POLSC302: "The Communist Manifesto"

Background
"The Communist Manifesto" is one of the most important and influential political theories ever formulated. Its authors, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, attempt to explain the goals of communism, as well as the theory underlying the movement. It presents an analytical approach to the class struggle (historical and present) and the problems of capitalism. It also discusses their ideas for how the capitalist society of the time would eventually be replaced by socialism, and then eventually communism. "Manifesto" had little influence in its own day. Only after Marx and Engels' other writings had made their views on socialism widely known did it become a standard text. For about a century, it was one of the most widely read (and some would argue misread) documents in the world.

Related Resources
Subunit 4.1 Marxism and Early Socialism
- Lecture: iTunesU: University of Wisconsin-Madison: Professor Charles Anderson's "Marx to Marxism"
- Yale University: The Avalon Project: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' "Manifesto of the Communist Party"

Instructions
For this assessment, using the related resources as a guide, you will write answer essays of one to two paragraphs on questions related to this influential text. The "Guide to Responding" specifies the section of the reading where the answers can be found. The goal of the assessment is to further your understanding of why Marx and Engels' work had such resonance in the political and economic upheavals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

1. Who is the bourgeoisie? Who is the proletariat? How do they interact in capitalist society?

2. Why did Marx and Engels believe that revolution was inevitable?

3. How is the proletariat different from past revolutionary classes?

4. What are the objectives of communism?

5. Why isn't it possible to eliminate class antagonisms through political reforms that improve the workers' quality of life? How does "Manifesto" reply to such reformers?