

Marxism 101 Timeline (1800-1900)

This exercise helps participants more deeply understand the context in which Marx was writing and organizing. Center for Political Education also uses this exercise as an opportunity to help participants think about the development of this work within a context of international struggle to help highlight how Marx was influenced by class struggles outside of his immediate context as well as how his work influenced those struggles. Further, we find that charting Marx's forced migration across Europe amplifies the ways his work challenged the power structures under which he lived.

This particular timeline covers Marx's lifetime, which is why it was selected for use in our first session. We selected events that helped amplify the core concepts and approach we took to this class, although many other events would be just as relevant to use. Facilitators should take care to select events to put on the timeline that are relevant for the areas of work in which participants are organizing (what were struggles in labor, housing, education, etc. during this period?), or that is reflective of participants countries of origin, or similar factors directly related to their experiences.

Goals:

- help participants expand their knowledge of Karl Marx's life and the context in which he developed his thought
- help participants situate Marx's work within a global historical context
- help situate Marx's work within a context of the areas of most concern to participants

Materials:

- prepared timeline (a long roll of paper, tape on a wall, etc.) with 25 year periods marked off from 1800 to 1900
- post-its with events on them
- support materials (timelines, readings, pictures, etc. to provide context cues to the participants)

Method:

- Begin with timeline that has some events already on it that can serve as context cues for participants
- Pass out post-its with additional events written on them that are not already on the timeline (depending on how many participants there are, either pass out one event per participant, or give an event to a small team of people to place collaboratively). *NOTE:* for people who are not able to see the post-its or who do not read, assign someone to read the event to them and work with them to place the event on the timeline.
- Ask participants to consider the event and place it in the place on the timeline where they think it belongs (or to make a best guess).
- After all the events are placed on the timeline, walk participants through the timeline, asking for feedback from the group about the accuracy of the placement, adding additional relevant context, and drawing connections between other items on the timeline.

Sample Events to Have Pre-Written on the Timeline

(event to be placed on the timeline and correct year in red, additional context in black)

Marx born (1818)

Marx is born May 5, 1818 in Trier, Prussia—what is now Germany. In 1835, (at 17 years old) he became a student of philosophy and literature, where he began participating in radical activities (father compelled him to move to University of Berlin for more serious study). Engaged to Jenny Von Westphalen in 1836 in Trier on a

break from school.

Meets Friedrich Engels, (1842)

Begins writing for radical newspaper *Rheinische Zeitung* (*Rhineland News*) (1842)

Marx works as a journalist and later editor for a radical newspaper that was frequently censored by government censors. This is where Marx first began outlining his early thoughts on socialism and sharpening his analysis of political economy.

Marries Jenny Von Westphalen (1843)

Moves to Paris (1843)

Marx is forced to leave Prussia after *Rheinische Zeitung* banned by government because of an article criticizing the Russian monarchy. In Paris Marx becomes the co-editor of *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (*German-French Annals*). It's in this publication that Marx writes "Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" and "On the Jewish Question". Only one issue of the journal is published. Marx moves to another radical newspaper, *Vorwärts!* (*Forward!*), a newspaper attached to the League of the Just (underground organization of workers and artisans)

Marx and Engels in Brussels (1845-1848)

Marx moves from France after *Forward!* shut down. Moves on to Brussels, under the promise not to publish political writings. Engels soon joins him. Begins working on *The German Ideology* (not published until 1932) after meeting with Chartists and continuing to develop his concept of historical materialism.

Mexican-American War (1846-1848)

Follows US forcibly annexing Texas from Mexico. Resulted in Mexico giving up Alta California, the rest of Texas, Santa Fe de Nuevo Mexico.

Marx and Engels back to Prussia (1848-1849)

While they are there, they are working on their analyses, but also involved in revolutionary uprisings through the Communist League.

Revolutions of 1848 (1848)

Most widespread wave of revolutions in European history. Revolutionary uprisings (mostly) against feudalism in places including Vienna, Berlin, Paris, and what's now Budapest.

Marx loses Prussian citizenship, is deported, moves to London (1849)

Engels soon moves to England (Manchester) to help with publishing political journal; takes up work in a mill in which his father owns shares to offer financial support to Marx writing *Capital* and his own writing project.

Cologne 1848-1849

Marx and Engels move to Cologne. Marx writes and distributes "Demands of the Communist Party in Germany" (essentially the 10 point program from *Communist Manifesto*). Marx also starts the *Neue Rheinsche Zeitung* (*The New Rhineland News*).

Louis Bonaparte declares self president for life of France (1851)

President of the French Second Republic. Initially elected by popular vote, but when the constitution prevented him from running for a second term, he staged a coup and took over. He was brought down by the Franco-

Prussian War.

Indian War of Independence against East India Co. (1857)

Rebellion against the British East India Company, posing severe threat to British imperial power.

Darwin's Origin of Species published (1859)

Foundational text in science of evolutionary biology. Written by Darwin, a contemporary of Karl Marx. Marx was influenced by Darwin's work on natural selection influenced Marx's concept of historical materialism.

Unification of Germany (1871)

Germany became a single republic after the French lost in the Franco-Prussian war.

Kabiliye Revolt (1871-1872)

One of the most intense rebellions by local Algerian people against French colonization. The uprising was set off when the colonial government tried to extend its authority to tribes that had previously not been under its control. The Kabiliye Revolt happened at the same time as the Paris Commune, and some captured Algerian insurrectionists and Paris communards ended up imprisoned together.

Queen Victoria claims empire over India (1877)

Despite already being under British control, then Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, had Victoria proclaimed empress to additionally bind the British crown to India.

Marx dies in London (1883)

Following years of poor health, Marx dies in exile in London. He is buried in Highgate Cemetery in London in a section reserved for atheists.

Berlin Conference (1884-1885)

Conference during which European countries collaborated to divide up Africa for colonization. Beginning of the “scramble for Africa”.

Engels dies in London (1895)

Of throat cancer.

Spanish American War (1898)

Initiated by the attack on the USS Maine in Havana Harbor. US intervened in Cuban War of Independence, seized Spain's colonies in the Pacific, which ultimately led to conflicts including the Philippine-American War.

Russian Revolution (1905)

First attempt at revolution by the peasantry and working class that put forward initial revolutionary theory that eventually led to Russian Revolution of 1917.

Sample Events to Put on Post-its

Marx and Engels set up the Communist Correspondence Committee in Brussels (1846)

They do this in an effort to ideologically and organizationally unite socialists and politically aware workers in different countries as an above ground organization of workers and artisans.

Manifesto of the Communist Party published (1848)

Marx and Engels write this work as the platform of the Communist League workers association in Germany as its plan of action and to forward the principle that history of society is the history of class struggle.

A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy is published (1859)

This work was foundational to the development of Marx's analysis which later developed into what would become Capital. Where Marx lays out economic interpretation of history and makes first important interventions into classical political economy (Adam Smith, and David Ricardo).

US Civil War (1861-1865)

First International (1864-1876)

International Workingmen's Association was an international organization that operated as a bit of an umbrella for socialist, communist, and anarchist groups and trade unions focused on class struggle. Founded in London and had first congress in Geneva in 1866.

Capital Volume I is published (1867)

Paris Commune (1871)

Socialist government that ruled Paris following the defeat to Louis Bonaparte and the collapse of the French Second Empire. Marx, Engels, and others saw the Commune as something of a model for what communism could look like. Engels and Lenin both described as the first dictatorship of the proletariat.

Battle of the Little Big Horn (Custer's Last Stand) (1876)

War between the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho and the United States. A decisive victory for the indigenous forces.

Second International (1889-1916)

After the dissolution of First International, the Second International emerged as a Socialist International. The formation excluded anarchists. Associated with the initiation of May Day and the Russian Revolution, also campaigned for the 8-hour work day.

First global May Day (1890)

International Worker's Day. Chosen by the 2nd International on this day to commemorate the Haymarket Uprising in Chicago to demonstrate for the 8-hour working day, working class demands, and for universal peace.