

**Reading Questions: Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, “On the Jewish Question,”  
Selections from *Capital***

1. What does it mean to “put out of sight” that commodities are the products of human labor? What is the significance of Marx using the phrases “goes on behind the backs” and “is left out of sight?” What do these phrases reveal about the purpose of his analysis of commodities?
2. What does Marx mean by value? Where does the value of commodities ultimately come from?
3. Is the production of commodities a necessary feature of all societies? What does the example of medieval European society reveal regarding social relations in a capitalist society (that is, one in which there are commodities)?
4. Why does Marx think commodities “abound in metaphysical subtleties?” How do commodities come to mediate the real social relations between human beings? What is lost or obscured by this mediation?
5. What does Marx mean by fetishism and what does it have to do with religion?
6. Do humans feel that they are in control of the production of commodities? If not, what is the implication for the autonomy of modern people?
7. What is surplus value and how is it created? Why does the capitalist claim to own it? Why can he appropriate it for himself? Does this seem fair to you?
8. What do thinkers like Bruno think is required to emancipate the Jews of Germany?
9. Do religious differences disappear when the state abolishes its establishment of religion? How is this like the abolition of property qualifications for voting?
10. Why is the liberation offered by the French Revolution partial or incomplete according to Marx? Why does Marx think that equality before the law is insufficient for freedom? What is required for true freedom? Do you agree with Marx?
11. Where do the ruling ideas of any period of history originate? Are the ‘masters’ of an historical epoch truly free? Think here about Marx’s critique of commodification and commodity fetishism.