

ISSS | STUDY COURSE

Institute in a Box

Institute for the Study of the Science of Society

Social Science for a New World.

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WHY STUDY?

Dedicating oneself to changing society — to creating a world where we cannot just survive but flourish; and not just ourselves but everyone and not just for our generation, but also for future generations — is the most profound task anyone could undertake. Such a serious undertaking demands that we take it seriously. How can we be the best, the most skilled revolutionaries that we can be?

To change society, one must understand how societies develop and change — how history works. As with any other serious undertaking, this requires study, reflection, discussion and practice. There are no shortcuts to being a skilled revolutionary.

It's not enough to be out in the streets fighting for change. Revolutionaries must have a clear sense of how societies develop, how revolutions happen, what stages revolutions proceed through, what stage the process is in at the moment. Skilled revolutionaries see farther because they know the steps, the stages, and the process. Skilled revolutionaries see the road that the revolutionary movement must take to succeed — the line of march.

These skills come from study. Knowledge is the result not just of interacting with the world, but also of reflecting on that interaction. Knowledge requires structure or framework through which to understand experiences, and a method for analyzing and understanding events around us. By studying the accumulated experience and thinking of others who have gone before us, we can become experts that much faster.

A regular study program, then, must be an essential component of any revolutionary's life. No one ever knows it all. Plus new experiences and new discoveries and new developments require us to constantly reflect on the new information and its meaning. Regular study is key to keeping that line of march in view.

Study groups have been a key part of every successful revolutionary movement. The core leadership of these movements developed out of study groups. Today, as before, a network of revolutionaries who approach the line of march from the perspective of science — a

network of Marxists – is essential to guaranteeing that both the present and the future struggles stay on track towards the ultimate goal. The starting point for building this network is building study groups.

INTRODUCTION

What is the “Institute-in-a-Box”?

Institute-in-a-Box is a starter kit for starting your own Marxism study group, based on the curriculum we use in the Institute. The curriculum is broken into 10 units. Each unit includes key terms, key concepts, suggested background readings, study activities, discussion questions, and other resources for further exploration of the concepts.

How to Use the Institute-in-a-Box

Feel free to use the Institute-in-a-Box in any way appropriate to your schedule. One possibility is to hold regular study groups, and work through each unit however your group feels the most comfortable. It was developed to be a guide to facilitate study groups and be a source of ideas to make your studying doable.

Some things that will be helpful:

- Have a regular program of study. Meeting at the same time and day each week, or every two weeks, will help ensure a successful program of study.
- Have one person take responsibility for leading the discussion. This task may require doing some additional background reading, preparing for the activities, assigning reports to study group participants, etc.
- Keeping the topics specific and not trying to do too much in any one session will make it a doable thing.

ORIENTATION

UNIT I – Introduction to the Study of the Science of Society

Key terms

Science

Science of Society

Doctrine

Marxism

Communism

Key concepts

“Science is systemized knowledge derived from observation, study and experimentation carried on to determine the nature of what is being studied.” (from *Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution*.)

Doctrine is the application of science to particular conditions. There is a difference between Marxism-the-science, and Marxism-the-doctrine.

Marxism-the-science describes the laws that govern the development of societies.

Marxism-the-doctrine, on the other hand, describes the application of Marxism-the-science at a given moment, and thus evolves and changes as conditions change.

Marxism-the-science is a method, a way of approaching problems that face revolutionaries. Many people espouse the economic system of communism — contribution to society based on ability, distribution of social wealth based on need. Marxists are communists who bring a scientific method to bear on the tasks facing communist revolutionaries: what needs to be done to ensure not only the present success of the movement, but the future success as well.

Readings

“Science and Doctrine” (Institute resource paper #1).

“Marxism as the Scientific Current Within Communism” (Institute resource paper #2).

“Why study?” (Introduction to Institute-in-a-Box)

Activities

Look up dictionary definitions of the key terms. Discuss the dictionary definitions in relation to the readings.

Have someone do a report on a supplemental reading “The Future of Human History as a Science”, the Epilogue from the recent book *Guns, Germs and Steel* (Jared Diamond, Norton, 1997).

Discussion questions/points

- What is science? What is doctrine? How are they different?
- What is a communist? What is a Marxist? How are they different? Are all communists Marxists? Are all Marxists communists?
- Why is an ongoing program of study important to a revolutionary?

PHILOSOPHY

UNIT II – Dialectical Materialism

Key terms

Dialectics: the study of how things develop and change.

Materialism: the philosophical principle that the world is real and knowable and that ideas come from interacting with the world (as opposed to philosophical “idealism” which says that the world is a product of some idea or ideal).

Historical Materialism: the extension of the principles of Dialectical Materialism to the study of social life, the study of society and history

Quality: A process (the totality of stages of development of dialectical motion)

Quantity: The stages of development of the process. Growth or motion takes place in definite and indispensable stages. Each stage grows out of the preceding one and connects to it.

Contradiction: Internal process; the basis of all quantitative development.

Antagonism: The mode of destruction and transformation to a new quality.

Objective: That which develops independent of our will or consciousness.

Subjective: Thought or consciousness; our perception of the material world

Leap: The motion of change from one quality to another.

Key concepts

Dialectics is the study of how things develop and change. The principles of dialectics include:

- Nature is a connected and integrated whole. Phenomena are connected through causality. An understanding of causality allows revolutionaries to draw political conclusions about the true, deep-lying causes of phenomena and the effects that may occur. Causality means that the world is going somewhere. We only have to find out what is causing its motion. Then we can utilize that process to introduce the new ideas that can move the world forward. Ignorance of causality gives rise to unscientific explanations, making it impossible for revolutionaries to produce the effects they require.
- Nature is in a state of constant change: development, disintegration, dying away and arising.
- Internal contradiction, the basis of quantitative development, is inherent in all things.
- Changes are from lower to higher order and occur as negations.
- Qualitative changes occur by a quantitative extraction from the quality or by quantitative introduction of an antagonistic new quality. Qualitative changes occur as leaps.
- Quantitative changes are definite and indispensable.

Readings

Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (first part, up to “Marxist Philosophical Materialism “)

“How and Why Things Change” (Institute resource paper #3)

Activities

Define key terms

Group work – discuss question and key points

Discussion questions/points

- How do things change?
- Why do things change?
- What is the leap?
- What are some other philosophical outlooks besides dialectical materialism?
How do they differ from dialectical materialism?

UNIT III – Base and Superstructure

Key terms

Base: The base of society is the unity of the mode of production and exchange, i.e. the productive relations and the productive forces. The base of the state is the productive relations. Classes are an aspect of the productive relations.

Productive Forces: The productive forces are the instruments of production (i.e. tools) wherewith material values are produced, plus certain production experience and labor skill.

Property Relations: In class society, property relations, having once arisen, become consolidated legally and politically in forms of ownership, in laws, in class politics, in the state and other institutions. Property relations express and protect the legal relationship regarding who owns the means of production.

Productive Relations (or relations of production): The productive relations are the relations of people to each other in the process of production. People struggle against nature for the production and reproduction of material values not in isolation from each other, nor as separate individuals, but in common, in groups, in societies. There have been relations of co-operation between people who are free from exploitation; and relations of domination and subordination.

Mode of Production: The mode of production is the embodiment of the unity between the productive forces of society and the productive relations in the process of the production of material values. Whatever is the mode of production of a society, such in the main is the society itself, its ideas and theories, its political views and institutions. The most revolutionary aspect of the mode of production is the productive forces and in particular, the tools. Changes in the mode of production inevitably call forth changes in the whole social system.

Superstructure: A superstructure reflects, protects, organizes and strengthens its base. The elements that make up the social superstructure include the social institutions and ideas that arise from the base of society, the mode of production. However, the social superstructure does not include all forms of social consciousness (e.g. natural science, history and language, are truths that are handed down from generation to generation.) The political superstructure rests, defends and protects the property relations. It is the state (which includes the military, prisons, legal system, etc.)

The State: The state is an organ of force by which the ruling class of a particular epoch maintains power. It is a machine for the oppression of one class by another. A small number of people cannot dominate over a vast majority without coercion. The state did not exist under primitive society as the productive forces were owned cooperatively and there was no concept of classes or private property. Work was ordered and maintained by force of custom and tradition or by the authority and respect of elders of a tribe or by women. The state appears whenever and wherever a division of society into classes appears. The state is a power that arises from society, but which places itself above it and becomes more and more alienated from it. It includes the military, prisons, legal system, government, etc. It consists of special bodies of armed forces who have at their disposal the prisons, and other means of subjugating the will of others by force. Revolution is not possible without the destruction of the apparatus of state power, without the proletariat seizing power and transforming the means of production into public property

Class: A class is a large group identified by having something in common. Economic classes are formed by their relationship to the means of production, whether they own the means of production or work at the means of production.

Revolution: Revolution is a historical process by which a subordinate class overthrows its ruling class, establishes itself as a new ruling class, establishing a new political system. The first stage of revolution is economic. It comes about when new, more efficient tools are introduced into production that produce social wealth faster, cheaper and easier. New tools create a new class or classes. The classes are qualitatively different. They don't fit and can't

exist in the old relationship. A massive and prolonged struggle erupts to create a new productive relationship. But, revolution is not simply the overthrow of one class by another. It is the disruption and destruction of an entire society brought about by the introduction of the new means of production. As a result, the base of society begins to weaken and disintegrate as new relationships struggle to be born. This, in turn, forces the political superstructure to strengthen its hold on society. The facade is stripped away. The naked oppression of the state begins to stand exposed.

Leap: A leap is the motion of change from one quality to another. It is not a single event, but a series of changes wherein one quality is replaced quantitatively, or stage by stage, with another quality. In society, today, the introduction of a new quality — electronics — into production has begun a leap in the economy. These new productive forces are increasingly coming into conflict with the productive relations giving rise to a leap in society which is expressed as a social revolution. Institutions, ideas, and relationships that once organized and gave meaning to society are disrupted and torn from their moorings. Once the leap begins, revolutionary activity in the spontaneous movement is no longer an end to itself; but a battleground of new versus old ideas. From out of this social revolution emerges the struggle to reorganize society around the new productive forces.

Key concepts

The base of society is the unity of the mode of production and exchange, i.e. the productive relations and the productive forces. The base of the state is the productive relations.

The base of society includes the way people relate to one another in the production of their lives and their means of life, in other words, the productive relations. Classes are an aspect of these productive relations. People do not relate on just any basis. They relate to one another through their mutual relation to property. This in turn defines the society. A state, a legal system, social institutions and ideas arise on this base. These elements make up what we call the superstructure. The superstructure reflects, protects, organizes and strengthens the base.

With the introduction of qualitatively new productive forces the leap — a series of changes wherein one quality is replaced quantitatively, or stage by stage, by another quality — begins. Revolution is not simply the overthrow of one class by another, but rather the disruption and destruction of the entire society brought about by the introduction of the new quality. The base begins to disintegrate and new relationships struggle to be born. New groups or new classes are created, unable to exist in the old productive relations.

All of society is pulled into the process — the classes fight one another, the classes fight themselves, and all are forced to attack society and fight for its reorganization in their interests if they are to survive. Nothing is automatic about this process. The rise of new classes plays an indispensable part in the process of social destruction, but reconstruction takes consciousness. As in all processes, the introduction of the new quality is necessary to bring about qualitative change.

Readings

Marx, Karl, “Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy”, January 1859

“How and Why Things Change” (Institute resource paper #3 – starting with “The application of these laws to the changes taking place in society”)

Excerpts from Rally, Comrades! Understand Change, Influence its Direction

Excerpts from Institute Resource Paper #9 Historical Materialism: The Civil War in the United States

Base and Superstructure Chart

Activities

Identify some examples of different forms of property throughout history.

Identify some examples of different types of productive relations throughout history.

Create a chart or diagram of the productive relations of these societies, and list parts of the superstructure of those societies.

Discussion questions/points

- Are the productive forces and productive relations part of the base of society?
- Does a given level of technology make a particular kind of society inevitable?
- Why can't the base be attacked?
- Where do new classes come from?
- How is the superstructure destroyed?
- What is the difference between reform and revolution? How does the difference relate to base and superstructure?
- How can a leap take a long time, but also be a sudden break or rupture?
- Why is the struggle for reform objective? What does it mean to say "the leap is governed by the subjective"?

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIETY

UNIT IV – Historical Materialism

Key terms

Historical materialism

Productive forces

Productive relations

Mode of production

Key concepts

The basis of the science of society is historical materialism. Marxism builds on the philosophic principles of materialism — that the universe is “by its very nature material,” it exists independent of consciousness. The universe is objective, knowable, and law-governed. Historical materialism applies the principles of dialectics (how things change) and materialism to society and history.

Understanding any society starts with understanding how that society is organized to meet its material needs. This social organization is in turn determined by the available productive forces — the technology and knowledge and organization — in a given period. Each qualitative advance of technology defines a period, or stage of human history. These periods have distinctive corollary forms of social or productive relations. Marx recognized that the relatively mobile (i.e., they are constantly developing) forces of production race ahead of the relatively static relations of production (the relationship of individuals and groups of people to one another in the process of production), laying the basis for transformation in society. That is, societies organize around available technology, and that a qualitative change in the available technology sets the stage for a qualitative change in social relations.

Readings

Required General Reading:

Marx, Karl, Excerpt from Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, January 1859

Required:

Peery, Nelson, Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution, “The Process of Development” and “The Content of the Time”, 1993

“The Shape of History: Historical Materialism, Electronics and Value” (Institute resource paper #4)

Suggested:

Diamond, Jared. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. W.W. Norton & Co., 1999. Excellent Resource

Christian, David. *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*. University of California Press, 2005. Excellent Resource.

Activities

Select clips of Hollywood videos that depict different historical periods with different modes of production. Identify tools, motive power, forms of ownership of means of production, and people’s relationship to the tools. Create a timeline that shows the progression. The following are some examples of movies that show people producing things in different historical periods:

- Clan of the Cave Bear
- The Ten Commandments
- Modern Times
- Documentary clips on robotics

For this activity use the two worksheets that have been provided in this unit under “Other resources” .

Define the key terms above.

Discussion questions/points

- What is the relationship between productive forces and productive relations? In what way are productive relations dependent on productive forces? Do any given productive forces make certain productive relations inevitable? What does it mean to say the productive forces are “mobile” and productive relations are “static”?
- According to the McPherson reading, why was the U.S. Civil War so bloody? Discuss the reading in terms of productive forces and productive relations.
- What is the difference between the content of history and the form of history?
- What conditions were necessary for property and ruling classes to emerge in human history? What conditions are necessary for them to disappear?

Other resources

Diamond, Jared. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. W.W. Norton & Co. An excellent current source of information on the history of human society, from a materialist perspective.

Worksheet 1 – “Societies organize around their tools”

Worksheet 2 – “Questions to consider while watching video”

Unit V – Historical Materialism Case Study: Electronics

Key terms

Electronics

Technology revolution

Property relations

Key concepts

For the bulk of history, production has been based on human labor. For the first time in history, electronics makes production possible without human labor, by capturing and incorporating the knowledge and skills and efforts of previous generations of workers in the new technologies. This new quality — laborless production — is what makes electronics a revolutionary technology. It distinguishes production today not just from electro-mechanical (industrial) production of the recent past, but also from the bulk of history. This is a very big change.

We are at the beginning of a technology revolution. New technologies continue to develop at a rapid pace and spread to more and more areas of the economy. The impact of new technologies is just being felt.

Readings

Required General Reading:

Marx, Karl, Excerpt from Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, January 1859

Required Reading:

New Epoch Makes New World Possible, Rally Comrades,

July.2010.Vol20.Ed4.<http://www.lma.org/2-pt/articles/v20ed4art1.html>

Martin Ford. *Your Job In 2020: In 2020 you will fight to keep your job.*

<http://www.forbes.com/2010/04/08/unemployment-google-2020-technology-data-companies-10-economy.html?boxes=Homepagechannels>

Any article of choice from Marshall Brain's Robotic Nation website:

<http://www.marshallbrain.com/robotic-nation.htm>

Suggested:

Bridges, William. "The End of the Job: As a way of organizing work, it is a social artifact that has outlived its usefulness. Its demise confronts everyone with unfamiliar risks — and rich opportunities." September 19, 1994, FORTUNE Magazine From JobShift, by William Bridges, 1994 Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.

http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/1994/09/19/79751/index.htm

The Lights in the Tunnel: Automation, Accelerating Technology and the Economy of the Future

Activities

Look for recent newspaper or magazine articles that describe new technologies or production processes. Some good sources for such articles are the daily newspaper, or magazines like Discover, Omni, or Wired. When reading the articles, consider the ways in which the technologies replace things that people used to do.

Make a list of features of new technologies, and how they change the role of people in the production process. Some key points include:

When looking at the newspaper articles consider the following:

- speed of development and rapid dispersion
- cheapening cost

- new areas of human activity
- not just replacement of people by machines, but the squeezing out of labor from all levels
- we're not at an end to a process, but at the beginning
- the new tools are not just robots and computers, but they are new materials, new processes, a new science.

Discussion questions/points

- A “revolutionary technology” is a technology of a new quality that is, qualitatively different from existing technology. Why is electronics a revolutionary technology? That is, what makes it qualitatively different from electro-mechanical technology?
- From the discussion on historical materialism, what are the implications of introducing a “revolutionary technology” into a society?
- Practically speaking, from your own or your parents' experience, how is this playing out in the world today? How is the economy being reorganized around new technologies?

Unit VI – Political Economy

Key terms

Commodity

Use value

Exchange value

Law of Value

Key concepts

A commodity is something produced by a person for exchange. A commodity has a dual nature — a use value (it must satisfy a want) and an exchange value (it embodies a quantity of human labor).

Marx used the term “value” to describe the substance common to all commodities – human labor. Value, the underpinning of the entire economy is directly related to human labor, human activity in the production process.

The basic law of capitalism is the maximization of profit; profit comes from unpaid labor.

Commodities exchange on the basis of their social value (the average value of all of the same kind of commodities), not their individual value. A commodity made with advanced techniques may embody less labor (and cost less to produce), but it exchanges at the same price as other commodities produced with older technology. Hence, a capitalist using advanced technology can realize extra profit.

A commodity must be sold for the value in it to be realized, and therefore for the profit to be obtained by the capitalist. If workers can't work, and therefore do not receive wages, they cannot buy things.

Readings

Excerpt from Marx, Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy

Destruction of Value Marks Capitalism's End. Rally, Comrades!, January.2009.Vol19.Ed1

Lenin, selections from "Teachings of Karl Marx" on "Value" and "Surplus Value."."

Peery, Nelson, "Dialectics of the Leap and the Destruction of Capitalism." (in *Entering an Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution*)

Suggested:

Marx, Karl, Capital (Basic Resource)

A book on Political Economy. (e.g., Leontiev, *Political Economy*, or for a recent treatment, G. Carchedi, *Frontiers of Political Economy*, Verso, 1991).

Tony Zaragoza's website

Activities

Define the key terms

Discuss the "Before Electronics/After Electronics" graphic.

Discussion questions/points

- Which of the following are commodities?
- A scarf someone knits for his/her own use
- A scarf someone knits to take to swap meet

- Apple falls off of a tree
 - Apples grown in an orchard by Farmer Brown
 - Cars made at GM in 1935
 - Cars made at GM by robots
 - Public school education
 - Private school education
-
- Do commodities only exist under capitalism?
-
- Does value only exist under capitalism?
-
- What are the implications of a introducing a “labor-replacing” technology like electronics into an industrial economy, where people sell their ability to work, and take those wages and buy stuff?
-
- How can a capitalist maximize profit? How are capitalists doing it today?

Other Resources

Marx, Karl, *Capital*

There are many other books on Marxist political economy (e.g., Leontiev, *Political Economy*, or, for a recent treatment, G. Carchedi, *Frontiers of Political Economy*, Verso, 1991).

REVOLUTIONARIES AND REVOLUTIONS

Unit VII – Revolutionaries – The Role of the Individual

Key terms

Objective
Subjective
Freedom
Necessity
Factors

Key concepts

Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends.

Revolutionaries can master their tasks and most effectively play their decisive role in history when they understand the laws that govern a process (necessity). The conclusion is that the most revolutionary thing to do today is to make millions clear about the economic transformation of society and their role in fighting for reconstruction.

Readings

Below are the readings for the third day of the ISSS school. Please read as much as you can before the school. There will also be some time for reading after you get here, and we will make assignments based on the readings and discussion questions.

Please read as much as you can. The more you read, the more everyone gets out of the discussion.

Part I, Core Readings

Institute Resource Paper # 5 – “Revolutionaries – The Role of the Individual”

Engels, Frederick, Frederick Engels, “Letter to Borgius, January 25, 1894.”

Plekhanov, G., “The Role of the Individual in History”

(If you can’t get to this one, we’ll try to set up a study group on it at the school.)

Part I, Secondary Readings

Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring, “Morality and law, freedom and necessity.”

(Much of this chapter is polemics of a time and place we’re not familiar with. The relevant part is only a few pages – the bolded, doubled-spaced portion on pages 6-9 of the attached.)

Michio Kaku, Visions: How Science Will Revolutionize the 21st Century, Chapter 1.

(This book is easily available in libraries, etc., and the chapter is short..)

Activities

Define terms

Compare and contrast the two quotes from Frederick Engels and Margaret Mead

Discussion questions/points

- What is Engels’ and Hegel’s definition of “freedom” (in the sense of the freedom of an individual to get done what he/she is trying to do) and how do you get it?

- Engels (in Anti-Duhring) says that freedom is also a product of historical development. What did he mean by that, and what are the implications of the electronic revolution for the “freedom” of humanity?
- The development of the productive forces is the general cause of the historical progress of humanity. What roles do people and, particularly, the conscious individual play? What is the difference between the “factors” theory and Plekhanov’s dialectical description of the role of the individual in history?
- What is a hero, and why was someone like Thomas Paine able to play such a decisive role in history?
- What does this mean for you and what you do?

Unit VIII – Revolution – the Line of March: part 1

Revolution in the economy and the disruption of society

Key terms

Objective

Subjective

Revolution

Economic revolution

Political revolution

Social revolution

Line of march

Key concepts

The application of a qualitatively new method of production brings about a revolution in the economy.

Revolution in the economy disrupts society and brings about social revolution.

Today's economic revolution is creating a new class, which is changing the character of the social struggle.

Qualitative change begins with the introduction of a new quality into the old process and develops through quantitative stages to the leap to the new quality. In this sense, "quantity" is not numbers or amount but a stage of the process of qualitative change.

Polarization and destruction are stages of the leap. Today's economic revolution is expressed in the polarization of society, which is setting the objective basis for the destruction of that which held society together in past periods.

Readings

Part II – core readings

Marx, Karl, Excerpt from Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, January 1859

Karl Marx, "The British Rule in India."

Institute resource paper #6 – "Revolution – the line of march."

"The leap in society and the role of the individual in history."

Forbes article on Michigan EFM:

<http://blogs.forbes.com/erikkain/2011/04/19/detroit-emergency-manager-closes-school-for-pregnant-teens-police-arrest-protesting-students/>

Nelson Peery, *Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution*, section on "The Revolutionary Process."

(The selection starts about half-way through the online version at the link above or on page 17 of the hard-copy pamphlet. We'll have copies in case you can't get to it before you arrive for the school.)

Part II — secondary readings

Frederick Engels, *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, (excerpt from Chapter 9). (See attached, esp. the part in larger size type.)

“Understand this Moment, Stay the Course”

Frederick Engels and Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, chapter on “Proletarians and Communists.”

Nelson Peery, *Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution*, “Dialectics of the Leap.”

Activities

Discuss the key terms.

Make the revolutionary process graphic by assigning current short readings that illustrate the philosophical and political points in the discussion questions. (If you want suggestions for articles that do this, ask the Institute staff in Chicago for ideas.)

Discussion questions/points

- What is the difference between and relation between the objective and subjective aspects of the revolutionary process?
- What is meant by the “line of march of the revolution”? Why is it important for revolutionaries to proceed from the line of march?
- What are the two aspects that make up the economic conditions of society? How does a change in motive forces of production begin the destruction of the old society? How was it that “British steam and science”.... “produced the greatest and... the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia” at the time Marx wrote in 1853?
- How is today’s economic revolution affecting the social struggle and destroying that which holds society together?

- How does the new class formed by electronics begin to change the character of the social struggle today? How is this an expression of the quantitative introduction of the new quality into the old process?

Unit IX – Revolution, the Line of March: part 2

Preparing for the political revolution and the reconstruction of society

Key terms

Objective

Subjective

Revolution

Economic revolution

Political revolution

Social revolution

Line of march

Key concepts

Economic changes in society are fought out in various ideological (“legal, political, religious, aesthetic, or philosophic”) forms.

Political revolution develops within the social revolution and accomplishes the goals of the objective struggle.

The shifting polarities in and intensification of the social struggle are the conditions within which the political and conscious aspects of the revolutionary process can be developed. But the social struggle against the destruction at the hands of the old system does not grow into a political struggle, that is, into a struggle for the political power to reconstruct society on a new foundation.

The economic revolution and social disruption destroy the foundation for the politics of the past period and open up the opportunity for politics that reflect the new class polarities.

The communist reconstruction of society (that is, around the program of this new class – with distribution according to need) is the solution to the objective demands of the social struggle.

In the revolutionary process, the leap to the new quality is not possible without the development of the subjective side of the process. This reconstruction of society will require a new consciousness and a new class in political power.

Readings

“Revolution – the line of march” (Institute resource paper # 6)

Excerpt from Engels, Introduction to Socialism: Utopian and Scientific

Marx and Engels, “Illusion of the epoch” (excerpt from The German Ideology)

Engels, Letter to Heinz Starkenburg, January 25, 1894 (esp. section 2a)

Excerpt from Lenin, What is to Be Done?

Peery, Nelson. Excerpt from *Entering an Epoch of Social Revolution* “The Revolutionary Process,” (pages 17-18)

Activities

Make the line of march of the revolution graphic by assigning current short readings that illustrate the philosophical and political points in the questions. (If you want suggestions for articles that do this, ask the Institute staff in Chicago for ideas.)

Discussion questions/points

- What is the political response of the ruling class to the new situation? In what ways do they act as a class?
- What is political struggle?
- Does the social struggle grow into the political struggle?
- Why is important for our class to think and act as a class, that is, to think and act politically? What will that mean? What are some of the steps to accomplishing that?
- Why is it important for revolutionaries to develop the consciousness about what the problem is, a vision of what the world could be, and a program for the reconstruction of society?

APPLYING THE SCIENCE OF SOCIETY

Unit X – Applying the Science of Society

From Racial Division to Class Unity: Is it Possible?

Key terms

Base / superstructure

Productive forces

Property relations

Productive relations

Objective / subjective

Quality/Quantity

Key concepts

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.” – K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1846 |

“There is a continual movement of growth in productive forces, of destruction in social relations, of formation of ideas; the only immutable thing is the abstraction of movement...” – Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 1847

The discovery of the Americas by Europeans truly heralded a new world: the expansion and transformation of the world economy, the shifting of the economic center of gravity from the Mediterranean and the East to Europe and the Americas, the rise of new political formations, new centers of political dominance and new ideas to justify and facilitate the development of the capitalism system.

African slavery was vital to the entire process. As such, racial ideology — linked first to nation and then to color — became a pivotal aspect of capitalist development.

By using the scientific method of dialectical and historical materialism we can understand that the ideology of race is in no way ‘natural’ nor simply the product of ‘wrong thinking’, but rather the expression of, as Marx wrote in *The Germany Ideology*, “the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas”.

Similarly, dialectical and historical materialism gives us the tools to understand that no idea can survive the destruction of the material foundation for its creation; as that foundation is swept away, the old idea itself shrinks in importance — it no longer explains or facilitates the changing material environment.

What is put in its place is up to us.

Discussion points

Reminder: The point here is to apply the concepts you have been learning, not to simply report on the information you read. Ask yourself what key concepts are being used in each one of these selections, work at articulating the way the concept has been used here in your own words, and think about how the concepts help us to understand the world around us and to assist us in our political work.

There is a short list of common readings, as well as readings that go with each of the three quotes below. Web addresses have been included for readings where available.

Supplementary materials

ISSS, Unit II, Dialectical Materialism, key terms and concepts

ISSS, Unit III, Base and Superstructure, Key terms and concepts

“Applying the Science of Society: The African Slave Trade, Capitalism and the ideology of race,” Institute Resource paper #7

“The only immutable thing is the abstraction of movement”: Quotes from Marx and Engels

Supplementary discussion questions and points

- “Race, and its companion ideas, racism and white supremacy, aren’t ideas that sprang up out of nowhere. Like all ideas and attitudes, they grew out of the material conditions of society that invented them. They were created along with the development of capitalism. They took root as the capitalist system became the dominant form of economic and social relations; they were consolidated and spread with the worldwide expansion of that system...” (Moving Onward, p. 1)

Supplementary readings

* Moving Onward, pp. 3-11

<http://www.speakersforanewamerica.com/movingon.1.php>

<http://www.speakersforanewamerica.com/movingon.2.php>

“Robots and globalization are doing away with the foundation of ‘racial’ unity. The world’s population is being reduced to two categories: the global rich and the global poor. The once privileged white worker, and in a descending order of privilege, all workers of the world are cast adrift by a new ruling class of multi-colored, supra-national financiers....Within this new class of poor lies the power to break the formula of control that has been used to exploit and divide the workers here and around the world.” (Moving Onward, p. 41)

“ Does this indicate that racism is on the decline? Not at all. It indicates that racism is changing its form. We must never forget that the brutality of racism is and was not always directed solely by color differences. The racist nationalism of the fascist Japanese government against the peoples of Asia, or the slaughter and enslavement of the Slavic peoples by fascist Germany are only recent examples. The thing that is clear is that racism, no matter its veneer, facilitates exploitation and is an integral part of capitalism. Therefore, as the needs of capitalism change, the forms of racism will change to accommodate it.

There is plenty of old-fashioned racism around and it will continue. The thing revolutionaries must grasp is that a new form of racism is developing. Change in social motion is difficult to grasp because the content begins to change before its form. This new racism is directed against the ‘ghetto Blacks’ the ‘illegal immigrant’ and the white, so-called ‘trailer trash.’ In other words, the class and cultural differences with the ruling class, not color, is emerging as the ideological basis for the savage economic assault against the poor. “(The Future is Up to Us, p. 93)

Moving Onward, pp. 41; 45-51.

Nelson Peery, *The Future is Up to Us*, pp. 90-93 (esp. 92-93)

<http://www.speakersforanewamerica.com/movingon.toc.php>

“Many brave and sincere people oppose racism. It is essential to do so... Yet to make a real change, it is not enough to simply oppose something. New ideas must be introduced and adopted that replace the old understandings, the old way of looking at things. They must be replaced as ideas in society with new ideas. New ideas do not arise on their own. They have to be introduced from outside of the struggle, brought into the process, struggled over and fought for.”(Moving Onward, p. 58)

“Some revolutionaries hold to the idea that race is still the predominant factor. Others are dropping the question of race and declaring that the today there is only the question of class. Race and racism are political weapons to facilitate class exploitation and should never be placed in opposition to class. It is not a question of either/or. Both factors are at play, and the question is which factor predominates under what circumstance and in which direction the general motion is going. While remaining fully conscious of the viability of the

race question, we revolutionaries concentrate on the question of class, which is the arising and progressive aspect. The political struggle is an art. It requires more than an adherence to theory or doctrine. It requires the ability to sum up, to make decisions on the basis of the temporary relationship of subjective and objective forces. This is nowhere more true than in the effort to unite the historically disparate sectors of the new, revolutionary class.” (“Race in America”, June 2006)

Moving Onward, pp. 54-60

<http://www.speakersforanewamerica.com/movingon.12.php>

Race in America: A Changing, but Central Question, Rally, Comrades!, June 2006

Supplementary further readings

The selections below can be used either as resources for the activities listed above or for further study.

Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire: Genesis*

This first of Galeano’s trilogy recounting Latin American history provides short and readable vignettes of the process of conquest of the Americas, the impact of enslavement on its history and development and moving accounts of the resistance that arose as a result.

Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro*, pp. 111-156.

The pages selected will provide the facilitator with a brief background of the second stage of conquest, the growth of sugar plantations, the acceleration of African slave trade and the dazzling profits which resulted for the ruling classes of the various nations.

Howard Zinn, *The People’s History of the United States*, pp. 23-58

These chapters provide greater detail of the relations between black slaves and white indentured servants briefly outlined in the pamphlet. Since he also quotes other sources which have researched into this topic, you will find additional resources to go to if you are interested.

James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, pp. 37-74; 171-200.

A key resource. The first chapter, '1493: The true meaning of Christopher Columbus' provides more background on the creation of a 'European' and 'white' identity, shows how much of the world was known prior to Columbus and describes the impact of conquest on the lives of indigenous peoples as well as on the configuration of world power.

Ivan Hannaford, "The Idiocy of Race", *Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 1994.

This article provides more background for the sections in the pamphlet on the development of the ideas of nation and race. See also Hannaford's book, *Race: History of an idea in the West*.

INSTITUTE RESOURCE PAPERS

The Institute Resource Papers are documents developed by the staff of the Institute. The current list of papers appears below:

Paper #1: Science and Doctrine

Paper #2: Marxism as the Scientific Current Within Communism

Paper #3: How and Why Things Change

Paper #4: The Shape of History: Historical Materialism, Electronics and Value

Paper #5: Revolutionaries – The Role of the Individual

Paper #6: Revolution – The Line of March

Paper #7: Applying the Science of Society: The African slave trade, capitalism, and the ideology of race

Paper #8: Applying the Science of Society: The World Prior to 1492

Paper #9: Historical Materialism: The Civil War in the United States

Paper #10: The Philosophy and Methodology of the Institute

Paper #11: New epoch calls for new doctrine — The doctrine of the leap