**Paper 3 – Theory and Methods**

**Marxism**

Possible questions

**10 marks**

* Outline and explain two criticisms of Marxist views of society.

**20 marks**

Marxists see society as based on conflict between social classes. Those who own the means of production are able to exploit those who do not and are also able to impose their views on society. However, different Marxists have different views about the nature of capitalist society and about how social change occurs.

Applying material from Item B2 and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness of Marxist approaches in understanding society..

Marxist see class as a fundamental division in society, in which the proletariat are exploited by the capitalist owners of the means of production. The capitalist class maintain their dominance partly by force and partly by ideological control through the media, the education system and so on. However, Marxists predict that ultimately, the proletariat will overthrow capitalism by means of a revolution. For Marxists, social change is not the gradual evolutionary process seen by consensus theories. However, other sociologists argue that class is not the only basis for inequality and that revolutions have failed to occur in advanced capitalist societies.

Applying material from item B9 and your own knowledge evaluate the contribution of different Marxist theorists to understanding Society.

**What you need to know about Marxism for paper 3**

The difference between consensus and conflict theories of society, including gMarxism.

Suggested content………

Humanistic and scientific Marxism

Marxist concepts:

Mode of production

Economic base

Superstructure

How capitalism works through class consciousness, alienation and ideology.

Links to communism.

Criticisms of Marx

Gramsci and hegemony and evaluation

Althusser’ structural Marxism and criticisms of this,

Useful mindmaps….. 1. What the theory is using Key Terms

2. Strengths and Criticisms

Evaluation problems with determinism and predictions.

Important concepts. At the beginning of human history, no classes, no private ownership so no exploitation. Everyone works and everything is share. As soon as someone owns production then there is exploitation. **Ancient** society has slaves. **Feudal** society has serfs tied to the land. **Capitalist** society has free wage labourers.

**Capitalism** has a division between proletariat (who are legally free) and bourgeoisie. Proletariat are not really free as have to **sell their labour power** to the bourgeoisie and they do not receive the profits they raise. Competition forces low wages to raise profits.

The classes are polarised. Members of the proletariat become **conscious** of how bad their lives are, this is called ‘**class consciousness’** as they become aware of need to overthrow capitalism.

**Ideology** – bourgeoisie aim to control the ideas of the proletariat. Ideas in society are those of the dominant class. This can create a **false consciousness**.

**Alienation** – this comes from loss of control and then separation from our true nature.,

**Revolution and communism** – the state exists to protect the interests of the ruling class. Marx thinks that the proletariat will overthrow the bourgeoisie and become the first majority to overthrow a minority. The state and class will disappear, private ownership and exploitation will disappear.

Useful terms

**Mode of production** (forces and relations of production)

**Economic base of society –** this determines all other features of society.

**Superstructures** all the bits of society that come from this base.

Materialism = idea that humans are beings with needs

How are these met?

Through history….unaided human labour, then tools, machines, human co-operation and social relations of production.

This creates - 1. A class who owns means of production

 2. A class of labourers.

**Comparison to Functionalism**

Similar to Durkheim - both could see harm caused my modern Industrial Society. Both believed that you could understand society scientifically.

Different because Marx did not see progress as smooth and gradual. Saw historical change as a process where capitalism would increase human misery before giving may to a classless society where humans would be free.

Evaluation – problems with Marx’s view of class

Humanistic Marxism

Scientific / Structural Marxism

Other Marxist Theories

Gramsci and hegemony **humanistic Marxism**

**Hegemony** means ideological or moral leadership. This idea is used to explain how the ruling class keep their position. They use coercion (force) and **hegemony -** ideas and values to trick the weaker class into thinking their stronger class should be in power. The working class can only win the battle by producing their own intellectuals who would put together a different vision of how society should work. This would be called the ‘**counter hegemony’**  it would be based on socialist rather than capitalist values.

Evaluation of Althusser

Althusser’s **structuralist** Marxism

Humanist Marxists believe that humans can change the course of history. **Structuralist** Marxists believe that social structures shape history and these could be studied scientifically. Althusser is the most important structural Marxist. He sees society as having 3 structures or Levels, draw these below. Draw Craib’s analogy next to it and explain.

What can you remember about RSAs and ISAs?

How does Althusser criticise humanist Marxism?

Evaluation of Gramsci