

FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

POLITICS 115: SUMMER 2016

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

Instructor: Alena Wolflink

Class: Tuesdays/Thursdays 1-4:30pm, Social Sciences 2, Room 165

Office Hours: After class meetings

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BEFORE THE 1930S, there was no such thing as “the economy.” How, then, did the phenomenon that we commonly speak of today as “economic” appear in intellectual discourse prior to the invention of “the economy” in the late 1930s? In what context, and with what effects, was this notion formed? This course is a study of the relation of ideas about property, labor, rights, exchange, capital, consumption, the state, pleasure, production, theology, leisure, poverty, sex and gender difference, needs and luxury, morality, procreation, and markets from 1690 to 1944. We will focus on how people have articulated relations among these objects and others as foundations or manifestations of power, prior to some of these topics becoming widely seen as integral and systematic parts of “the economy” (and others being excluded). We’ll focus on the philosophical and theological origins of and justifications for property, the contrasts among workmanship, industrial, and financial models of human activity, the importance of human differences for production and consumption, and moral economies of distribution. We’ll consider the implications of these matters for material and social interdependence and for relations of power. Our meetings will be chances to reflect on which ends we promote, and which we thwart, by thinking and talking about and (therefore?) experiencing “the economy” as a distinct sphere of activity with its own laws that can be known by means of scientific analysis.

Learning Objectives

In this course, you will become familiar with the arguments and ideas presented in the readings, in lectures, and in classroom discussions and will further hone your ability to thoughtfully read complex texts and analyze arguments. This course encourages you to practice communicating your own ideas and arguments verbally. It will provide a space for you to develop your “public speaking skills,” albeit a very accepting public. Writing is a significant part of this course, and you will develop your ability to create written assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments we read in ways that are clear, cogent, and compelling.

Readings

There are no textbooks for the course and all readings are available online.

Requirements

I expect you to attend all class meetings, and to thoughtfully read all course materials. Your course grade will be based on the following:

1. Attendance and participation – 35%
2. Discussion posts – 35%
3. Final paper (8 pages) – 30%

Extensions and incompletes are only for emergency cases. Contact me immediately – and in advance of any due dates – should urgent, unavoidable, and unforeseen circumstances interfere with your completion of the requirements.

Expectations

Readings:

The readings are the foundation of the course. Much of the reading is dense and difficult, and full of unfamiliar ideas. You must give sufficient time to actively read and re-read the materials slowly, carefully, and thoughtfully. ***You should plan to spend a number of hours each week reading and re-reading the course materials, and preparing for discussion. If you have taken these steps and are still having difficulty with the reading, you should arrange to see me in office hours.***

Class Discussions:

Discussions provide an opportunity for more in-depth discussion and analysis of the material. Attendance and participation is required, and you are expected to be an active and consistent contributor. More specifically:

- You must come to class prepared to analyze and reflect on the readings—this means you must complete the assigned readings prior to class. Come to class on time, and bring a copy of the readings with you. If you are consistently late or frequently arrive without a copy of the assigned readings (or your notes), this will impact your participation grade.
- You will be expected to raise questions related to the material, share perspectives on and interpretations of the readings and discussion topics, and engage in respectful and thoughtful debate.

Grading Guidelines for Participation:

The following guidelines will be used to evaluate your work in class discussion:

A: Full attendance. Solid, consistent, outstanding contributions; active listener.

B: Full attendance. Participated well most days with contributions and as an active listener; or someone who made solid contributions, but contributed too often or took over conversations

C: Full attendance but not much more- i.e. little to no participation, just showed up to class and breathed.

D: Missed 2 or more class meetings, did average work or less, or who was present/breathing but regularly came to class without the texts.

F: 3+ absences

Writing:

There is one major writing assignment for this course. Prompts for the final paper will encompass a number of the readings, so you should be sure to stay up-to-date on all of the readings. Clear writing is an extremely difficult task that can only be mastered through practice. Virtually no one is a born writer. Virtually everyone can be a good – even outstanding – writer. Focused papers will help to develop your skills, but they will require significant time thinking, writing, and revising and reworking. I will also be available to meet with you to discuss your papers, however, these meetings must be conducted in person. I also encourage you to seek help from the Writing Center or friends to review papers for you. At the very least, proofread your own work.

I take seriously the responsibility of grading your work, and will always strive to be fair and accurate in my evaluations. I will use the following standards for the evaluating written work in this course:

- A: Excellent work, with clear, challenging, original ideas supported by sufficient, appropriate, logically interpreted evidence. The essay should engage the reader in the inquiry, convincingly answer opposing views, be well organized, and free of significant flaws. An ‘A’ paper should be not just good but outstanding in ideas and presentation.
- B: Good to very good work, with a clear thesis supported by sufficient, appropriate evidence, organized and interpreted logically. The ‘B’ paper may have some outstanding qualities but be marked by significant flaws which keep it from being an ‘A’; or it may be all-around good work, free of major problems but lacking the deeper insight necessary for excellence.
- C: Satisfactory work, but not yet good. The ‘C’ paper meets the basic requirements of a thesis supported by interpretation of specific evidence, but it needs work in thinking and/or presentation. There may be a lack of clarity, the evidence may not always be sufficient and appropriate, or the interpretation may have logical flaws. The essay may have organizational or mechanical problems that keep it from being good. The ‘C’ paper may be good in some respects but poor in others, or it may simply be adequate but not noteworthy overall.
- D: Barely passing work that shows effort but is so marred by serious problems that it cannot be considered a satisfactory paper.
- F: Failing work—for example, a hasty, sloppy paper that shows little or no thought, effort, or familiarity with the text.

Discussion Posts:

Discussion posts are an opportunity to further reflect on the readings and in-class discussions. All posts are expected to be completed, and to be posted on eCommons on time (by 11am on the day of each class meeting).

Posts submitted for Tuesday meetings should respond to the readings in 300-400 words, and should do so with reference to specific parts of the texts (page number citations included). Posts should reflect on broader course themes via detailed textual analysis, raise discussion or clarification questions, and express original thinking about the texts. Posts should also demonstrate awareness of the content of posts completed by other students—responding to them directly, or at least acknowledging them, is certainly encouraged!

Subsequent follow-up discussion posts (to be completed between the Tuesday and Thursday class meetings) should specifically reference the readings assigned for Thursday, and should either reflect on class discussion in light of the assigned readings, or further develop points made in previous posts. These posts can be shorter—in some cases, significantly so. You can post as many times as you like between Tuesday and Thursday, but your posts should total 250 words. These secondary posts **must** respond to posts submitted by other students.

Other Policies:

It is imperative that you check your UCSC email account for class communications. I will always respond to your emails within 24-48 hours. However, *I do not respond to grade inquiries via email*—all specific questions about your grade in the course must be addressed in person.

Any form of academic dishonesty plagiarism will be met with a failing grade and referral to the university for further discipline. Consult this website to clarify what constitutes plagiarism:

http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/undergraduate_students.

If you require accommodations because of a disability, please submit your Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me after class **by the end of the first week of the quarter**.

Class Schedule and Readings

Week 1:

Thursday, June 23rd

Mitchell, “Fixing the Economy.” Cultural Studies 12:1 (1998)

Graeber, “A Brief Treatise on the Moral Grounds of Economic Relations,” from Debt, The First 5,000 Years (2011), pp. 89-124

MacGilvray, “Introduction” and “The Rise of Commerce,” from The Invention of Market Freedom (2011)

Week 2:

Tuesday, June 28th & Thursday, June 30th

Locke, Second Treatise of Government, paragraphs 1-51, 85

Locke, First Treatise of Government, paragraphs 1-10, 40-43

Locke, Second Treatise of Government, paragraphs 95-104, 119-131

Week 3:

Tuesday, July 5th

Mandeville, The Grumbling Hive; Fable of the Bees, Remarks B, D, F, G, I, K, L, M, O, P, Q and Y.

Thursday, July 7th

Smith, Theory of Moral Sentiments, Part IV, Ch. 1 Part VI, sections i, ii Smith, Wealth of Nations Book IV: chs. 1, 2, 7-9 Book V: chs. 1, 2

Smith, Wealth of Nations, Book I: chs. 1-9 Book II: ch. 1

Week 4:

Tuesday, July 12th

Malthus, An Essay on the Principle of Population pp. 9-22, 28-45, 51-61, 74-91, 103-149

Thursday, July 14th

Harriet Taylor Mill: Socialism and the Question of Distribution

Locke, First Treatise of Government, pars 81-93

J. S. Mill, Principles of Political Economy, “On Property;” “The Same Subject Continued,” sections 1-3, 5-7; “The Stationary State;” and “Probable Future of the Laboring Classes.”

Week 5:

Tuesday, July 19th

Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class, chs. 1-5, 8, 10, 13

Tuesday, July 21st

Keynes, “The General Theory of Employment”

Hayek, The Road to Serfdom (Intro and Chs. 1-9, 14)

Final Paper due July 28th by 12pm