

**Sociology 621 Lecture 3 January 25, 2017. Critique of capitalism  
OUTLINE**

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**1. The three principles (reprise):** Equality/fairness, Democracy/freedom, Community/Solidarity

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

Democracy/freedom: *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.*

**2. The critique of capitalism**

Equality/fairness: *Capitalism inherently generates massively unequal access to the material conditions needed to live flourishing lives.*

- The levels of inequality in both income and wealth in all capitalist economies systematically violate egalitarian principles of social justice.
- The levels of inequality generated by capitalism are such that some people suffer absolute deprivations of the conditions to live flourishing lives, not simply unequal access to those conditions.

Democracy/freedom: *Capitalism generates severe deficits in realizing democratic values by excluding crucial decisions from public deliberation, allowing private wealth to affect access to political power, and allowing workplace dictatorships. It undermines freedom by depriving many people of the means to put life plans into practice*

Community/Solidarity: *Capitalism fosters motivations and practices that are corrosive of the values of community and solidarity.*

**3. An alternative way of framing the Principles: Each principle includes a value and an**

**Value: the good society**

**Fairness: the just society**

Flourishing	A good society fosters conditions for human flourishing	Equal access to the social and material conditions necessary to live a flourishing life
Self-determination	A good society enables people to have control over their own lives	Equal access to the necessary means to participate in decisions over conditions that affect one's life
solidarity	A good society is one in which people cooperate with each other not simply because of what they get out of it but because of concern for the wellbeing of others and the moral obligation not to be a free rider	Equal access to caring relations and solidaristic community.

**4. Diagnosis & Critique of capitalism**

**4.1. Flourishing and equality**

**Flourishing:** *Capitalism perpetuates widespread deficits in human flourishing*

- Marxist cultural analysis: capitalism undermines flourishing – self-realization – for elites as well as masses.
- Ecological Marxism: *Capitalism inherently threatens the quality of the environment and thus the conditions for human flourishing because of imperatives for consumerism and endless growth.*

**Equality:** *Capitalism inherently generates levels of inequality in income and wealth that systematically violate social justice: some people have much greater access to the conditions to live a flourishing life than others.*

- *Exploitation: inequality in capitalism is itself a cause of poverty. capitalism perpetuates eliminable forms of human suffering.*
- *Inequality and social justice: capitalism inherently violates the equal access principle*

#### 4.2 Self-determination and Democracy

**Self-determination.** *Capitalism creates illusions of self-determination – freedom – but limits the freedom of everyone by the ways its dynamics impose severe constraints on the lives people are able to live.*

- *Chaos, crisis and irrationality: this undermines self-determination*

**Democracy.** *Capitalism generates severe deficits in realizing democratic values by excluding crucial decisions from public deliberation, by allowing private wealth to affect access to political power, and by allowing workplace dictatorships.*

#### 4.3 Community/Solidarity: Competition and commodification within capitalism undermine community/solidarity.

Alternative way of clustering the 11 critiques of capitalism in *Envisioning Real Utopias*

<b>Exploitation</b>	<b>Injustice</b>
1. <i>Capitalist class relations perpetuate eliminable forms of human suffering.</i>	6. <i>Capitalism violates liberal egalitarian principles of social justice.</i>
2. <i>Capitalism blocks the universalization of conditions for expansive human flourishing.</i>	<b>Irrationality</b>
<b>Domination</b>	7. <i>Capitalism is inefficient in certain crucial respects.</i>
3. <i>Capitalism perpetuates eliminable deficits in individual freedom and autonomy.</i>	8. <i>Capitalism is environmentally destructive.</i>
4. <i>Capitalism, in a world of nation states, fuels militarism and imperialism.</i>	9. <i>Capitalism has a systematic bias towards consumerism.</i>
5. <i>Capitalism limits democracy.</i>	10. <i>Capitalist commodification threatens important broadly held values.</i>
	11. <i>Capitalism corrodes community.</i>