

Foundations of Class Analysis

An intensive four-week course offered by

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January 28-31, March 4-22, 2002

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Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 4-6**

From the middle of the 19th century until the last decade of the 20th, the Marxist Tradition provided the most systematic body of ideas and social theory for radical critics of capitalism as an economic system and social order. Even those critics of capitalism who did not directly identify with Marxism relied heavily on Marxist ideas about class, exploitation, commodification, the state, ideology. And while many anticapitalists felt that the specific political project that came to be identified with Marxism -- the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism -- was deeply flawed, they nevertheless shared the emancipatory vision of a socialist society within which class inequalities attenuated and the economy was democratically controlled in the interests of everyone. Above all it was this defense of *a vision of an emancipatory alternative to capitalism* which gave Marxism its emotional and ideological power: we might live in a world of great misery, inequality and oppression, but an alternative was both imaginable and achievable.

In recent years, particularly since the end of Communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Marxism has declined as an intellectual force. TINA – “there is no alternative” – has replaced confidence in the possibility of radical alternatives. Instead of being viewed as a threat to capitalism, talk of socialism now seems more like idle utopian musing. Culture, discourse and identity have replaced class and economic inequality as the central themes in critical social theory. Some critical sociologists have even proclaimed the “Death of Class,” seeing it as a virtually irrelevant dimension of social life in the “postmodern” era. When you add to this dismissal of class

as an object of inquiry the equally prevalent postmodernist methodological distaste for social structural arguments in general, Marxist-inspired class analysis may seem to many students to be a retrograde approach to understanding social issues, plagued by a host of meta-theoretical sins: determinism, economism, materialism, structuralism, positivism.

Yet, ironically, we also live in a period in which inequality and economic polarization in many developed societies has been deepening; in which the commodification of labor has reached unparalleled heights with the entry of masses of women into the labor force; in which capital has become increasingly footloose, deeply constraining the activities of states; in which the market appears ever-more like a law of nature uncontrollable by human device; in which politics is ever-more dominated by money. We live in an era in which social dynamics intimately linked to class are increasingly potent, and yet class analysis is increasingly marginalized.

In this political and intellectual context, many students will be skeptical that it is still worthwhile to devote concentrated attention to the Marxist tradition of social theory and social science. There are three reasons why I feel it is indeed worth the time and effort. First, and most importantly from my point of view, I believe that the Marxist theoretical tradition continues to offer indispensable theoretical tools for understanding the conditions for the future advance of a radical egalitarian project of social change. Marx is famous for saying in the *eleventh thesis on Feurbach* that philosophers have only tried to understand the world, but that the real point is to change it. It is equally true, however, that without effectively understanding the world we cannot know how to change it in the ways we desire. Marxism may not provide all of the theoretical tools we need for understanding the world, but it provides some of the fundamental ingredients, and for this reason it is worth studying. Second, I also believe that the Marxist tradition has a great deal offer to sociology in general even if one does not identify strongly with the vision of human emancipation in that tradition. In particular I think that class analysis in the Marxist tradition has considerable explanatory power for a wide range of issues of sociological importance. Third, the Marxist tradition of social thought is interesting and provocative. It contains some of the most elegant and ambitious theoretical constructions in all of social science and raises all sorts of intriguing puzzles and problems. Even if one rejects the substantive theses of the Marxist tradition, it is worth taking the time to understand them deeply as part of the general process developing ones analytical skills in social theory.

This course will explore a broad range of issues in the Marxist tradition of social theory and social science. I refer deliberately to “the Marxist *tradition*” rather than *Marxism* as such. “Marxism,” like other “isms”, suggests a doctrine, a closed system of thought rather than an open theoretical framework of scientific inquiry. It is for this reason, for example, that “Creationists” (religious opponents to the theory of biological evolution) refer to evolutionary theory as “Darwinism”. They want to juxtapose Creationism and Darwinism as alternative doctrines, each grounded in different “articles of faith”. It has been a significant liability of the Marxist tradition that it has been named after a particular historical person and generally referred to as an *ism*. This reinforces a tendency for the theoretical practice of Marxists to often look more like ideology (or even theology when Marxism becomes Marxology and Marxaltery) than social science. It is for this reason that I prefer the looser expression “the Marxist tradition” to “Marxism” as a way of designating the theoretical

enterprise. I feel that the broad Marxist tradition of social thought remains a vital setting for advancing our understanding of the contradictions in existing societies and the possibilities for egalitarian social change, but I do not believe it provides us with a comprehensive doctrine that automatically gives us the right answers to every question.

The overall objective of this course is to provide a rigorous introduction to the core concepts, ideas and theories in the Marxist tradition of critical social science. The course will revolve around six broad topics: The theory of history; class structure; class formation and class struggle; the theory of the state and politics; ideology and consciousness; socialism and emancipation.

A NOTE ON THE SCOPE OF THE COURSE

While from time to time we will discuss some of Marx's own writings and those of other "classical" Marxists this is not a course on Marx *per se*, or on the historical development of Marxism as an intellectual tradition, but rather on the logic, concepts and theories of that tradition. The emphasis, therefore, will be on contemporary problems and debates rather than on the history of ideas.

The course will also not attempt to give equal weight to all varieties of contemporary Marxisms, but rather will focus especially on what has come to be known as "Analytical Marxism". Over the years that I have taught versions of this course some students complain that it is not really a course on Marxism but on "Wrightism": some of the readings come from my own published work, and most of the lectures focus on the core ideas of the variety of Marxism within which I do my own work, "Analytical Marxism". There is thus very little discussion of Hegelian Marxism, of the Frankfurt school, of various forms of culturalist Marxism, of classical Marxism, or of the rich body of Marxist historical writing. Some of the times I have taught the course I tried to incorporate significant material from these other perspectives, but in the end this was never very satisfactory. Including these kinds of alternative perspectives always meant dropping important topics from the course agenda, and in any case, many students wondered why I included these readings when I was so critical of them (especially for their frequent obscurantism). Given the time constraints, I decided in the end that it is better to organize the course around the ideas and approaches I find most powerful and compelling.

READINGS

All readings for the course will be available as adobe pdf files on my website:

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/soc298.html>. You can either read the texts on-line or print them out. There is a fair amount of reading for the course. Given the concentrated character of the actual seminar sessions – three two-hour sessions a week when the seminar meets – it is not realistic to do the reading immediately before each session. *My expectation, therefore, is that students do most of the reading in February when there will be no seminar sessions.*

STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

This course has a somewhat unusual structure in two respects: first, when it meets it will meet for three two hour sessions on successive days, Tuesdays-Thursday; second, there will be a four week gap (all of February) between the first week of the course – January 29-31 – and the remaining three weeks, March 4-21). During those four weeks I would like the seminar to meet once a week on Thursdays, 4-6 (one of the scheduled periods) to discuss some of the readings in my absence. This will be a way of deepening the continuity of the class, making sure that a significant part of the reading for March is completed before those sessions, and giving the students in the class an opportunity to chew over some of the core readings on their own. My suggestion of readings for these “study group” sessions are as follows:

February 7

Michael Burawoy and Erik Olin Wright, “Sociological Marxism,” in Jonathan Turner (ed), *Handbook of Sociological Theory* (Plenum: forthcoming)

February 14

Erik Olin Wright. “A Framework of Class Analysis in the Marxist Tradition,” chapter 1 in *Foundations of Class Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming)

Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts*, chapter 1, “Class Analysis”, pp. 1-34

February 21

James, David. “The Transformation of the Southern Racial State: class and race determinants of local-state structures”, *ASR*, 53, 1988, pp.191-208

Erik Olin Wright. *Class Counts*, chapter 6, Conceptualizing the interaction of class and gender, pp.115-124

February 28

Offe, Claus. “Structural Problems of the Capitalist State: Class rule and the political system. On the selectiveness of political institutions”, in Von Beyme (ed). *German Political Studies*, vol. I (Sage, 1974).pp. 31-54

Therborn, Göran. *The Power of Ideology and the Ideology of Power* (Verso, 1980), pp. 1–49

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Students taking the course for credit are required to keep an on-going analytical journal engaging the readings and discussions of the class. The idea here is not to write elaborate *reading notes* (although, of course, you can do this as well), but to interrogate the central ideas of the readings and class discussions. The expectation is that you will write 2-3 pages (400-600 words more or less) per session for two of the three sessions during each week of the course, for a total of eight memos. Some of these commentaries should focus directly on issues from the readings and others should be

“post-mortems” on the class sessions. I will write reactions to these analytical memos on a weekly basis, so they should be sent to me electronically at: Wright@ssc.wisc.edu. They are due on the following schedule:

Seminar session	due date for analytical journal
week 1. Jan 28-31	February 4
week 2. March 5-7	March 8
week 3. March 12-14	March 15
week 4. March 19-21	March 22

SCHEDULE OF LECTURE TOPICS

Week 1. January 29-31 *Introduction: The Broad Structure of Marxist Theory*

Sessions 1-3. Normative Foundations, Diagnosis of Capitalism, Historical Materialism, and “Sociological Marxism”

Week 2. March 5-7 *Class Structure and Class Formation*

Session 4. Oppression, Exploitation and Class

Session 5. Complexities of Class Structure: the Middle Class, Careers, Families

Session 6. Class Formation

Week 3. March 12-14 *Class, Race and Gender*

Session 7. Thinking about Class and other forms of Inequality

Session 8. Class and Race

Session 9. Class and Gender

Week 4. March 19-21 *State and Ideology*

Session 10. The Class Analysis of the State

Session 11. The Class Analysis of Ideology

Session 12. Envisioning Real Utopias

SEMINAR SESSIONS AND READINGS

Week 1. INTRODUCTION: The broad structure of Marxist theory

Sessions 1-3 Normative foundations, the diagnosis of capitalism, historical materialism, and “sociological Marxism”

Marxism has always been easier for non-Marxists to define than for Marxists themselves. Non-Marxists generally define Marxism as a doctrine (or worse, dogma) which defends a set of propositions about society based on the work of Karl Marx. Marxism = Marx’s-ism. Marxists, on the other hand, have engaged in endless debates over precisely what constitutes the irreducible core of that doctrine, what is essential and what is not, what aspects of Marx’s work should be retained and what aspects discarded or revised, whether Marxism is primarily a “method” or a set of substantive propositions, whether Marxism is a general theory of society and history, or just a specific theory of certain properties of societies. Such debates are complex and often opaque. We will encounter them in many different guises throughout the course.

In these initial sessions we will not want to delve into the intricacies of these debates. Rather I will lay out what I see as the central properties that define Marxism as a distinctive tradition of critical social science. I will do this in two ways: First, I will lay out a series of core propositions which I map out the basic substance of Marxist theory. These will be organized around three themes:

1. *Normative foundations* – the core values which provide the motivational unity to the intellectual and political tasks of the Marxist tradition. Here we will focus especially on the idea of “human flourishing” as implicitly understood in the Marxist tradition and the role of “economic equality” and “community” as conditions for enhancing such flourishing.
2. *Diagnostic theses* – the core theses of the Marxist critique of capitalism, theses that answer the question: what is wrong with capitalism? Here the critical issue is the way in which capitalism is seen to both generate an enhanced *potential* for human flourishing and, at the same time, to *block the realization* of that potential.
3. *Historical possibility theses* – the core theses that frame the strategic problem of what to do about the ways in which capitalism blocks the realization of the potential for flourishing. This turns out to be the most controversial part of Marxism. Here we will map out two different clusters of arguments, one closely identified with classical Marxism and usually called “historical materialism”, and another one more identified with contemporary neo-Marxist reconstructions, which I will call “sociological Marxism”

Second, I will briefly compare the broad character of Marxism as a field of critical social theory with feminism. Both of these can be viewed as “emancipatory social theories” and both of them

establish, at least in part, agendas within social science. Seeing where these currents of theory differ will help us map out the problem of Marxist class analysis as a distinctive kind of theoretical enterprise.

BACKGROUND READINGS:

Tom Mayer, *Analytical Marxism*, chapter 1, "Foundations of Analytical Marxism", pp.1-24
Rius, *Marx For Beginners* (London: Two Worlds Publishers, 1977)

CORE READING:

G.A. Cohen, "Back to Socialist Basics", *New Left Review* #207, September-October, 1994, pp.3-16

Erik Olin Wright, "Marxism After Communism", Chapter 11, pp.234-248 in *Interrogating Inequality*

Erik Olin Wright, "A Framework of Class Analysis in the Marxist Tradition," chapter 1 in *Foundations of Class Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), pp. 6-11

Michael Burawoy and Erik Olin Wright, "Sociological Marxism," in Jonathan Turner (ed), *Handbook of Sociological Theory* (Plenum: forthcoming), pp. 1-16, 24-32

Erik Olin Wright, "Explanation and Emancipation in Marxism and Feminism," chapter 10 in *Interrogating Inequality*

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Erik Olin Wright, Andrew Levine and Elliott Sober, *Reconstructing Marxism: essays on explanation and the theory of history* (London: Verso, 1992), Chapter 1. "Marxism: Crisis or Renewal?" and Chapter 8. "Prospects for the Marxist Agenda"

FURTHER READINGS:

David McLellan, *Karl Marx* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), chapter ii, "The Thought", pp.19-76.

Frederick Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific"

Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: NLB, 1976)

Ernest Mandel, *The Formation of the Thought of Karl Marx* (Monthly Review Press, 1971).

Week 2. Class Structure and Class Formation

Session 4. Oppression, Exploitation and Class

Perhaps the most distinctive property of the Marxist concept of class is the link between “class” and “exploitation”. In this session we will try to develop a rigorous definition of exploitation and examine the relationship between exploitation so defined and class structure.

Traditionally, the Marxist concept of exploitation has been closely linked to the labor theory of value. In recent years the labor theory of value has come under considerable attack, and these attacks have called into question the concept of exploitation as well. In this lecture we will first briefly look at the labor theory of value as the original way in which exploitation in capitalist societies was analyzed by Marx and then turn to sociological reformulation of the concept of exploitation that does not depend upon the technical apparatus of the labor theory of value. At its core this reformulation understands exploitation as a form of *antagonistic material interests* of actors within a system of production that satisfy three primary conditions: (1) the material well-being of the advantaged group is causally at the expense of the material well-being of the other; (2) this inverse relationship between material well-being is generated by the exclusion of the disadvantaged group from access to economically important resources; (3) this exclusion enables the advantaged group to appropriate the labor effort of the disadvantaged group. If only the first two of these criteria are present we have a situation of *nonexploitative economic oppression*. When all three are present we have exploitation.

BACKGROUND READING:

Tom Mayer, *Analytical Marxism*, chapter 3, “Exploitation: conceptual issues”, and Chapter 4, “Exploitation: applications and elaborations” pp.58-130

CORE READINGS:

Erik Olin Wright, *The Debate on Classes* (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 278-301

Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts*, chapter 1, “Class Analysis”, pp. 1-34

Session 5. Complexities of Class Structure: middle class, careers, families & other problems

The most intense debates among Marxists over the analysis of class structure have revolved around the problem of specifying the location of the “middle class(es)” in the class structure. This is distinctively a problem posed at the middle level of abstraction of class analysis. At the level of abstraction of mode of production, classes are polarized; at the level of abstraction of conjunctures, the analysis of “empty places” involves an array of intra-class divisions, segments, fractions, nonclass locations, etc. The problem of the middle class, is thus a problem of decoding the class structure at the level of the “social formation” as it is sometimes called.

In this session we will very briefly review a range of alternative strategies that have been adopted by Marxists to deal with the problem of the middle classes. Four alternatives have been particularly important:

1. *Simple polarization* views of the class structure: In this view, there is no “middle class” at all, except perhaps for the traditional petty bourgeoisie. All positions are either in the bourgeoisie or the proletariat.
2. *Segments of Traditional Classes*: There are two versions of this stance. In the first, the middle class is viewed as a segment of the petty bourgeoisie (the New Petty Bourgeoisie); in the second, it is treated as a segment of the working class (the New Working Class).
3. *The New Class*: the middle classes of advanced capitalism are viewed as a distinctively new class in its own right, a class which emerges in the course of capitalist development and which is defined by its distinctive relationship to knowledge or culture.
4. *Contradictory Class Locations*: This stance rejects the assumption of all of the others that all locations within a class structure must be viewed as falling into a unique class. Class locations -- the “empty places” in the structure of class relations -- may be simultaneously located within two or more classes.

We will also, again briefly, explore a number of additional complexities in the analysis of class structure:

1. the *temporal* dimension of class locations (class locations embody time horizons)
2. *multiple* class locations (many people hold more than one job in different class locations)
3. *mediated* class locations (links to the class structure via family and social networks)

CORE READINGS:

Erik Olin Wright, *Classes* (London, Verso, 1985), pp. 37-42

Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts*, pp. 15-27

Erik Olin Wright, "A Framework of Class Analysis in the Marxist Tradition," chapter 1 in *Foundations of Class Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), pp. 12-25.
<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/found-c1.PDF>

Erik Olin Wright, *The Debate on Classes*, pp. 323-348

SUGGESTED READINGS

John Goldthorpe, "On the Service Class", in Anthony Giddens and Gavin Mackenzie (eds), *Social Class and the Division of Labor* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp.162-85

Philippe van Parijs, "A Revolution in Class Theory", in *The Debate on Classes*, pp.213-243

Tom Mayer, *Analytical Marxism*, chapter 5. "Class", pp.131-171

John Gubbay, "A Marxist Critique of Weberian Class Analysis" *Sociology*, 31:1, February 1997, pp.73-89

Val Burris, Arthur Stinchcombe, Peter Meiksins, Johanna Brenner and Erik Wright, "Symposium on Erik Olin Wright's *Classes*", in *The Debate on Classes*, pp.157-211

Erik Olin Wright, "Varieties of Marxist Conceptions of Class Structure," *Politics & Society*, 9:3, 1980

Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx*, Chapter 6.1, "Defining Classes", pp.319-331

FURTHER READINGS

Peter Whalley and Steven Crawford, "Locating Technical Workers in the Class Structure," *Politics & Society*, v.13:3, 1984, pp. 239-52

Guiglielmo Carchedi, "Two Models of class analysis -- a review of E.O.Wright, *Classes*", *Capital & Class*, #29, Summer 1986, pp.195-215, reprinted in *The Debate on Classes*

Albert Szymanski, *Class Structure: a critical perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1983), Appendix, "Critique of Alternative Conceptualizations of Class," pp.602-645

Richard Hyman, "White Collar Workers and Theories of Class", in *The New Working Class?* edited by Richard Hyman and Robert Price (London: MacMillan, 1983), pp. 3-45

Richard Hyman and Robert Price (eds), "The Search for Theory: Synthesis or Dissonance", in *ibid.*, pp.98-144.

Gavin Mackenzie, "Class Boundaries and the Labor Process", in Anthony Giddens and Gavin Mackenzie (eds), *Social Class and the Division of Labor* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 63-86.

- Nicos Poulantzas, "On Social Classes", *New Left Review*, 78, 1973
- Erik Olin Wright, *Class, Crisis and the State*, chapter 2, especially pp.61-97
- Pat Walker (ed), *Between Capital and Labor* (Boston: South End Press, 1979).
- Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: NLB, 1975).
- G. Carchedi, *On the Economic Identification of Social Classes*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).
- R.W. Connell, "A Critique of the Althusserian Approach to Class," *Theory and Society*, 8:3, 1979
- N. Abercrombie and J. Urry, *Capital, Labour and the Middle Classes* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983)
- John Gubbay and Rosemary Crompton, *Economy and Class Structure* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978).
- Dale L. Johnson (ed)., *Class & Social Development: a new theory of the middle class* (Sage, 1982).
- Allin Cottrell, *Social Classes in Marxist Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), especially ch. 2

Session 6. Class Formation

Classes are not simply formed or unformed, organized or disorganized. They are organized in particular manners, with historically specific inter-relationships with the class formation of other classes. One of the important tasks of a Marxist analysis of class formation is to understand the variability in types of class formation, and the central determinants of this variability. In this session our focus will be on one specific kind of class formation: *class compromise*. At first glance, at least within a Marxist framework, class compromise might seem like an oxymoron: if classes are constituted by antagonistic, contradictory, exploitative relations, how can there be genuine "compromises." Some Marxists, in fact, have regarded compromise as almost always a sham, as simply the ideological dressing for hegemonic class rule. In contrast, we will explore the conditions under which meaningful forms of compromise are possible even within a framework of antagonistic relations.

We will focus specifically on Adam Przeworski's very important contributions to the theory of "class compromise". Przeworski seeks to demonstrate how class compromise emerges out of the concrete material conditions faced by workers and their organizations, thus avoiding explanations of reformism and economism that rely primarily on "misleadership", "corruption" or "false consciousness." Different levels and forms of class organization permit different strategies for advancing interests, and shape those interests themselves. With high levels of organization, reflected in high union density and electoral vehicles of their own, workers are capable of, and commonly interested in, striking accommodations with capitalists through the state. Typically, this takes the form of wage moderation, coupled with the provision of a more generous social wage. Within less highly organized regimes, by contrast, workers' action

typically takes the form of more militant “economism” (that is, collective action confined to the economic sphere, centering on particular wage and benefit gains), and is distinctly less solidaristic.

CORE READINGS:

Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts*, pp.190-193

Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), chapter 5. “Material Interests, Class Compromise and the State” pp.171-203.

Erik Olin Wright, “Working-Class Power, Capitalist-Class Interests and Class Compromise” (*American Journal of Sociology*, January, 2000, pp.957-1002)

FURTHER READINGS:

Michael Burawoy, “Marxism without Micro-Foundations,” *Socialist Review* 89/2 (1989), pp. 54-85.

Adam Przeworski, “Class, Production and Politics: A Reply to Burawoy,” *Socialist Review* 89/2 (1989), pp. 87-111.

David Cameron, “Social Democracy, Corporatism, Labour Quiescence, and the Representation of Economic Interest in Advanced Capitalism,” in Goldthorpe, *Order and Conflict in Contemporary Capitalism* (Oxford: 1984),pp.143-178.

Joel Rogers, “Don't Worry, Be Happy: Institutional Dynamics of the Postwar Decline of Private Sector U.S. Unionism.” *University of Wisconsin Law Review*, 1990.

Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches*

Walter Korpi, *The Working Class in Welfare Capitalism* (RKP, 1981), and *The Democratic Class Struggle* (RKP, 1983)

Francis Castles, *The Social Democratic Image of Society* (RKP, 1978)

Scott Lasch, *The Militant Worker: Class and Radicalism in France and America* (London: Heineman, 1984)

Duncan Gaillie, *Social Inequality and Class Radicalism in France and Britain* (Cambridge, 1983)

Week 3. Class, Race and Gender

Session 7. Thinking about Class and Other forms of Inequality

There is a tendency in some currents of radical theory to want to treat all forms of oppression symmetrically. One therefore frequently encounters lists of various sorts: sexism, racism, classism, ageism. In one sense this is a legitimate move: in terms of the lived experience and identity of people there is no a priori reason to regard any form of oppression as intrinsically “worse” than others, as more harmful than another. The oppression of people with handicaps can create harms as deep as class or gender. (When middle class kids asked in a survey whether they would prefer to be poor or be grossly obese without the possibility of losing weight, they say poor). Nevertheless, if the implication of the laundry list is that the specificities of the mechanisms of oppression are of secondary importance, or that all oppressions have the same explanatory importance for all problems, then I think this is a mistake.

The task of a critical theory of class, race and gender, then, is to understand the specificity of the causal interactions of these social relations. Sorting these issues out is especially important since, in recent years, perhaps the biggest challenge to class analysis among radical intellectual has revolved around the problem of the relationship between class and other forms of oppression and struggle, particularly gender and race. The characteristic form of this challenge involves the accusation that Marxist class analysis is guilty of one or more of the following sins:

1. The concept of class in Marxism is gender-blind and/or race-blind, whereas class relations are inherently gendered and racialized.
2. Marxist class analysis tends to “reduce” gender and race to class. That is, gender and race oppression are treated as if they can be fully explained by class oppression.
3. Marxist class analysis treats race and gender as “epiphenomena” -- that is, as effects which are not themselves causally important for anything else. They are treated as “surface phenomena”, symptoms of something else, but not important in their own right.

In this session we will discuss this general problem of the “specificity” of racial oppression and gender oppression and try to clarify what it means to talk about the “relationship” between class and these other forms of inequality.

CORE READING

Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, *Marxism and Socialist Theory* (Boston: South End Press), chapter 2, “Society and History,” pp. 65-92; chapter 5, “Kinship and History”, pp. 220-229; chapter 6, “Community and History”, pp. 252-268

Session 8. Class and Race

In this sessions we will explore the general issue of the articulation of race and class by discussing two specific empirical problems:

(1). Who benefits from racism? One of the central problems in the interrelationship between race and class is the issue of who benefits from racism. Specifically, it is a contentious political issue whether white workers, white capitalists or both benefit from racism. This is a complex issue and we cannot possibly explore it in detail here, but I will try to clarify the theoretical issues at stake in the debate. Answering this question will require some attention to a difficult counterfactual: which social categories would have their material interests undermined by reductions in racial oppression.

(2) How should we explain transformations in race relations in the United States? Here I want to address a specific historical question posed by the sociologist David James: why was the civil rights movement successful in the 1960s whereas it had failed earlier? Why were race relations transformable towards less oppressive forms in the U.S. South then, but not in 1900 or 1930? James proposes an interesting class theory of the conditions for the *transformability* of racial domination which still gives racial domination real autonomy.

CORE READINGS:

David James, "The Transformation of the Southern Racial State: class and race determinants of local-state structures", *ASR*, 53, 1988, pp.191-208

Edna Bonacich, "Class Approaches to Ethnicity and Race," *Insurgent Sociologist*, X:2, Fall 1980, pp.9-24.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, *Marxism and Socialist Theory* (Boston: South End Press), chapter 6, "Community and History" pp.231-268

Harold Wolpe, "Class concepts, class struggle and racism", in John Rex and David Mason (eds) *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.110-130

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, second edition (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1994)

Peter Weinreich, "The Operationalization of identity theory in racial and ethnic relations," in Rex and Mason (eds) *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.299-320

Larry Bobo, "Group Conflict, Prejudice and the Paradox of Contemporary Racial Attitudes", in P.A. Katz (ed), *Eliminating Racism: profiles in controversy* (Plenum, 1988)

- Larry Bobo, "White's Opposition to Busing: Symbolic Racism or Realistic Group Conflict?", *J. of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1983, Vol.45:6, pp.1196-1210.
- Tom Nairn, "The Modern Janus," *The Break up of Britain* (New Left Books)
- Steve Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985* (University of California Press, 1988). Selections
- Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989)

Session 9. Class and gender

In this session we will lay out a general conceptual menu for how to think about the interconnection of class and gender. Specifically, we will look at five ways in which class and gender are interconnected:

1. gender as a form of class relations
2. gender as a sorting mechanism into class locations
3. gender relations causally affecting class relations and class relations causally affecting gender relations
4. gender as a basis for mediated class locations
5. gender and class as distinct mechanisms co-determining various outcomes.

I will briefly illustrate a number of these possibilities, but give particular attention to the problem of gender and mediated class locations. This issue has been particularly salient in a recent British debate over how to conceptualize the class location of married women, particularly in two-earner households. Is a secretary married to a factory worker in the same class as a secretary married to a top manager? This problem of defining the class location of married women has been sharply posed in an essay by the British sociologist John Goldthorpe. Goldthorpe argues, quite contentiously, that:

- (a) families are the units of class analysis;
- (b) all members of a family share the same class;
- (c) the class of families is strictly determined by the head of households;
- (d) in nearly all cases the head of household is father/husband in a nuclear family;
- (e) therefore, in general, the class of married women is derived from the class of her husband.

We will carefully examine Goldthorpe's position both theoretically and empirically.

CORE READING

Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts*, Chapters 6-8, pp.115-158

J. Goldthorpe, "Women and Class Analysis: In defense of the Conventional View", *Sociology* 17:4, 1983, pp.465-488

SUGGESTED READINGS:

- Michelle Stanworth, "Women and Class Analysis: a reply to John Goldthorpe," *Sociology* 18:2, May, 84, pp.161-169
- A. Heath & N. Britten, "Women's Jobs do make a difference: a reply to Goldthorpe," *Sociology* 18:4, 1984, pp.475-90
- Robert Erikson, "Social Class of Men, Women and Families", *Sociology* 18:4, November, 1984, pp.500-514
- John Goldthorpe, "Women and Class Analysis: a reply to the replies," *Sociology*, 18:4, Nov. 1984, 491-499
- Nicky Hart, "Gender and the Rise and Fall of Class Politics", *New Left Review*, 1989, #175, pp. 19-47
- Jane Humphries, "Class Struggle and the persistence of the working class family", *Cambridge J of Econ*, 1:3, 1977, pp.241-258
- Gita Sen, "The Sexual Division of Labor and the Working Class Family: towards a conceptual Synthesis of Class Relations and the Subordination of Women", *RRPE*, 12:2, 1980, pp.76-86

Week Four. Class, State and Ideology**Session 10 Class Analysis of the State**

The State and Politics can be analyzed in many ways. One can do a game theoretic analysis which focuses on the strategic action dilemmas of actors situated in various ways within and outside of the state. One can do a cultural analysis stressing the formation of norms, values, worldviews and how these impact on state institutions. One can do an historical-institutional analysis of the state, focusing on the processes by which institutions get built in historically critical junctures, and how the legacies of these processes of state building constrain and facilitate subsequent trajectories of politics and the state. And, one can do a "class analysis of the state" in which one attempts to understand the specific class determinants of the state and political processes. The central objective of this session is to explore exactly what it means to do such an analysis. Specifically, we will try to accomplish four things:

- (1) Explore why the problem of the capitalist character of the state is a "problem". This will involve explaining the distinction between viewing the state as a "state in capitalist society" versus "a capitalist state".
- (2) Examine some of the possible properties of the "capitalist" state that various theorists have argued have a distinctively capitalist character to them. In particular we will discuss Göran Therborn's attempt at constructing a fairly comprehensive typology of the class character of formal aspects of state institutions.
- (3) Discuss the methodological problems in validating these kinds of arguments. Even if it is

legitimate to treat the state as having a distinctive class character, it is a difficult task to empirically establish that a given state intrinsically has a particular class character. It is not sufficient to show that the *policies* of the state are biased in favor of one class, since this could be the result either of instrumental actions of class actors or of the structural properties of the form of the state. Claus Offe argues that in order to establish the class character of the form of the state itself, it is necessary to demonstrate that this form itself produces the class bias, that is, that the form as such excludes anticapitalist policies and effects. This means that the task of proving the class character of the state requires explaining “non-events” -- things which do not happen -- as well as events.

(4) Think about what it might mean for the state to be a “patriarchal state” rather than simply a “state in patriarchal society”. The reasoning behind the specification of the class character of the state may also be relevant for feminist analyses of the state, but this requires a quite precise understanding of what would constitute a “patriarchal” attribute of a political institution.

CORE READINGS:

Göran Therborn, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules?* (London: NLB, 1978).pp 23-97, 118-119

Claus Offe, “Structural Problems of the Capitalist State: Class rule and the political system. On the selectiveness of political institutions”, in Von Beyme (ed). *German Political Studies*, vol. I (Sage, 1974).pp. 31-54

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Catherine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp.157-170

David Gold, Clarence Lo and Erik Olin Wright, “Recent Developments in Marxist Theories of the State”, *Monthly Review*, October and November, 1975.

Martin Carnoy, *The State*, pp. 131-140

Claus Offe and Volker Ronge, “These on the Theory of the State” *New German Critique* #6, Fall, 1975.

Ellen Meiksins Woods, “The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism,” *NLR* #127, 1981

Steven Lukes, *Political Power: a radical View* (London: McMillan, 1974)

John Keane, “The Legacy of Political Economy: Thinking with and against Claus Offe,” *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 1978.

Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx*, pp.411-422

Bob Jessop, “Towards a Theoretical Account of the State”, chapter 5 in Jessop, *The Capitalist State*.

Herbert Kitschelt, "Review of Goran Therborn, *What Does....*", *Kapitalistate* #7, 1979
S. Sardei-Biermann, et. al., "Class Domination and the Political System: a critical interpretation of recent contributions by Claus Offe", *Kapitalistate* #1, 1973.
Claus Offe, "Advanced Capitalism and the Welfare State" *Politics & Society*, Summer 1972.
Claus Offe, "Competitive Party Democracy and the Keynesian Welfare State", *Policy Sciences*, 15, 1983, pp.225-246.

Session 11. The Class Analysis of Ideology

The problem of subjectivity has become an increasingly salient theme in all varieties of critical theory. Within the Marxist tradition such concerns are generally theorized under the rubric "ideology and consciousness", whereas in some other traditions "culture" is the buzzword for the study of subjectivity in social life. The increased attention to such themes within Marxism is partially a reaction to the underdevelopment of the theory of ideology in early Marxist work and partially a result of a growing realization that capitalist societies are reproduced not merely through repressive force but through the pervasive impact of various forms of ideology on the subjectivity of workers. In this section of the course we will try to sort out some of the salient features of ideology as a process of reproduction and struggle and some of the critical debates on the theory of ideology in contemporary Marxist discussion.

One preliminary word of caution: Discussions of ideology are particularly complex (and sometimes opaque) because they so directly impinge on questions of methodology, epistemology and philosophy. Disagreements about what is ideology and how its effects and determinants are to be understood are directly implicated in disagreements over what is knowledge and how scientific understandings are to be constructed. Frequently it happens that discussions of ideology become totally preoccupied with these methodological issues, and the actual elaboration of the real mechanisms and dynamics of ideology never gets analyzed in a sustained way. I will try in this section of the course to keep the lectures and readings as substantive as possible. While we will spend some time reflecting on the methodological questions bound up with the study of ideology, we will reserve a full-dress discussion of these problems for a later section of the course.

Debates on ideology typically revolve around two interconnected but distinct questions (a) How should we understand the social process by which ideology is determined? (b) How should we understand the social consequences of ideology? The first of these has been at the heart of discussions of the relative autonomy of ideology, of the ways in which ideology does or does not reflect (in inverted fashion or otherwise) "real" relations, sect. The second issue centers on different views of what ideology really is, on how it "functions" within social relations and why it matters. We will focus most of our energies on this second cluster of problems, not because the problem of the determination of ideology is uninteresting, but because the analysis of such determination can be made intelligible only once we understand the logic by which ideology is

consequential for human affairs. As we shall see the problem of the “class character of ideology”, like the problem of the class character of the state, concerns both of these questions: how class processes in various ways shape ideology and how ideology, in various ways, may reproduce (or, sometimes, undermine) class relations.

There is relatively little consensus among Marxists about precisely what the term “ideology” denotes, and thus, of course, little consensus about why ideology is consequential. We will discuss several different usages of the term “ideology” that are common in Marxist discussions and then turn to the general problem of the relationship between ideology and subjectivity as a way of integrating these different views. Note that in any case these different usages are overlapping and interdependent rather than mutually exclusive.

In this session I will defend an overarching conception of ideology that has some of its roots in the work of Louis Althusser as this has been transformed by Goran Therborn, although I will criticize Althusser's functionalist tendencies in his analysis of ideology, some of its roots in rational action theory, and some of its roots in what might be termed “Marxist social psychology.”. I will argue that other conceptions of ideology -- conceptions which revolve around the concepts of false consciousness, mystification or normative beliefs -- all make important contributions, but are incomplete. Instead a viewing ideology as primarily a set of ideas whether mystified or normative, I will argue that ideology should be regarded a kind of practice (or perhaps more rigorously, as a specific dimension of social practices), namely *a practice which produces human subjectivity*. (Sometimes this is referred to as practices which produce subjects, or subject-producing practices). Ideology is a social practice, a structure of real activities which have the effect of producing and transforming forms of human subjectivity. A “class analysis” of ideology, then, is an analysis of how class relations shape such practices and are, in turned, shaped by them.

BACKGROUND READINGS:

Raymond Boudon, *The Analysis of Ideology* (London: Polity Press, 1989), c.2, “What is Ideology?”, c. 3 “Is Homo Sociologicus (always) irrational?” and c. 3, “Journey around a Table”, pp.18-68

Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology* (The University of Georgia Press, 1979), particularly chapter 1, “Historical origins of the concept of ideology” and chapter 2, “Marx's theory of ideology” pp.17-67

Richard Lichtman, “Marx's Theory of Ideology” *Socialist Revolution* #23, 1975

Stuart Hall, “The Hinterland of Science: Ideology and the Sociology of Knowledge” in *On Ideology*, Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Hutchinson, 1978). pp.9-33

CORE READINGS:

Göran Therborn, *The Power of Ideology and the Ideology of Power* (Verso, 1980), pp. 1–49

Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts*, pp. 185-215

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 1-63

Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of Critical Theory* (Cambridge University P., 1981), chapter 1, “Ideology”, pp.4-44

Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in *Lenin and Philosophy* (NLB, 1971)

G.McLennan et al., “Althusser's Theory of Ideology” in *On Ideology* (op.cit.), pp.77-108

N. Abercrombie, S.Hill and B. Turner, “Determinacy and Indeterminacy in the theory of Ideology,” *New Left Review*, #142, 1983

Erik Olin Wright, *Classes* (London: Verso, 1985), “What is Class Consciousness?”, pp.242-250

Raymond Williams, “Ideology”, pp.55-74 in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977)

Jorge Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology* (Humanities Press, 1983)

Session 12. Thinking about alternatives to capitalism: Envisioning real utopias

All varieties of Marxists have always assumed that some kind of statist socialism -- state ownership of the principal means of production under the control of the working class -- was an essential precondition for the transition to an emancipatory future, generally identified as (small-c) “communism” -- a society without classes, without exploitation, with maximal freedom, etc. This model of a postcapitalism has lost credibility in recent years. While it can certainly be debated whether or not the irrationalities and oppressions of the authoritarian command economies decisively demonstrate that centralized, statist models of socialism inevitably thwart the aspirations of democratic socialists, still, few socialists today have much faith in such models. This loss of faith in statist socialism, in turn, has underwritten the growing power of TINA claims (“there is no alternative”) about the inevitability of capitalism.

In this historical situation, it becomes an especially important task to elaborate alternative models of post-capitalist, emancipatory possibilities. Such alternatives might be termed “real utopias”.

“Real Utopia” seems like a contradiction in terms. Utopias are fantasies, morally-inspired designs for social life unconstrained by realistic considerations of human psychology and social

feasibility. Realists eschew such fantasies. What is needed are hard-nosed proposals for pragmatically improving our institutions. Instead of indulging in utopian dreams we must accommodate to practical realities.

In this session we will embrace this tension between dreams and practice. Its premise is that what is pragmatically possible is not fixed independently of our imaginations, but is itself shaped by our visions. Self-fulfilling prophecies are powerful forces in history, and while it may be pollyannaish to say “where there is a will there is a way”, it is certainly true that without “will” many “ways” become impossible. Nurturing clear-sighted understandings of what it would take to create social institutions free of oppression is part of creating a political will for radical social changes to reduce oppression. A vital belief in a Utopian ideal may be necessary to motivate people to leave on the journey from the *status quo* in the first place, even though the likely actual destination may fall short of the utopian ideal. Yet, vague utopian fantasies may lead us astray, encouraging us to embark on trips that have no real destinations at all, or worse still, which lead us toward some unforeseen abyss. Along with “where there is a will there is a way”, the human struggle for emancipation confronts “the road to hell is paved with good intentions”. What we need, then, are “real utopias”: utopian ideals that are grounded in the real potentials of humanity, utopian destinations that have accessible waystations, utopian designs of institutions that can inform our practical tasks of muddling through in a world of imperfect conditions for social change.

In this session we will briefly review several such “real utopian” possibilities: universal basic income; market socialism; empowered deliberative democracy.

CORE READING:

Erik Olin Wright, “Overview: *The Real Utopias Project*”
<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/OVERVIEW.html>

Robert Van der Veen and Philippe van Parijs, “A Capitalist Road to Communism”, *Theory & Society* v.15:5, 1986, pp.635-655

Erik Olin Wright, *Interrogating Inequality* (London: Verso, 1994), Chapter 7. “Why Something like Socialism is Necessary for the Transition to Something like Communism”, pp. 157-172

FURTHER READINGS:

Books in the Real Utopias Project

Joshua Cohen & Joel Rogers, *Associations and Democracy* (London: Verso)

John Roemer, *Equal Shares* (London: Verso)

Samuel Bowles and Herb Gintis, *Recasting Egalitarianism* (London: Verso)

Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, *Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance* (Verso, 2002 forthcoming), available at:
<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/DeepDem.pdf>

Basic Income

- Robert Van der Veen and Philippe van Parijs, "A Capitalist Road to Communism", *Theory & Society* v.15:5, 1986, pp.635-655
- Erik Olin Wright, "Why Something like Socialism is Necessary for the Transition to Something like Communism", *Theory & Society* v.15:5, 1986
- Philippe Van Parijs, "Competing Justifications of Basic Income," in Philippe Van Parijs (ed). *Arguing for Basic Income* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 3-29
- Jon Elster, "Comment on Van der Veen and Van Parijs", *Theory & Society* v.15:5, 1986, pp.709-721
- David Purdy, "Citizenship, Basic Income and the State", *New Left Review* #208, November-December 1994, pp.30-48
- Philippe Van Parijs, "The second marriage of Justice and Efficiency," in Philippe Van Parijs (ed). *Arguing for Basic Income* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 215-234

Stakeholder Grant Capitalism

Bruce Ackerman and Ann Alstott, *The Stakeholder Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

Market Socialism

- John Roemer, *Equal Shares* (London Verso)
- Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, *Looking Forward: participatory economics for the 21st Century* (Boston: South End Press, 1991), pp.65-94. To be distributed in class.
- Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), final chapter: "feasible socialism"

Real Utopian models of Democracy

- Joshua Cohen & Joel Rogers, *Associations and Democracy* (London: Verso)
- Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, "Deepening Democracy: innovations in empowered participatory governance", *Politics & Society*, vol. 29, no. 1, March 2001, pp. 5-42

Other sources

- Henry Hansman, *The Ownership of Enterprise*
- Thad Williamson, *What Comes Next? Proposals for a different Society* (Washington, D.C. National Center for Economic and Security Alternatives, 1997)
- Steven Lukes. *The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat* (London: Verso, 1996)
- Russell Jacoby, "Utopia-Phobia," *Tikkun* (May/June 1999).