

Harold Mah, *The End of Philosophy; the Origin of "Ideology": Karl Marx and the Crisis of the Young Hegelians*.

Thomas Nagel, "Subjective and Objective," in his *The Mortal Questions*.

Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

Course requirements:

Readings; presentations; discussion; papers.