

**Lecture 7. Sociology 621. OUTLINE. September 28, 2011**  
**Critiques & reconstructions of classical historical materialism**

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Criticism 1) *The development thesis*: the forces of production do not have a systematic tendency to develop over time.

*Response*: sticky-downwards development

Criticism 2) *Fettering*: There is no general reason why class relations inevitably fetter of forces of production. A good argument may be possible for why a particular kind of class relations have this property, but there is no general argument for why all forms of class relations ultimately do this.

*Response*: shift from development-fettering to use-fettering

Criticism 3) *Economic reductionism*: HM is a form of economic reductionism, especially in the explanation of superstructures, and this is illegitimate.

*Response*: Restrictive versus inclusive historical materialism

Criticism 4) *Transformation*: Even if relations do fetter the forces of production, there is no reason to suppose that there will always emerge any historical agents capable of transforming those relations.

*Response*: shift from theory of historical trajectory to historical possibility

Criticism 5) *functional explanations*: Functional explanations in social science are not legitimate forms of explanation, both as they apply to the relations of production and to the superstructure.

*Response*: shift from functional optimality to functional compatibility and functional superiority arguments.