

FMS essay 1 autumn 2010

12626003 Marx on the origins of capitalism

The essay contains a good deal of information; however, at the moment your response does not address the question posed – concerning the *origins* of capitalism. Take care to analyse the question and formulate an argument in response to it as specifically as possible. The essay question asks about the origins of capitalism and Marx's account of this. Your response should focus on Marx's own argument, contemporary debate about this, and perhaps engage in a comparison with other approaches to the question. There is a literature on this topic that you don't seem to have looked at.

More generally, your introduction should tell the reader how you've understood the question and should outline how you plan to respond to it. The essay should then comprise a series of interlinked points that build a case. Take care to write short sentences (don't try to get too many things into once sentence!). Proofread your work aloud to yourself to check expression.

Suggested mark 47%

12720302 Marx on the origins of capitalism

This essay is a good piece of work: the introduction works well to frame the argument, and the main body of the piece is evidence of wide reading and understanding. You provide a good and fairly precise account of Marx's arguments, though you could do more to detail the appropriation of land from the peasantry via enclosure – 'so called primitive accumulation'. However, you do get hold of Marx's argument for the historical specificity of capitalism. In conclusion you could do more to assess the argument, eg by comparing Marx's case with other rival accounts of the origins of capitalism.

Always give precise page references when quoting, and avoid single sentence paragraphs.

Suggested mark: 62%

12416118 Diamond on the rise of agriculture

A good essay: you give a clear account of Diamond's thesis and present several challenges to it in a concise and cogent manner.

Suggested mark: 66%

99007457 Diamond on the rise of agriculture

This piece of work contains lots of ideas relevant to the question; however, at the moment it reads more like notes than as a finished piece of work. You need to develop and sustain your points with arguments and evidence. The essay does not have an introduction, and contains several forward

slashes (/) where it seems you can't quite decide on how to make your case. It is your essay, the task is to decide on the argument you want to make and then work out the best way to present the case for it.

Punctuate properly and avoid single sentence paragraphs.

Suggested mark: 42%

12718992 Marx on the origins of capitalism

This essay contains lots of critical questions pertinent to the topic, but does not always follow through on those questions by developing a sustained argument in response to them. Take time to develop your points. Use quotation more sparingly: quotes should help to capture particularly pithy arguments made by others; they should not simply be included in order to complete your own sentences! Be careful not to make sweeping statements (eg 'Marx does not discuss values' p5). _

At pp 3-4 you try to locate the origins of capitalism in the process of enclosure of land. You need to look rather more closely at Marx's argument here: a rise in the price of wool is not per se indicative of a transformation in the 'forces of production'. You seem to have missed the force of this: the core issue in Marxist debates about the transition is whether changes in productive forces engendered transformation of the mode of production, or whether changes in the relations of production came first (as in, eg, changed rights in land). I don't understand your point (p5) about sheep being problematic!

Suggested mark: 50%

12517744 military technology and competition between European states

This is an interesting discussion of competition and its role in technological development, but what is the question? To my recollection this essay is not quite an answer to it...

Take care to use 'affect' and 'effect' correctly, and please write in paragraphs!

Suggested mark: 55?

12725901 is there a direction to history?

This is good, thoughtful and critical work that takes the question and attempts a response, building in some fruitful insights about the work of Marx and Durkheim. To be more accomplished the essay would need a more developed introduction: where does the idea that history has a direction come from? How old is this idea? In what ways and with what effects does it animate modern social theory? That is, tell your reader why the question is important. Once you've set this up, try to work toward closer analysis of the arguments of Marx, Durkheim, or modernisation theorists (all of whom are mentioned at the moment, but in passing – perhaps focus on one key example?); this will show

your reader how the idea of a direction to history animates some of the key ideas in modern social science, and will help to show up how contested and contestable is this idea.

Suggested mark: 60%