

Alliance for Workers' Liberty

Capital tutors' school

This plan is adapted and abridged from one used for a *Capital* tutors' school in Nottingham, 20/21 April 2002, taking into account the comments made by the participants in that school.

Preliminaries

Participants are asked to read through the course scheme, at:
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/capital/course.htm>
and the "crib sheets" on each item provided with that course scheme.

In the course scheme, the general plan of each session is as follows. The session will start with a brief introduction to the issues under study, and how they relate to previous and later sessions.

Then time can be given for reading: in every session except week 8 the basic reading is short enough to be done then and there if need be.

The class is then divided into small groups - of two, three, or four - to study the discussion points and write responses with felt-tip pens on large sheets of paper.

Finally, the different responses are stuck up on the wall, and the whole class comes together to discuss them. The tutor sums up, highlighting the main points from the session and providing pointers to what will be discussed in the next session.

Week 1: The value problem

Reading: Rühle chapter 1 sections 1 and 2; Marx chapter 1 sections 1 and 2

Week 2: The value form and money

Reading: Rühle chapter 1 section 3 and chapters 2 and 3; Marx chapter 1 section 3 and chapters 2 and 3

Week 3: Communism and commodity fetishism

Reading: Rühle chapter 1 section 4; Marx chapter 1 section 4

Week 4: The transformation of money into capital

Reading: Rühle chapter 4; Marx, chapters 4, 5 and 6

Week 5: Exploitation and the struggle over the length of the working day

Reading: Rühle chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9; Marx chapters 7 to 11

Week 6: Cooperation and manufacture

Reading: Rühle chapters 10 to 12; Marx chapters 12 to 14

Week 7: The capitalist factory

Reading: Rühle chapter 13; Marx chapter 15

Week 8: Productive and unproductive labour. Wages. Accumulation of capital

Reading: Rühle chapters 14 to 20, 21 to 23, and end of 24; Marx chapters 16 to 25, and 32.

Week 9: Primitive accumulation of capital

Reading: Rühle chapter 24; Marx chapters 26 to 31.

Week 10: Marx's analysis vs. bourgeois alternatives and critiques

Activity 1: Introduction

Aims: To introduce school participants to each other; to develop a common understanding of the aims of the course; to define what participants hope to get out of the school.

Task: All participants to introduce themselves. The participants then divide into pairs. Each pair writes down, in felt-tip pen on a large sheet of paper:

- a) Their experiences of participating in or running classes on Capital;
- b) What they have got out of previous classes they have participated in or run;
- c) Lessons they have learned from those previous classes which they can bring into this course;
- d) What they want to learn from this school,

We post up the results on the wall and discuss them.

Activity 2: Techniques

Aims: To train ourselves in a common set of techniques to be used in running the sessions.

Task: Each participant reads the outline, above, and the "Session Plan" blank at the end of these notes. The participants then divide into pairs. Each pair writes down, in felt-tip pen on a large sheet of paper, a list of dos and don'ts for planning and running sessions.

We post up the results on the wall and discuss them.

Activity 3: Value theory

Aims: To improve our understanding of the most difficult aspect of *Capital* volume 1. To practice preparing a session.

Task: Look at the list of discussion points used in session 1 (below). Working in pairs, draft a *one-sentence* response to each discussion point. Do this without reference to the "crib sheet". Write your sentences in felt-tip pen on a large sheet of paper. We then post the results on the wall, alongside the "crib sheet", and discuss them.

Activity 4: Planning

Aim: To plan at least one session which you may introduce.

Task: Each participant should choose one of the ten sessions which she or he may introduce. Group ourselves into pairs: where possible, pair off with someone who has chosen session which you may also introduce. Each pair writes session plans for the two sessions they will introduce. We circulate the session plans and discuss them.

Activity 5: Debrief

Aim: To gather opinions on today's school, and how it might be done better.

Task: Discuss opinions of the school.

For Activity 3, above

Week 1: The value problem.

Rühle part 1 sections 1 and 2; Marx chapter 1 sections 1 and 2.

1. How would you define:

- commodity
- use-value
- value
- exchange-value
- abstract labour, or average social labour?

Crib-sheet

2. Why is average social labour the substance of value? What arguments against this theory do you know, and how would you answer them?

Crib-sheet

3. Can you think of any useful things which are products of human labour but not commodities?

Crib-sheet

4. What is 'the twofold nature of the labour embodied in commodities'? Why do you think Marx believed that this was 'the pivot on which a clear comprehension of political economy turns'?

***Capital* course - outline session plan**

SESSION:
The students' starting point - what they will have learned in the previous session, and questions left open from that session
Key points you want the students to learn in your session
What you will say in your introduction (maximum three points)
Discussion points and one-sentence indications of the sort of answers you hope for (you can copy these from the course scheme)
Points to reinforce in your summing up
Issues and open questions to be flagged up for the next session
Hand-outs, flip-charts, and "props" to prepare