

Arizona State University
Fall 2021

CEL 300: Debating Capitalism

TH 12-1.15; Tempe - CRTVC216

Instructor

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Course Description

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the study of political economy, broadly understood. Political economy is often and usefully defined as the study of the interactions and inter-relationships between the market and the state. We will explore these connections along three dimensions: the relationship between economics and the modern nation state; the causes of economic growth; and the relationship between markets and morality. CEL 300 is the first course in a three course sequence. In this course we will stress the relationship, positive or negative, between markets and morality. Our approach will be historical and comparative.

We will begin with a fundamental but puzzling question. Economics is the study of economic behavior. But what is *economic* behavior? What is the relative status, worth, or dignity of economic behavior in comparison to other forms of human behavior? It is frequently said today that economic behavior plays a far greater role in the modern world, and especially the modern West, than it did in previous eras. If this is true, what are the moral implications of this greater prominence?

We will first turn for help with these questions to the classical world which, for the most part, looked down on economic behavior. Later we will consider the modern philosophers most associated with both the rise of capitalism and the science of political economy. As we will see these two developments are intimately related. What explains this revaluation of values? We will consider explanations that focus on religion, technology, cultural shifts, and/or ideas. We will also consider some of the most powerful religious and modern philosophical critiques of capitalism.

Learning Objectives

1. On the successful completion of this course students will understand many of the basic arguments for and against modern market societies.
2. On the successful completion of this course students will understand the contributions of the key figures in the origins and development of political economy.
3. On the successful completion of this course students will understand the differences between the modern and the pre-modern approaches to markets.

4. On the successful completion of this course students will understand the major theories about rise of capitalism.

Required Materials

I have ordered one book for the course.

Jerry Z. Muller, *The Mind and the Market*.

Muller provides, among other things, valuable historical background for our consideration of primary sources. (This book will also be used in Classics of Modern Economic Thought.) Other required readings will be available through Canvass.

Grade and Class Procedure

The course will proceed on the basis of lecture combined with class discussion and debate. Attendance is required. Completion of the readings before class is also required. Both are essential for your constructive participation in class discussions and debates.

Your grade will be based on:

1. Two FOUR page papers on assigned topics. 15% each due in the 6th and 12th week of class.
2. One EIGHT page paper. 40% due in the last week of classes.
This paper will answer a narrowly focused research question (30%). The question will be worked out in consultation with the instructor. The question may involve a thinker, an issue, a time period, or some combination of these. Students will be required to provide an outline and draft of their paper three weeks before the due date (10%). The outline and draft will be returned to you with suggestions for revision. The final version of the paper will be presented to the class.
3. Final Exam 20%.
4. Participation 10%. You will make a short presentation on your long paper in the last week of class. In addition, frequent in class contributions are expected. The cliché is correct that there is no such thing as a dumb question. So ask away. But to assess whether you are participating constructively you might ask the following question of yourself: Did my class contribution improve the overall quality of class discussion?

Grading Scale:

A+	97-100%	C+	77-79
A	94-96	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	F	63 or less
B-	80-83	D	64-66

Attendance

Attendance at all class meetings is required. Late arrival and early departure are strongly discouraged; please notify your instructor in advance, should it be necessary to miss all or part of a class meeting.

Academic Integrity

Students are responsible for knowing and adhering to the ASU Student Academic Integrity Policy (see <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>); violations - which include, but are not limited to plagiarism, cheating on examinations, etc. - will be sanctioned in accordance with ASU guidelines.

Students with Disabilities

We are eager to make accommodations for instruction and testing for students with disabilities; please consult the instructor and the ASU Disabilities Resource Services

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

(Please note that this is a tentative schedule only. Check Canvas and your email for updates for updates.)

WEEK 1: 16 Aug.

H Introduction: The Three Dimensions of Political Economy

WEEK 2: 23 Aug.

T Debating markets and morality: Jonathan Haidt, [Moral Psychology and Capitalism](#)

PREMODERN VIEWS OF THE MARKET

H Muller, ch. 1.

WEEK 3: 30 Aug.

T Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I

H Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II, 1-6, 11, *Ethics*, Book IV, 1-3, Book V, 5.

WEEK 4: 6 Sept.

T Selections from the *Hebrew Bible*, the *New Testament*, and the *Koran*.

H Aquinas, "Of property," "Whether it is lawful to steal through stress of need," "Of Cheating," "Of buying and selling," "Of Usury," from *Summa Theologica*.

WEEK 5: 13 Sept.

EXPLAINING THE RISE OF CAPITALISM

T Douglass C. North, "Institutions, Ideology, and Economic Performance."

Joel Mokyr, "Progress Isn't Natural."

Liah Greenfeld, "Nationalism and Economic Growth."

H Deidre McCloskey, *Bourgeois Equality* (excerpts).

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (excerpts).

CAPITALISM AND LIBERAL POLITICAL THOUGHT

WEEK 6: 20 Sept.

- T Pieter de la Court's, *Political Maxims of the State of Holland* (selections on commerce and religious toleration).
 H Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. 13-15.

WEEK 7: 27 Sept.

- T Locke, *Second Treatise*, chs. 2, 5 and "Essay on the Employment of the Poor."
 H Mandeville, "Fable of the Bees."

WEEK 8: 4 Oct.

A Case Study: Benjamin Franklin

- T Franklin, *Autobiography*, Part One.
 H Midterm Exam

WEEK 9: 11 Oct.

- T Fall Break Oct. 6-9
 H Franklin, *Autobiography*, Part Two and "Way to Wealth"

WEEK 10: 18 Oct

***DOUX COMMERCE AND THE RISE OF THE SCIENCE
 OF POLITICAL ECONOMY***

- T Hume, "On Refinement in the Arts" and "Of Commerce."
 H Muller, Ch. 3 on Smith.
 Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.i.1-2, II.ii.1-3, IV.i, VI.i.

WEEK 11: 25 Oct.

- T Smith and his predecessors; Smith and his successors; relationship of *Wealth of Nations* to the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; Smith's history of the rise of modern Europe; the four stages theory.
 Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Bks I.1-3, III.2-4, (V.1.a-b recommended).
 H Mercantilism; division of labor; value, exchange, and distribution; natural progress of opulence; political economy as a branch of the science of the legislator; free trade and international relations.
Wealth of Nations, Bks I.4-10, II.2-3, IV.1-2.

WEEK 12: 1 Nov.

- T The role of the state: defense; justice; education; religion; public works.
Wealth of Nations, Bk V.1.a, f, g.

"SATANIC MILLS"?

Rousseau's Protest

- H Muller, ch. 2 on Voltaire.
 Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Preface, Part Two (plus notes).

WEEK 13: 8 Nov.

- T Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Preface, Part Two (plus notes) cont'd.
Modern Communism

H Muller, Ch. 6 on Hegel and ch. 7 on Marx and Marx, selections from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, “Theses on Feuerbach.”

WEEK 14: 15 Nov.

T Marx, “On the Jewish Question.”

H Marx, selections from *Capital*.

WEEK 15: 22 Nov.

T Marx, *Communist Manifesto* Parts I-II.

Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

H **No class - Thanksgiving**

WEEK 16: 29 Nov.

T Presentations

H Presentations

F Long paper due.

WEEK 17: 6 Dec.

Exam Week