

Course Syllabus: Introduction to Political Economy (Economics 108)

REVISED

Spring 2020

Professor: Tai Young-Taft

Professorial Office: Hall College Center, Parking Level, next to men's restroom on side away from cafeteria (across from Bill Dunbar's office)

Professorial Office Hours: By appointment. Generally, I will be in my office from 8:30-11:15, T, 8:30-9:55, W

Contact Information: [Please feel free to contact me with any thoughts, comments, questions, or concerns.]
e-mail: tyoungtaft@simons-rock.edu

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the field of political economy through Marx's writings in the field, along with other political economic theorists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This course gives students a grounding in Marxist economic discourse and its relation to related social issues, such as race, gender, empire, media, poverty, and the state. In particular, students will examine questions such as: Is poverty a necessary outcome of industrialization? What are the function and role of the state in industrialization and modern political processes? In addition, students will consider the relationship between economy and empire, as well as the effects of the modern economy on women. No prerequisites.

Rationale:

This course introduces students to the field of political economy, the study of the modern economy and its relation to human life. To such an extent we follow classic texts from modern authors that grapple with problems of power, ideology, and experience from the perspective of economic systems and their effects on individuals and society. Themes include anarchism, black nationalism, capitalism, feminism, finance, imperialism, Marxism, the media, poverty, and socialism. Students acquire a basis in social scientific terminology and analysis they can use in future classes in Economics and Social Studies.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Articulate and describe the fundamental concepts necessary for Marxist economic analysis, such as the labor theory of value, class, money, and exploitation
- Conceptualize and execute short research papers that frame specific textual points in primary materials to one another and to general positions in the field
- Identify and describe major positions with respect to empiricism, positivism, determinism, and historical materialism, their relationship to post-Kantian science and rationalism, and certain contemporary features of the social sciences

- Report some major developments in the history of economics and their relation to historical events from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century, and their relationship to contemporary positions in economics and the social sciences

Required Work: Three 1,500 word analytic discussion papers.

Grading: Three 1,500 word analytic discussion papers 90%, equally weighted, and class participation 10%.

Recording and Distribution Assent: By participating in online classes you are consenting to your visual, audio, text, and other media recording and electronic distribution, as well as any media you shared by other authors/creators.

Attendance: I presume you have attended and understood all classes, asking questions if you have them for clarification, or have gained relevant knowledge if you have missed class.

Late Work Policy: The Professor will not accept or give any credit for any work not turned in the format required (for example, electronic and/or hard copies) by the time due without exception. If you need an extension for what I consider to be reasonable reasons, please talk with me as soon as possible about it and I will be happy to give you one.

“I couldn’t print it,” or “paper cut wasn’t working” are not acceptable reasons for turning in late work. If you need to go to the library to print something out before class, make sure you do it.

Computers in Class: You may not use your computer for any reason as it is distracting to other students and if you are using it for purposes other than those related to the class (e.g. taking notes) it is disrespectful to the participants in the class. Cell phones and tablets are computers.

Respectful Deportment and Class Participation: The student is required to deport themselves respectfully towards the Professor and other students, in class and outside of class. We are all here to develop a liberal learning environment, which cannot exist without mutual respect and interested reciprocal deportment among participants. This includes but is not limited to willingness to listen, open-mindedness of opposing points of view, respect for individual differences and alternative viewpoints, which will be maintained at all times, and temperament of one's words and use of language so that they lie within acceptable bounds of civility and decency. This constitutes the respectful deportment and class participation grade and I will not hesitate to impose significant penalties to insure these demands are met.

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is valued at Simon’s Rock. All students are expected to know and uphold the college’s policies on academic honesty as described in the 2019-20 Simon’s Rock *Catalogue*.

There are websites that claim to offer homework help but are really just archives for homework answer sets. You may not use any homework help website without my permission.

You may not upload any of my homeworks, handouts, labs, exams, or worked solutions to any website that archives such things, or download them from the same.

Accessibility and Accommodations: The College aims to make learning experiences as accessible as possible to all students, and I am fully committed to this as well. If you anticipate or experience physical or other barriers in the course based on a disability, please contact **Jeannie Altshuler, Accessibility and Academic Support Specialist**, in the Win Commons (jaltshuler@simons-rock.edu; 413-528-7383) to arrange for reasonable accommodations.

Trigger Warning: Herman and Chomsky's book is very heavy reading, including graphic depictions of genocide, torture, child torture, murder and rape. It is a book that I frequently put down and take breaks from when I read it, because the material itself can be traumatic, and I recommend giving yourself plenty of time and mental space when approaching it.

From BSU Statement: It is almost offensive to us that faculty members could not recognize how the "n-word"... conveys a strong ambivalence, if not cruelty, toward the well being of a Black student.

Required Reading:

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Césaire, Aimé. (2001). *Discourse on Colonialism*. Monthly Review Press.

Emma, Goldman. (1969). *Anarchism and Other Essays*. Dover.

Herman, Edward S., and Chomsky, Noam. (2002). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Pantheon.

Kautsky, Karl. (1911). "Finance-Capital and Crisis," *Social Democrat*. London. Vol. XIV, July, August, September, October, November and December 1911.

Marx, Karl. (1998). *The German Ideology*. Prometheus.

Marx, Karl. (1979). *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. International Publishers.

Stirner, Max. (2014). *The Ego and His Own: The Case of the Individual Against Authority*. Verso.

Course Outline: [Subject to revision.]

Herman, Edward S., and Chomsky, Noam. (2002). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Pantheon.

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Important notes on outline:

Spring Break starts March 6th, and ends March 22nd