

## Lesson Plan: Marxist Theories and Climate Change

As an **Undergraduate Economics** or **Social Sciences** teacher, you can use this set of computer-based tools to help you in teaching social theories in Marxism.

This lesson plan will allow you to introduce Marxism in social theory taught across Sociology, Political Science, Economics, and other disciplines. It includes teaching the socio-economic ideologies presented in *Das Kapital* which can serve as a prelude to discussions on contemporary social problems. By describing the **foundations of Marx's theory of Capitalism** and its **historical development**, you can use this lesson plan to explain capitalism's influence on climate change. This lesson plan includes resources to teach your students about **carbon markets** and to use Marxist concepts to evaluate the effect of carbon markets on present day capitalism.

Thus, the use of this lesson plan allows you to integrate the teaching of a climate science topic with a core topic in **Economics** or **Social Sciences**.

Use this lesson plan to help your students find answers to:

- What are Marx's main tenets about Capitalism?
- What are Marx's fundamental problems with Capitalism?
- What were Marx's ideas to reform Capitalism?
- Does Marxist theory support carbon markets and the greening of Capitalism?

### About the Lesson Plan

**Grade Level:** Undergraduate

**Discipline:** Economics, Social Sciences

**Topic(s) in Discipline:** Marxist Theory of Capitalism, *Das Kapital*, Theory of Value, Working Class, Labor Time, Historical Materialism, Greening Capitalism, Climate Capitalism

**Climate Topic:** Energy, Economics and Climate Change; Policies, Politics and Environmental Governance

**Location:** Global

**Access:** Online, Offline

**Language(s):** English

**Approximate Time Required:** 120 min

# 1 Contents

## 1. Readings (20 min)

A news article to introduce Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* and his theory of Capitalism.

This can be accessed at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2017-39837515>

A reading to discuss Marx's life and works, and the economic and philosophical ideologies proposed by him.

This can be accessed at:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marx/>

## 2. Video lecture (45 min)

A video lecture to explain the basis of Marx's Capitalist Theory. This is a part of a series of lectures about Marxist Theories.

This can be accessed at:

<https://oyc.yale.edu/political-science/plsc-118/lecture-10>

## 3. Video (~12 min)

A video interview to discuss the historical evolution of Marx's Capitalist Theory in the context of climate change.

This can be accessed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-i242fEKyY>

#### 4. Reading (45 min)

A research article about a Marxist assessment of carbon markets and their role in the evolution of global capitalism.

This can be accessed at:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239735675\\_Greening\\_Capitalism\\_A\\_Marxist\\_Critique\\_of\\_Carbon\\_Markets](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239735675_Greening_Capitalism_A_Marxist_Critique_of_Carbon_Markets)

#### 5. Suggested questions/assignments for learning evaluation

- What are Marx's main tenets about Capitalism?
- What are Marx's fundamental problems with Capitalism?
- What were Marx's ideas to reform Capitalism?
- Does Marxist theory support carbon markets and the greening of Capitalism?

## 2 Step-by-step User Guide

Here is a step-by-step guide to using this lesson plan in the classroom/laboratory. We have suggested these steps as a possible plan of action. You may customize the lesson plan according to your preferences and requirements.

## 1. Topic introduction and discussion

Use the brief write-up, '[What is Marx's Das Kapital?](#)' by Brian Wheeler for BBC, to introduce the topic of Marxist Theory of Capitalism. Use the reading to describe the socio-political circumstances of when the *Das Kapital* was written, the essential ideas promulgated by it, and how the historical context of the Marxist Theory of Capitalism has evolved over time.

This reading can be accessed at:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2017-39837515>

Use the reading, '[Karl Marx](#)' by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, to describe the socio-political contexts in Karl Marx's biography and to initiate a discussion about his written works. Use the sub-sections to summarize the Marxist ideologies in his early writings, about economics, the theory of history, and the morality in his works. Finally, encourage your students to debate the juxtaposition of his ideas about capitalism and communism.

This reading can be accessed at:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marx/>

## 2. Extend understanding

Use the video lecture, '[Marx's Theory of Capitalism](#)' by Prof Shapiro, Yale University, to explain the basis of Marx's theory of Capitalism around what defines value and how wealth can be created. Explain how this can be viewed from both a micro and macro socio-economic standpoint. Use the video lecture to describe Marx's definition of a working class and modes of production. Explain the differences in class-in-itself and class-for-itself in capitalist society. Use the lecture to elaborate on the use of both human and non-human resources, and necessary and surplus labor time, in capitalism.

Note: This video lecture is the first of two lectures that describe Marx's ideologies of Capitalism and Historical Materialism. This lecture is available to download in audio and video formats, has downloadable lecture notes and suggestions for assignments to enhance learning.

This video lecture is available at:

<https://oyc.yale.edu/political-science/plsc-118/lecture-10>

### 3. Discuss further

Use the video interview, '[Marxist theory: Relevant to climate change today?](#)' by Prof Graham Murdock, Loughborough University, UK, to discuss the impact of capitalism on climate change. Draw attention to Marx's commentary on the breakdown of the relationship of humans with nature due the industrialization of agricultural practices. Further, discuss how Marx's analysis on ecology could also provide the solutions to problems in the context of climate change.

This video can be accessed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-i242fEKyY>

### 4. Assignment

Carbon markets are important for the global efforts to address climate change. Use the paper '[Greening Capitalism? A Marxist Critique of Carbon Markets](#)' by Steffen Böhm et al, Organization Studies (2012) to evaluate carbon markets. Begin by explaining that the paper reviews four Marxist concepts- metabolic rift; capitalism as world ecology; uneven development and accumulation through dispossession; and sub-imperialism for this analyzing carbon markets. Instruct your students to read the research paper and summarize it in an in-class discussion. Use the article's references to introduce the concept of 'climate capitalism'. Finally, initiate a debate on how carbon markets could affect capitalist dynamics to achieve a sustainable global economy.

This research paper is made available by the author at:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239735675\\_Greening\\_Capitalism\\_A\\_Marxist\\_Critique\\_of\\_Carbon\\_Markets](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/239735675_Greening_Capitalism_A_Marxist_Critique_of_Carbon_Markets)

### 5. Questions/Assignments

Use the tools and the concepts learned so far to discuss and determine answers to the following questions:

- What are Marx's main tenets about Capitalism?
- What are Marx's fundamental problems with Capitalism?
- What were Marx's ideas to reform Capitalism?
- Does Marxist theory support carbon markets and the greening of Capitalism?

## 3 Learning Outcomes

The tools in this lesson plan will enable students to:

- learn about Karl Marx's life and works
- understand the Marxist theory of Capitalism
- describe the historical development of the Marxist theory of Capitalism
- explain the impact of capitalism on climate change
- discuss how carbon markets influence Capitalism

## 5 Credits/Copyrights

All the teaching tools in our collated list are owned by the corresponding creators/authors/organizations as listed on their websites. Please view the individual copyright and ownership details for each tool by following the individual links provided. We have selected and analyzed the tools that align with the overall objective of our project and have provided the corresponding links. We do not claim ownership of or responsibility/liability for any of the listed tools.

**1. Reading; 'What is Marx's Das Kapital?'**

By Brian Wheeler for the [BBC](#)

**2. Reading; 'Karl Marx'**

Provided by the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)

**3. Video lecture; 'Marx's Theory of Capitalism'**

Presented by [Professor Ian Shapiro, Yale University](#)

**4. Video; 'Marxist theory: Relevant to climate change today?'**

By [Professor Graham Murdock](#), Loughborough University, UK, on [CTGN](#).

**5. Reading; 'Greening Capitalism? A Marxist Critique of Carbon Markets'**

[Böhm, Steffen & Misoczky, Maria & Moog, Sandra. \(2012\). Greening Capitalism? A Marxist Critique of Carbon Markets. Organization Studies. 33. 1617-1638. 10.1177/0170840612463326.](#)