



GSOC.ST12 Marxist and Feminist Perspectives on Power and the State

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 70 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. For longer answers write in full sentences. There is one levels-marked evaluation question at the end. Spend about 70 minutes on this paper in total.

- 1** Which Marxist claim argues that the courts, police and laws exist mainly to protect private property and the wealth of the ruling class in a capitalist society such as Britain?

- ☐ A) the state as a neutral arbiter
- ☐ B) the capitalist state as an instrument of class rule
- ☐ C) the pluralist state model
- ☐ D) the Weberian bureaucratic state

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Define what Marxists mean when they say the state is not a 'neutral referee' in the politics and law of a country like Britain.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Identify and explain one way Marxists argue that police priorities in modern Britain support capitalist interests.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

- 4 Identify and explain two Marxist reasons why courts and legal outcomes might favour the wealthy in a capitalist state such as Britain.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

- 5 Describe one way Marxists argue that the modern ruling class is becoming more global in its composition, with reference to multinational business owners and financiers.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

- 6 State one piece of evidence, from recent UK political life, that feminist sociologists use to argue political power remains patriarchal.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

- 7 Identify and explain two feminist reasons why women remain underrepresented in senior political roles in Britain.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

- 8** Explain one Marxist criticism of the idea that national governments are fully free to redistribute wealth away from the rich.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

- 9** Which term describes the Marxist claim that a small group of wealthy capitalists controls major economic resources and uses the state to protect their interests?

- ☐ A) the ruling class
- ☐ B) the managerial state
- ☐ C) the civic elite
- ☐ D) the technocratic bloc

(Total for Question 9 is 1 mark)

- 10** Using a contemporary UK example, explain one feminist argument about how gendered norms affect women's chances of reaching senior judicial or civil service roles.

Refer to a plausible example such as low female appointment rates to senior judicial roles or Cabinet reshuffles where few women are promoted.

(Total for Question 10 is 4 marks)

- 11** Explain two Marxist ways that multinational corporations and global finance can influence national political decisions in Britain.

(Total for Question 11 is 4 marks)

12 Define the feminist concept of 'patriarchy' as used when analysing political power in Britain.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

13 Identify and explain two limitations of using only Marxist theory to explain low female representation in Parliament and other senior state roles.

(Total for Question 13 is 4 marks)

14 State one policy change that could be advocated to reduce gender imbalance in senior state roles, and briefly explain how it would help.

(Total for Question 14 is 4 marks)

15 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that political power in Britain is unequally distributed by class and gender. Use Marxist and feminist perspectives in your answer and reach a supported judgement.

Evaluate how far political power in Britain is unequally distributed by class and gender, drawing on Marxist and feminist perspectives and considering possible limitations or alternative views.

(Total for Question 15 is 8 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ST12 Marxist and Feminist Perspectives on Power and the State

Question 1

- **B1** B (the capitalist state as an instrument of class rule)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies that the state favours the interests of the ruling capitalist class rather than being impartial (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. laws and institutions operate to maintain existing inequalities and protect private property
- **Answer: Marxists mean the state favours the interests of the ruling capitalist class rather than being impartial, and that its laws and institutions operate to maintain inequalities and protect private property.**

Question 3

- **B1** identifies a correct way, e.g. prioritising policing that protects property and businesses
- **B1** explains how this supports capitalist interests, e.g. by safeguarding owners and profits and discouraging labour unrest
- **Answer: One way is prioritising policing that protects property and businesses; this supports capitalist interests by safeguarding owners, profits and by discouraging protests or labour unrest that might threaten accumulation.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies reason one, e.g. wealthier defendants can afford better legal representation
- **B1** explains reason one, e.g. better lawyers increase chances of acquittal or lighter sentences
- **B1** identifies reason two, e.g. laws may be written or interpreted to protect corporate interests and property rights
- **B1** explains reason two, e.g. this helps maintain capitalist accumulation and shields business practices from strict sanction
- **Answer: Wealthier defendants can afford better legal representation, increasing chances of acquittal or lighter sentences; and laws may be written or interpreted to protect corporate interests and property rights, helping maintain capitalist accumulation and shielding business practices from strict sanction.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies a genuine way, e.g. multinational owners and financiers operate across national borders
- **B1** development, e.g. they make investment and location decisions that affect many countries
- **B1** further development, e.g. global finance links elites in different countries so their interests cross national boundaries
- **B1** further development, e.g. this reduces the power of national governments to act against transnational capital
- **Answer: Marxists point to multinational owners and financiers operating across borders who make investment and location decisions affecting many countries. Global finance links elites in different states so their interests cross national boundaries, reducing how far national governments can act against transnational capital.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies a genuine piece of evidence, e.g. underrepresentation of women among Members of Parliament
- **B1** brief development, e.g. lower percentages of women in the Cabinet or as senior judges or civil servants
- **Answer: One piece of evidence is the underrepresentation of women among Members of Parliament, with similarly lower percentages of women in the Cabinet and in senior judicial and civil service roles.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies reason one, e.g. structural barriers such as gendered childcare responsibilities limiting time for politics
- **B1** explains reason one, e.g. women may be less able to attend late sittings or campaign full time, reducing political career progression
- **B1** identifies reason two, e.g. informal networks and male-dominated party structures favouring men
- **B1** explains reason two, e.g. selection processes and patronage within parties may reproduce male privilege and limit women's access to senior posts
- **Answer: Structural barriers such as gendered childcare responsibilities limit time for politics and make it harder for women to attend late sittings or campaign full time, and informal networks and male-dominated party structures favour men through selection and patronage, reproducing male privilege and limiting women reaching senior posts.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a Marxist criticism, e.g. national governments face pressure from powerful capitalists and global markets
- **B1** development, e.g. this pressure limits redistributive policies since capital can threaten disinvestment or move operations abroad
- **Answer: Marxists argue national governments face pressure from powerful capitalists and global markets which limits redistributive policies, because capital can threaten disinvestment or relocate operations abroad to avoid higher taxes or regulation.**

Question 9

- **B1** A (the ruling class)
- **Answer: A**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies a plausible example, e.g. low rates of female appointments to senior judiciary or few women promoted in a Cabinet reshuffle
- **B1** explains how gendered norms influence this, e.g. expectations about leadership styles or perceptions that men are more authoritative affect selection
- **B1** links the example to structural barriers, e.g. bias in promotion, networking and selection criteria
- **B1** applies feminist reasoning to show how the example supports the argument about patriarchal power
- **Answer: An example is low rates of female appointments to the senior judiciary or few women promoted in a Cabinet reshuffle. Gendered norms about leadership and authority can bias selection, with men seen as more authoritative, while promotion processes favour those with long networks and uninterrupted careers, disadvantaging women with childcare breaks; this shows how patriarchal expectations affect chances of reaching senior roles.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies way one, e.g. threat of moving investment or jobs abroad
- **B1** explains way one, e.g. governments may avoid policies seen as hostile to investment to keep jobs and tax revenue
- **B1** identifies way two, e.g. lobbying and revolving-door relationships between business and government
- **B1** explains way two, e.g. direct lobbying and former business leaders advising government shape policy in favour of business interests
- **Answer: One way is the threat by multinationals to move investment or jobs abroad, so governments may avoid policies hostile to investment to protect jobs and tax revenue. A second is lobbying and revolving-door relationships where business influence and ex-industry leaders shape policy, steering it towards business friendly outcomes.**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies patriarchy as a system of social power in which men hold dominant positions over women in political, economic and social institutions
- **B1** development, e.g. this can be seen in patterns of underrepresentation and in gendered expectations and norms
- **Answer: Patriarchy is a system of social power in which men hold dominant positions over women across political, economic and social institutions, seen in underrepresentation and gendered expectations and norms that sustain male dominance.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies limitation one, e.g. Marxism focuses on class and economic structures and may underplay gender specific causes
- **B1** explains limitation one, e.g. it may miss cultural norms and sexism that uniquely affect women
- **B1** identifies limitation two, e.g. Marxism may treat political institutions mainly as serving capitalist interests and neglect intersectional factors
- **B1** explains limitation two, e.g. factors such as gendered childcare, discrimination and party culture need specific feminist analysis
- **Answer: One limitation is Marxism focuses on class and economic structures and may underplay gender specific causes like sexism and cultural norms. A second limitation is Marxism may treat institutions mainly as serving capitalist interests and neglect intersectional factors such as childcare responsibilities, discrimination and party culture which feminist analysis highlights.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a realistic policy, e.g. guaranteed childcare provision or flexible working for senior posts
- **B1** explains how it helps, e.g. reduces the career penalty from childcare and enables more women to compete for senior roles
- **B1** identifies a second element or example, e.g. gender quotas for selection or promotion
- **B1** explains how it helps, e.g. increases the number of women in senior positions and changes institutional culture over time
- **Answer: One policy is guaranteed childcare provision and flexible working for senior posts, which reduces the career penalty from childcare and helps more women compete for senior roles. Another is introducing gender quotas for selection or promotion, which increases women in senior positions and can change institutional culture over time.**

Question 15

- **Level 1** (1-2): Basic assertions about inequality with little sociological explanation or evidence. Limited reference to Marxist or feminist ideas.
- **Level 2** (3-5): Sound explanation using Marxist and feminist ideas to show unequal distribution of power by class and gender, with some supporting examples. Some attempt at evaluation or consideration of limitations.
- **Level 3** (6-8): Detailed, balanced discussion using Marxist and feminist perspectives, clear examples and evidence, and a well-supported judgement about the extent of unequal distribution of political power in Britain.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Marxist view that the state serves capitalist class interests, protecting private property and wealth, so political power is concentrated with the ruling class.
 - Examples of how courts, police and laws can reflect class advantage, such as better legal representation for the wealthy and policies favourable to business.
 - Marxist argument about global capitalism, multinational owners and financiers constraining national policy and creating a transnational capitalist class.
 - Feminist view that patriarchy shapes political institutions, producing underrepresentation of women among MPs, Cabinet members, senior judges and civil servants.
 - Examples of gendered barriers: childcare responsibilities, biased selection processes, informal networks and gendered norms about leadership.
 - Evaluation points: overlap and interaction between class and gender, for example elite women may still benefit from class; limits of Marxism in explaining gender specific mechanisms and limits of feminist accounts in explaining class power.
 - Consideration of change over time and reforms, such as increases in female representation, policy initiatives or corporate diversity drives, and whether these indicate major shifts.
 - Conclusion should weigh Marxist and feminist evidence and consider which explanation is stronger for class inequality and for gender inequality, leading to a reasoned judgement on how far power is unequally distributed.