

Phil E-162: Economic Justice

Spring 2016

Version of January 27, 2016

Instructor: Mathias Risse (mathias_risse@harvard.edu)

Professor of Philosophy & Public Policy
209 Rubenstein, HKS Campus
Office Hour: Tuesday, 3-4

Teaching Fellow: Kerstin Haase (khaase@fas.harvard.edu)

Location: Philosophy E-162 is an online course (a videotaped version of Harvard College undergraduate course ER41), but local students who wish to attend the lectures where it is taped may do so at the location and times listed just below.

Location of ER41: Harvard Hall 104

Class Days and Time: M/W 11-12

Course Description: Capitalism organizes society around individual pursuits of material gain. Capitalism seems to have won the great ideological struggle with other ways of organizing society. But there is much discontent: the Occupy Movement made clear that even Americans now care about excessive inequality, and many worry about the future in an increasingly economically divided society where access to technology richly rewards some to the exclusion of many others. Capitalism is also closely associated with what is arguably the biggest policy problem of the 21st century: climate change. So how can we justify capitalism? What are feasible alternative ways of organizing society? This class begins with an assessment of the current crisis and explores a range of influential arguments for capitalism. Then we turn to socialist/communist approaches focusing on some of the more influential writings of Karl Marx. Finally, we explore the liberal egalitarianism of John Rawls. The debate about capitalism and its alternatives (and about what capitalism might learn from those) addresses the central political and social concerns of our times, and therefore offers a highly suitable way of satisfying the general education requirement in ethical reasoning. This class offers an in-depth encounter with the major positions in that debate and thereby prepares students to participate in that debate in an informed way. While the first three lectures explore the current predicament and focus on social-scientific readings, the methodological outlook of the class is philosophical. Nonetheless, our concern is always with questions that shape political agendas now and in the foreseeable future.

Prerequisites: None. The course is introductory and open to all students, regardless of year or major. We provide guidance in writing philosophical papers.

Requirements: For Extension School students, there will be a one-page writing assignment within the first 10 days of class for the instructor and TF to get a sense of who the students are. The regular requirements are then as follows: Three papers of 5-6 pages, double-spaced; the first to be handed out on Feb 22 (due by 8 pm EST on March 4); the second on March 23 (due by 8 pm EDT on April 1); and the third to be handed out on April 13 (due by 8 pm EDT on April 22). A list of available topics will be provided. The aim of these papers is to help you to focus on the main issues of the course and to give you practice in developing careful, structured arguments. The paper assignments get progressively more complex. In the first paper, the emphasis is on reconstructing somebody else's argument, allowing you to develop the skill of logical reconstruction rather than narrative summary of a text. The second paper goes beyond mere reconstruction, asking you to both reconstruct and critically evaluate somebody else's argument. The third paper will give you an opportunity to develop a well-reasoned defense in support of your own view regarding one of the central issues of the class. The paper topics will be those that we also use for the Harvard undergraduates who concurrently take this course as ER 41. Extensions on paper-deadlines can only be given by the instructor, and require a very good reason (please cc head TF (Kerstin Haase) on requests of extensions). There will be a final exam, for which study questions will be given out at the last lecture. This will be an in-class exam that Extension School students who live in the New England area are required to attend in person on campus. Students outside of this area may choose to travel to campus for their exams. If they do not choose to travel to campus, they must arrange to take their exams at an alternate location with an approved proctor (they are given a time window within which the exam is to be completed). The exam date will be determined through the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. There will be a participation component to this course, which will take the form of a mandatory weekly online discussion. The purpose of this component of the course is to increase understanding of the material discussed in lectures, as well as to provide opportunities for students to exchange ideas and views about that material. If space permits, Extension School students are welcome to attend the lectures in person.

Policy on collaboration: All written work must be entirely your own. This includes the posts in the weekly online discussions. If you use ideas from written materials or ideas generated by others in conversation you must give proper credit in a footnote. Plagiarism is a serious offense. Please consult with your TF if you are not sure how to give credit, or for what you need to give credit.

Texts: Lecture outlines will be made available on the course webpage after some delay. Reading will be about 40-80 pages per week, depending on difficulty. Some articles are available free of charge through Hollis or the Internet. They will be posted on the course website. The remaining texts have to be purchased. A course packet, available for purchase in hard copy or in e-reader format through University Readers (with purchasing instructions posted on the course website),

will include some of the articles and book chapters that are assigned for the course.

Much of the readings, however, will come from several books, and because of copyright limitations on the amount of material that can be reproduced from books, these books will have to be purchased in addition to the course packet:

Jason Brennan, *Why Not Capitalism?* Routledge (2014)
G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* Princeton University Press (2009)
F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*. University of Chicago Press (1994)
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Basic Books (1974)
John Rawls, *Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press (1999, SECOND, REVISED EDITION ONLY! – please don't buy the first edition)

Grading: The one-page assignment (“assignment zero”) within the first 10 days will not be graded. All written assignments (assignment zero, three papers, and a final exam) must be completed and the participation requirement in the weekly online discussion must be fulfilled for a passing grade. The first graded paper will count for 10% of the final grade, the second and third papers for 20% each. The final exam will count for 35%, and discussion participation for 15%. Late papers will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 of a grade per day, including the first weekend. Any student who is taking this course either to meet the Core Moral Reasoning requirement or the General Education Ethical Reasoning requirement must take this course letter-graded. Students who enroll Pass-Fail, must receive passing grades on all three papers and on the final exam.

AEO: Any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to present their letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term. Failure to do so may result in the Course Head's inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although AEO may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation.

Introduction: The Current Crisis

Monday, January 25

Lecture 1: Elites

Jared Diamond, *Collapse*, Chapter 14, pp 419-440 pp 550-551 **(required reading packet)**

Robert Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, Chapter 1, pp 1-39 **(required reading packet)**

Recommended:

George Packer, The story of Tammy Thomas, in *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America* **(recommended reading packet)**

Wednesday, January 27

Lecture 2: Inequality

Thomas Picketty, *Capital in the 21st Century*, Introduction, pp 1-38 **(required reading packet)**

Gabriel Wollner, "Review of *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*," in *Economics and Philosophy* (forthcoming, 2015) **(will be posted on course website)**

Monday, February 1

Lecture 3: The Role of Education in the Current Crisis

John Meyer and D. Frank, "University Expansion and the Knowledge Society," *Theory and Society* 36 (2007), pp 287-311 **(posted on course website)**

William Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*, Chapters One and Five, pp 7-26, 77-82 **(required reading packet)**

Recommended:

Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz. "The Race Between Education and Technology", in *The Race Between Education and Technology*, Chapter 8 **(recommended reading packet)**

Defending Capitalism

Wednesday, February 3

Lecture 4: Why Not Capitalism?

Jason Brennan, *Why Not Capitalism?* Chapters 1 and 2 **(book)**

Monday, February 8

Lecture 5: Why not Capitalism? Cont.

Jason Brennan, *Why Not Capitalism?* Chapter 3 and 4 **(book)**

Wednesday, February 10

Lecture 6: The Invisible Hand and the Fundamental Welfare Theorems

Adam Smith, Chapters 1-3 in Book I ("Of the Causes of Improvement, etc.") in *The Wealth of Nations*, <http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html> **(posted on course website)**

Alan Gibbard, "What's Morally Special about Free Exchange?" *Social Philosophy and Policy* 2 (1985): 20-28 **(posted on course website)**

Monday, February 15 is a holiday (President's Day)

Wednesday, February 17

Lecture 7: Avoiding the Road to Serfdom?

F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, Chapters 1-5 **(book)**

Monday, February 22

Lecture 8: Defending the 1%

Gregory Mankiw, "Defending the One Percent." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27 (2013): 21-34 **(posted on course website)**

Joseph Stiglitz, Chapters 2 and 7 of *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future* **(required reading packet)**

First paper topics to be handed out (paper due on Friday, March 4, 8 pm EST)

Glance at a Different System

Wednesday, February 24

Lecture 9: Why Not Socialism?

G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* **(book)**

Capitalism and Libertarianism in Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia*

Monday, February 29

Lecture 10: Nozick

Anarchy, State and Utopia, Chapters 1-3, pp 3-35, 48-53 **(book)**

Wednesday, March 2

Lecture 11: Nozick, Cont.

ASU, Chapter 5, pp 96-119 **(book)**

Monday, March 7

Lecture 12: Nozick, Cont.

ASU, Chapter 7: Section I, pp 149-182 **(book)**

Recommended:

ASU, Chapter 7: Section II, pp 183-231 **(book)**

Wednesday, March 9

Lecture 13: Objecting to Nozick

G. A. Cohen, Chapters 1 and 2 of *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality*

(required reading packet)

Karl Max on Exploitation, Commodification and Alienation

Monday, March 21

Lecture 14: Marx

Karl Marx, 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Chapter 8, pp 83-122 in David McLellan, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (second edition) **(required reading packet)**

Wednesday, March 23

Lecture 15: Marx, Cont.

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* **(posted on course page)**

Second paper topics to be given out (due on Friday, April 1, 8 pm EDT – no joke!)

Monday, March 28

Lecture: 16: Marx, Cont.

Karl Marx, "Wage Labor and Capital," In David McLellan, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, Chapter 19, pp 273-294 **(required reading packet)**

Wednesday, March 30

Lecture 17: Dealing with Capitalist Ideology Post-Marx: Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm

Herbert Marcuse, Chapter 1 of *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* **(required reading packet)**

Erich Fromm, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 of *To Have or To Be* **(required reading packet)**

Monday, April 4

Lecture 18: The Limits of Markets

Elizabeth Anderson, "Is Women's Labor a Commodity?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 19:1 (1990), pp 71-92 **(posted on course page)**

Judith Andre, "Blocked Exchanges: A Taxonomy," *Ethics* 103:1 (1992), pp 29-47 **(posted on course page)**

John Rawls's Theory of Justice

Wednesday, April 6

Lecture 19: Rawls

Theory of Justice, sections 1-7 **(book)**

Monday, April 11

Lecture 20: Rawls, Cont.

TJ, sections 11-17, 20-25 **(book)**

Wednesday, April 13

Lecture 21: Rawls, Cont.

TJ, sections 26-30 **(book)**

Third paper topics to be handed out (due on Friday, April 22, 8 pm EDT)

Monday, April 18

Lecture 22: Implications for Health Care

Norman Daniels. "Capabilities, Opportunity, and Health," Chapter 6 of *Measuring Justice: Primary Goods and Capabilities*, ed. by H. Brighouse and I. Robeyns **(required reading packet)**

Daniel Wikler. "Personal and Social Responsibility for Health," Chapter 6 of *Public Health, Ethics and Equity*, ed. by S. Anand, F. Peter and A. Sen **(required reading packet)**

Wednesday, April 20

Lecture 23: Money in Politics

Lawrence Lessig, Chapters 9 and 10 of *Republic, Lost* **(required reading packet)**

Martin Gilens. Chapter 3 of *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America* **(required reading packet)**

Monday, April 25

Lecture 24: An Synthesis between Rawls and Nozick?

John Tomasi, Chapters 4 and 6 of *Free Market Fairness* **(required reading packet)**

packet)

Wednesday, April 27

Lecture 25: Conclusion

Summing up