

**Sociology 621 Lectures 1 & 2, September 3 & 5, 2013. Marxism as an Emancipatory Social Science
OUTLINE**

INTRODUCTION: logistics of the course

I. Prologue: What this course is about

1. The history of the course
2. The Marxist Tradition.
3. My own relationship to the material.
4. Many Marxisms.
5. Learning the Language of Marxism.

II. Critical + Emancipatory + Social + Science

1. Foundations:

Foundational claim of *critical* social science: *Many forms of human suffering and many deficits in human flourishing are the result of existing institutions and social structures.*

Foundational claim of *emancipatory* social science: *Transforming those institutions and structures has the potential to reduce human suffering and expand the possibilities for human flourishing.*

Marxian Variant

Foundational critical thesis: *Many forms of human suffering and many deficits in human flourishing are the result of the class structure and dynamics of capitalism.*

Foundational emancipatory Thesis: *Transcending capitalism by creating a democratic-egalitarian political economy has the potential to reduce human suffering and expand the possibilities for human flourishing.*

2. Goals of Emancipatory Social Science

3. Reflexivity

4. Science

5. Summing up:

The “emancipatory” in emancipatory social science → *choice of questions to ask*

The “social science” in emancipatory social science → *a methodology for producing answers*

III. What kind of Critical Emancipatory theory is Marxism?

1. Emancipatory social transformation is possible.
2. Agents for such transformation come from within the game
3. Transformation comes through struggle
4. Punchline: Oppressed people can transform the conditions of their own oppression through struggle. BUT
5. Constraints: They do so under constraints “not of their choosing” which can thwart their efforts
6. Knowledge: Therefore: *to effectively transform the world in an emancipatory way we must understand the nature of the constraints themselves and how to transform them.*

IV. Four tasks of Emancipatory Social Science: Normative foundations; diagnosis and critique of the world as it exists; envisioning viable alternatives; and, a theory of transformation

V. Task #1: Normative Foundations

Four Principles

Equality: In a just society all persons would have broadly equal access to the material and social means necessary to live a flourishing life.

Democracy: In a fully democratic society, all people would have broadly equal access to the necessary means to participate meaningfully in decisions about things which affect their lives.

Community/Solidarity: Community/solidarity expresses the principle that people ought to cooperate with each other not simply because what they personally get out of it, but also out of a real commitment to the wellbeing of others.

Sustainability: Future generations should have access to the social and material means to live flourishing lives at least at the same level as the present generation.