

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR *THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO*
ENGLISH 125.068

The Communist Manifesto, written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1848, is one of the most influential social, political, or economic texts ever written. Its peers are the likes of the Magna Carta, the American Constitution, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, the *Analects* of Confucius, the Book of Leviticus, and Plato's *Republic*. In our small selection, Marx and Engels sketch their theory of history: namely, that human events are determined by class struggle. In our time, Marx and Engels claim that the struggle is between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

In order to prepare for our discussion of this text, please answer the following questions about the piece's prose style and its content:

1. How is the piece written? Is the style simple or complex? Who is the intended audience? What effect does this audience have upon the writing?
2. What is effective about the piece? What isn't working so well?
3. How do the authors define the terms *proletarian* (or *proletariat*) and *bourgeois* (or *bourgeoisie*)?
4. What are the authors' attitudes toward capitalism? What effects do they think has capitalism had on our current society? Do the authors roundly condemn capitalism, or are their attitudes ambivalent?
5. Explain the authors' concept of history in light of your answers to the previous questions.