

# Cultural Marxism's Origins: How the Disciples of an Obscure Italian Linguist Subverted America

You may have heard the terms “Cultural Marxism,” “Critical Theory” or “Frankfurt School” bandied about. And while you might have an intuitive approximation of what these terms mean for America in the 21st century, there’s a good chance that you don’t know much about the deep theory, where the ideology comes from and what it has planned for America – and the world.

The underlying theory here is a variant of Marxism, pioneered by early-20th-century Italian Marxist politician and linguist Antonio Gramsci. Gramscian Marxism is a radical departure from Classical Marxism. One does not need to endorse the Classical Marxism of Marx, Engels and others to appreciate the significant differences between the two. He is easily the most influential thinker that you have never heard of.

Whereas Classical Marxism located what has been called “the revolutionary subject” (the people who will overthrow capitalism and usher in socialism) within the broad working class, primarily in what is now the First World, Gramscism takes a very different approach. This approach underpins most of the social unrest that is gripping America and the West today. In a sense, we are living through the endgame of a Gramscian revolution.

There are two important diversions that Gramscism has from more traditional Marxist thought: First, that economics was the base of culture and politics. Second, philosophical materialism in the Marxist sense where reality is effectively formed by the means of economic production.

*For Gramsci, culture was more important than either economics or politics.* This was what needed to be changed for there to be a revolution. As such, the weapon to be used for revolution was not the economic might of an organized working class, but a “long march through the institutions” (a phrase actually coined by German Marxist Rudi Dutschke), whereby every institution in the West would be subverted through penetration and infiltration.

Throughout this article, we will use the term “Cultural Marxism” as a catchall to refer to this phenomenon, because it is the most all-encompassing and does not limit us to discussing any one specific variation (Gramsci, the Frankfurt School or what have you). Finally, we should briefly mention that, the claims of Dr. Jordan Peterson notwithstanding, Cultural Marxism is ideologically distinct from postmodernism and deconstruction, both of which are hostile toward Marxism. We will not touch on either postmodernism or deconstruction in this article, though they certainly have been influential on the international left.

## The Origins of Cultural Marxism

There is a tiny kernel of Cultural Marxism within Classical Marxism. Namely, that Marx himself was obsessed with the kinds of detailed critiques that later came to characterize Cultural Marxism – for example, *The Critique of the Gotha Program*, *Anti-Dühring* (which is actually by Engels), *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, and *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. This is perhaps best exemplified by the famous remark in *Theses on Feuerbach* that “philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”

Antonio Gramsci, however, seems to be the best place to locate the genesis of Cultural Marxism proper. Gramsci was the son of an Albano-Sardinian low-ranking government official. Without engaging in too much psychoanalyzing, it is probably not a coincidence that the son of a low-ranking civil servant was able to see the power that low-ranking bureaucrats would have if all of them were guided by the proper ideology.

Gramsci attended the University of Turin where he studied linguistics – not philosophy or economics. Health and financial problems led him to leave his studies prematurely, shortly after he joined the Italian Socialist Party. In this period, as well as the period immediately following the Russian Revolution, Gramsci was a fairly standard Communist, though he did occasionally have disagreements with the party line, none of which are relevant to the development of Cultural Marxism. Beginning in 1924, he was the head of the Italian Communist Party. For this, he was arrested by the Fascist government in 1926, and sentenced to 20 years in prison under newly enacted emergency laws. He died in prison on April 27, 1937, at the age of 46, due to a number of untreated health problems.

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