

An Introduction to Social Theory

Karl Marx and Marxism

Name and date begun:

Time allocation:

3 lessons

Learning objectives:

- Students should begin to appreciate that Marxism is both a social and a political theory.
- All students should realise that Marxist social theory is a significant perspective within sociology.
- Marxism is based on a theory that stresses social conflict and a view of power relationships. Students will need to ensure that they have a good knowledge of Marxism and of neo-Marxism.
- Marxist theory makes a number of claims about the nature of human social relationships. Students should be able to evaluate and to criticise the claims of these theories.

Key Concepts and vocabulary

See your lesson notes for the language and vocabulary of Marxism. This must be learned in addition to the following:

- Conflict
- Political theory
- Social theory
- Hegemony
- Capitalism and capital
- Bourgeoisie
- Proletarian
- Relationship to the means of production

Additional reading and references

It is strongly recommended that you learn as much as you can about Marxist theory. It is usually less difficult than it seems at first. Use as many texts, CD-ROMs and Websites as you can to collect notes and ideas about Marx. Write summary notes and then develop them more fully. Share work with your friends. Ask questions. Use the LRC and the local libraries.

Haralambos and Holborn (1995) *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* Ch. 1. *You should also look in the Index for other references.*

Taylor *et al.* (1996) *Sociology in Focus* p 1 - 24

Jorgensen *et al.* (1997) *Sociology: An interactive approach* p vi and vii, p 4 – 6,

Make a note of any additional sources that you have used below

Personal Development ideas

- Develop your notes constantly.
- Start to look in the Internet to discover what you can about Marxist social theory.
- Use CD-Rom to collect information about Marx and the Marxists.
- Use encyclopaedias to gather information

Overview of the debate

- Why do we need social theory?
- What is the difference between consensus and conflict sociology?
- What implications does Marxism have for sociologists who wish to understand society?
- Why is Marxism so problematic for many people that they cannot accept it as an analysis of society?

Revision tips

- Return to this work each week until you feel completely secure that you know what you are talking about.
- Refer to these ideas in all of your written work.
- Be sure that you understand that Marxism is a perspective and that there are arguments and different points of view within Marxism.
- Share your notes with your friends and talk through them on a regular basis.
- This work is central to much sociological thinking.

What you should have in your folder when this work has been completed correctly:

- A clear explanation of each of the glossary terms
- Additional glossary terms which you have identified as Marxist.
- Acceptable lesson notes.
- Evidence that you have looked at least two textbooks and made notes on Marxism
- Notes taken from CD Rom and from the Internet
- A list of the main ideas of Marx and the Marxists. Look for revision texts to help you summarise these.
- A list of arguments both for and against Marxism as a social analysis. Use revision texts to help you.