

I. Capitalism: Basic structure & dynamics

1. A note on concepts & definitions

- Words // Levels of abstraction of a definition // Concepts and Theories

2. Capitalism: the contrast space

- Mode of production vs other ways of classifying societies.
- Capitalism vs other modes of production

3. Two approaches within the Marxist tradition for developing a definition of capitalism

3.1 Capitalism as a distinctive form of market society:

- *Simple commodity production*: C – M – C
- *Capitalist commodity production*: M – C – M'.

3.2. Capitalism as a distinctive organization of production: the basic structural definition

- **Class relations // Economic coordination**

3.3 Complexity

- Capitalism is mixed with a variety of non-capitalist forms: hybrid systems
- There are many different *types of capitalism* -- laundry list versus theoretical typology

4. Capitalism: core dynamics

4.1. The key sources of dynamism

- (1) *Capitalist competition* : Lower costs and increase productivity // New products & markets
- (2) *Class conflict*

4.2 Contradictions within these dynamics

Definition: (1) Chains of effects of a given process disrupt the functioning of the process. (2) Multiple functional requirements of system in which satisfying one conditions undermines another.

4.3 The “surplus absorption” problem

4.4 An ambiguity in the analysis: From profits to relentless capital accumulation

Three explanations for capitalist imperatives of growth:

- Economies of scale
- Aggregate political and economic instability from lack of growth
- Motivations of capitalists, rather than structural imperatives

II. Capitalism: Critique

1. Two ways to Criticize institutions

- Capitalism generates *harms* and *irrationalities* of various sorts.
- Capitalism generates *injustices*.

2. The four principles (reprise): Equality, Democracy, Community/Solidarity, Sustainability

3. Diagnosis & Critique of capitalism

3.1 Equality: *Capitalism inherently generates levels of economic inequality that systematically violate social justice.*

3.2 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.*

3.3 Community/Solidarity: *Competition and commodification within capitalism undermine community/solidarity.*

3.4 Sustainability: *Capitalism inherently threatens the quality of the environment for future generations because of imperatives for consumerism and endless growth*

4. The problem of the “irrationality” of capitalism