

Questions to Consider When Reading Weber

1. How does Weber define capitalism? How does Marx? What are the similarities and the differences? How do they matter for the analysis?
2. How does Weber's conception of society before capitalism ("economic traditionalism") compare with Marx's conception of society before capitalism? For Marx, how does society progress from feudalism to capitalism? For Weber?
3. What is the spirit of capitalism? How is the spirit of capitalism related to the capitalist economic system? What is the relationship of particular religious beliefs to the spirit of capitalism?
4. What is a calling? Is it necessary to hold particular religious beliefs in order to have a calling?
5. What specifically in the ideas of particular Protestant sects facilitated the emergence of the capitalist system? What exactly was the mechanism through which these religious beliefs translated into different forms of economic behavior?
6. Today—do we need to have any particular belief system to support the operation and stability of capitalism? What does Weber mean by the "iron cage"? Is there any way out?
7. What does Weber mean by rationality and rational behavior? How does it compare to other conceptions of rationality we have encountered in the readings?

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17.100J / 15.678J / 14.781J Political Economy I
Spring 2016

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