Course Description:

This course will explore the topic of political economy at an introductory level. It will provide a survey of the history of political economy, examining Adam Smith’s praise of free markets and David Ricardo’s promotion of free trade, Karl Marx’s critiques of capitalism, Veblen’s focus on conspicuous consumption and the leisure class, Keynes’s ideas to bring capitalist economies out of the Great Depression, and Galbraith’s insights on the affluent society. The course will also help students acquire a basic literacy in economics, by examining the relevant concepts from microeconomics, macroeconomics, and international trade. In the latter part of the class, the concepts from the first part will be applied to understanding the financial and economic crisis of 2007 - ?. We will analyze the crisis from the perspectives of contemporary neoclassical, Keynesian, and Marxian theorists, and examine its global dimensions. We will use both readings and film to learn about the various elements of the crisis.

Required Texts:


Additional readings will be assigned (available on-line, and/or distributed in class).

Assignments:

• Attendance, participation, and engagement with the readings

• Weekly homework assignments, due in class on Thursdays.

• Two essay papers (about 4-6 pages, typed, double spaced), one due on Feb. 10th, and the other due at the end of the quarter on March 8th. The first paper will be on Smith, Marx, Veblen, Keynes, or Galbraith, for which you will need to do some additional reading of the primary sources by these authors. The second paper will be on some aspect of the economic crisis of 2007.

• Class presentations (during the section on the financial/economic crisis.)

Attendance Policies and Evaluation Criteria:

As per Fairhaven procedures: Attendance and participation is required at every seminar. Students who miss more than 3 classes may lose credit for the course. Doing the readings in advance is necessary in order to contribute to the discussions during the seminar.

Disability Accommodations: If you have a disability for which you need special accommodations, you need to inform the instructor at the beginning of the quarter, and you need to work with the Disability Resource Services. The DRS will provide the instructor with information on the nature of accommodations to be granted.
The DRS can be reached at: drs@wwu.edu, or by telephone at: (360) 650-3083 (voice) or (360) 650-3725 (TTY).

Evaluation: Your evaluation will be based on: class attendance and participation, successful completion of all assignments, improvement in writing skills, contributions to discussions and discussion facilitation, quality of written work in general (including depth of analysis), meeting deadlines, and overall growth during the quarter. At the end of the quarter, you will write a self-evaluation that should reflect on each of these elements. It is a good idea to keep a journal throughout the quarter, where you note down some of the highlights and your impressions of the class. This will help you write your self-evaluation.

Course schedule

Week 1: Introduction
Jan. 4: Introduction
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/warning/view/

Week 2: Adam Smith
Jan. 11: Read SSK, ch. 2, pp. 25-50
Jan. 13: Read Weaver, Introduction, ch.1 (pp. 1 – 35), and ch. 2 (pp. 49 – 75). (Topics: Demand and Supply, Equilibrium, Perfect Competition)


Week 3: Karl Marx
Jan. 18: Read SSK, ch. 2, pp. 51 - 82
Jan. 20: Read Weaver, finish ch. 2 pp 75 - 96. (Topics: Income Distribution, Inequality)

Recommended: Karl Marx, Communist Manifesto, ch. 1, available at:

Week 4: Veblen
Jan. 25: Read SSK, ch. 4, pp. 83 - 104
Recommended: Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, chs II & IV (“Pecuniary Emulation,” and “Conspicuous Consumption”), available at: [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/833/833-h/833-h.htm#2HCH0002](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/833/833-h/833-h.htm#2HCH0002) and [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/833/833-h/833-h.htm#2HCH0004](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/833/833-h/833-h.htm#2HCH0004)

**Week 5: Keynes**


Feb. 3: Read Weaver, ch. 4, pp. 143 – 177. (Topics: GDP, Effective Demand, Fiscal and Monetary Policies, Business Cycles)


**Week 6: Galbraith**


Feb. 10: Read Weaver, chs. 5 & 6, pp. 181 – 235. (Topics: comparative advantage, exchange rates, balance of payments, trade policy)


**The 2007-? Financial and Economic Crisis**

**Week 7: Neoclassical perspectives**


**Week 8: Keynesian perspectives**

http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/11/stiglitz200811

Watch: Interview with Paul Krugman on *Now on PBS*, Oct. 10, 2008, (15 min.)
http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/440/krugman.html

Watch: Interview with Joseph Stiglitz on *Democracy Now*, Feb. 18, 2010, (35 min.)
http://www.democracynow.org/2010/2/18/nobel_economist_joseph_stiglitz_on_obamas

Krugman’s blog (in particular, see http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/10/02/how-the-other-half-thinks/ )

Feb. 24: Global dimensions of the crisis and perspectives from the Global South.


**Week 9: Marxian perspectives**

March 1: Read Magdoff & Yates, pp. 1 - 54


**Week 10: Marxian perspectives continued**

March 8: Read: Rick Wolff, “Capitalism Hits the Fan,” *Dollars & Sense*, Nov. 2008, 


See additional articles, audio and video resources by Richard Wolff at http://www.rdwolff.com/


March 10: Wrap-up session. Self-evaluations are due.

Class Schedule

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