

**POL 485H1S/2027H1S, Section L0201: Topics in Political Theory II**

**The Politics of Capitalism**

**Winter 2018**

**Fridays, 10 am-12 pm  
Trinity College, Room 22**

**Instructor:**

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Office Hours: Fridays, 1:30-3:00 pm (or by appointment)

**Description:**

This course focuses on an important problem for all 21<sup>st</sup>-century global citizens: Is capitalism a system that promotes human freedom and emancipation? Or, is it a system that depends on and perpetuates inequality and exploitation?

In this advanced political theory seminar, we will think about these questions together. To support our inquiry, we will draw on a broad range of textual resources from the mid-seventeenth century to the present day—works of political theory, political economy, literature, history, speech and rhetoric, and investigative journalism. These texts are all part of a centuries-long debate about commerce and capitalism. To give shape to our discussion, we will pursue three distinct but overlapping themes that recur throughout this debate: labor and property, markets and exchange, and commodities and commodification. In the process, we will pursue some persistent questions that have mattered since the emergence of a capitalist political economy. What is the moral and economic value of work? Is work something we have to do to survive, or is an important expression of our humanity? Does capitalism exploit laborers, or offer new outlets for creative work and expression? What is the connection between labor and property? Are markets the best way of organizing human relationships and satisfying our needs and wants? Does commerce connect us or create new divisions among us? Are some commodities better than others? Are there things that shouldn't be commodified and sold?

This course has three related learning goals. First, one main purpose of the course is to familiarize you with the multi-century trajectory of humanistic work on capitalism, including a broad sample of laudatory, ambivalent, and critical treatments. This will include extensive engagement with classic works, such as Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and Marx's *Capital*, but we will read and discuss a broad range of texts that fall under the category of "political thinking about commerce and capitalism." A second purpose of the course is to think deeply about particular themes or concepts in the history of capitalism by analyzing how thinkers from a range of time periods and moral and political perspectives have confronted them. The third and last goal of this course is to use our growing sense of the history of our current capitalist dilemmas to help us think critically about our own participation in systems of production and exchange.

## Requirements and Grading:

### Book List:

The following books are available in the bookstore, or you can borrow them from the Robarts library, where they are on reserve. Sometimes I have spare copies, so please ask to borrow if you find yourself in need of a copy of a text!

- Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees and Other Writings*, ed. E.J. Hundert (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse in Inequality*, trans. Maurice Cranston (New York: Penguin, 1984).
- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (New York: Random House, 2000).
- *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978).

Please acquire and use *these* editions, since class discussion will run much more smoothly if we are all using the same versions of the texts.

### Course Requirements and Grade Distribution:

This class is a seminar, so we will spend nearly all of our time discussing the readings. Your questions and comments will structure our discussions, so please come prepared for each class with at least one question or comment that you would like for us to think about as a group. Sometimes I will ask us to work through a difficult problem or question in the readings, but for the most part your concerns will drive our work.

The other component of your work for this seminar is writing. I will ask you to hand in two short reflections on readings over the course of the semester, and you will design your own seminar paper to hand in at the end of the term. There will also be a take-home midterm.

The course has five assigned components:

- Class attendance and participation
  - Bring texts to class
  - Be an engaged listener (This means no smartphones!)
  - Participate in discussion
- Giving the class a 5-minute synopsis of our discussion from last class
- 2 short reflection papers on readings, one single-spaced page each
- Take-home midterm
- Seminar paper

The grading breakdown is as follows:

- Seminar attendance and participation: 20%
- Oral summary of the previous seminar meeting: 5% (Full credit or no credit)
- 2 response papers for readings: 5% each, for 10% total (Full credit or no credit)
- Take-home midterm: 20%
- Seminar paper abstract: 5% (Full credit or no credit)
- Seminar paper: 40%

To pass this course, you must complete each component of the course. For example, someone who writes a wonderful seminar paper but does not attend class regularly will receive a failing grade for class participation and will subsequently fail the course. Likewise, someone who is an excellent contributor to class discussions but skips a response paper will fail the course.

### Late work policy

I will deduct 5% from your grade for each 24 hours that your assignment is late.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable, and I report all suspected cases via the process outlined on the last page of this course outline. If you are not sure whether something counts as plagiarism, please don't hesitate to ask me. I will also post a guide to citations and bibliography on Blackboard with your writing assignments.

### Laptop Policy

Unless you have a documented reason for using a laptop or tablet during our seminar, I ask that you power down all your electronic equipment.

### **Student Resources and Support**

Your success in this course is important to me. Here are some resources I hope you will use if ever you need them:

#### Accessibility:

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach Dr. Nacol /or Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

The staff members of Accessibility Services (Located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 400) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. Please call 416-978-8060 or email [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca).

The sooner you let me know what you need, the sooner I can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

#### Notice of Collection:

The University of Toronto respects your privacy. The information on medication certificates is collected pursuant to section 2(14) of the University of Toronto Act, 1971. It is collected for the purpose of administering accommodations for academic purposes based on medical grounds. The department will maintain a record of all medical certificates received. At all times it will be protected in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

If you have questions, please refer to [www.utoronto.ca/privacy](http://www.utoronto.ca/privacy) or contact the University's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office at 416-946-5835. Address: Room 201, McMurrich Bldg., 12 Queen's Park Crescent, Toronto, ON M5S 1A1.

### Assignments:

#### **Schedule and Explanation of Assignments:**

**Synopsis of Previous Class:** During our first meeting, you will sign up to give a short 5-minute presentation at the beginning of one of our seminar meetings. Your task is to give the group a brief synopsis of the major points of our discussion from the previous class. What did we talk about? What were the two or three major themes or problems we discussed in class? How did we approach or discuss them? As part of your summary or synopsis, please make reference to particular comments or questions from your peers (by name!) that struck you as key to our discussion.

**Short Response Papers:** You will choose the due dates for these and will sign up during our first meeting. You must complete two response papers this term. You will select two class meetings and

do a one-page, single-spaced reflection paper on the readings for those meetings, and you will hand it in electronically to me by 5 pm the night before class. (Example: If you are interested in writing on the Kathi Weeks reading for Friday, 19 January, you must hand in your reflection paper on that reading to me by 5 pm on Thursday, 18 January.)

These papers have no strict guidelines except one: Please do not summarize the readings. You can assume that your reader has read the texts and has a working understanding of their major points and arguments. Instead, use this assignment as an opportunity to raise an interesting question, puzzle, or criticism about the reading. I may refer to your response paper to guide our class discussion the next day, too, so think of this as an opportunity to help set our agenda.

**Midterm Exam:** The midterm will be a take-home, open book/note exam. I will email you an essay question on **Wednesday, 28 February, at noon**. You will have one week to compose your answer, so it will be due back to me on **Wednesday, 7 March, at noon**. You may draw from your notes and the readings to answer the question, with no outside sources expected or required. Your response should be between 2400-3000 words (8-10 double-spaced pages), and it should take the form of an argument with a thesis statement, supported by evidence from the texts.

**Seminar Paper:** Your seminar paper will be of your own design. For undergraduate students, your final essay should be about 3600-4500 words (12-15 pages), and for graduate students, your final paper should be about 5400-6000 words (18-20 pages). You may write on any question or problem you wish, using any of the readings that interest you. You may also bring in outside source materials, although this is not necessarily required. The completed seminar paper is due **on Thursday, 5 April, by 5 pm**.

**Seminar Paper Abstract:** You must write a one-page abstract for your seminar paper, in which you articulate the question that interests you and suggest how you will answer it. This abstract is due no later than **Monday, 19 March, at 5 pm**, although you may certainly hand it in earlier. For those of you who are new to abstract writing, I will post a simple guide on Blackboard to help.

### **Schedule of Readings and Assignments:**

Please bring your texts and notes to **every class**, since we will work from them. Please read in advance of class.

All readings beyond the book list are marked with an \* on the syllabus. These are available on our class Blackboard site.

#### **Friday, 5 January**

- (a) Syllabus review
- (b) Discussion of course themes and goals
- (c) Sign up for presentations and response papers

#### **Friday, 12 January: Forging Connections Between Labor and Property**

- (a) John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, ch. 5 (“Of Property”) in *Political Writings*, ed. D. Wootton (Hackett, 2003), pp. 272-286.\*
- (b) John Locke, “Labour,” in *Political Writings*, ed. D. Wootton, (Hackett, 2003), pp. 440-442.\*
- (c) David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Pt. 2, Sections 1-4, in *Political Writings*, eds. S. Warner and D. Livingston (Hackett, 1994), pp. 1-33.\*
- (d) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality Among Men”, Epistle Dedicatory and Part II, in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, pp. 57-66, 109-137 (Note: Don’t forget to look at Rousseau’s Notes!)

### Friday, 19 January: Wage Labor

- (a) Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book I.1-2, I.8, I.10, and V.1.3, pp. 3-18, 73-99, 114-165, 839-844.
- (b) John Stuart Mill, "On the Probable Futurity of the Laboring Classes," in *Principles of Political Economy*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Vol. 3 (Liberty Fund, 2006), pp. 758-796.\*
- (c) Karl Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital," in *The Marx Engels Reader*, pp. 203-217.
- (d) Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (Falling Wall Press, 1975).\*
- (e) Nancy Fraser, "After the Family Wage: A Postindustrial Thought Experiment," in *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (Verso, 2013) pp. 111-138.\*
- (f) Kathi Weeks, *The Trouble with Work: feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*, ch. 4 (Duke UP, 2011), pp. 151-174.

### Friday, 26 January: Alienation and the Meaning of Work

- (a) Karl Marx, "The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *The Marx Engels Reader*, pp. 67-81.
- (b) Philosophy Bites Podcast: Jonathan Wolff on Marx on Alienation.\* (Will email link)
- (c) William Morris, "Dawn of a New Epoch," in *Critics of Capitalism: Victorian Reactions to 'Political Economy'*, eds. E. Jay and R. Jay (Cambridge UP, 1996), pp. 202-217.\*
- (d) Henry David Thoreau, "Life without Principle," in *The Portable Thoreau*, ed. C. Bode (Viking, 1947), pp. 630-655.\*
- (e) David Harvey, "Contradiction 17: The Revolt of Human Nature: Universal Alienation," in *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Oxford UP, 2015), pp. 264-281.\*

### Friday, 2 February: Labor, Property, Communism

- a) Karl Marx, "The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *The Marx Engels Reader*, pp. 81-101.
- b) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *The Marx Engels Reader*, pp. 469-491.
- c) Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*, trans. M. Shatz (Cambridge UP, 1995) pp. 41-127.\*
- d) David Harvey, "Epilogue: Ideas for Political Praxis," in *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Oxford UP, 2015), pp. 294-297.\*

### Friday, 9 February: Labor and Poverty

- a) John Locke, "Draft of a Representation Containing a Scheme of Methods for the Employment of the Poor," in *Political Writings*, ed. D. Wootton (Hackett, 2003), pp. 446-461.\*
- b) Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal...," in *Major Works*, eds. A. Ross and D. Woolley (Oxford UP, 2008), pp. 492-499.\*
- c) Bernard Mandeville, "An Essay on Charity and Charity Schools," in *The Fable of the Bees and Other Writings*, pp. 109-129.
- d) Alexis de Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, trans. S. Drescher (Civitas, 1997), pp. 24-38.\*
- e) Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," *The North American Review*, Vol. 148, No. 391 (June 1898), pp. 653-665.\*

### Friday, 16 February: Labor, Leisure, and Resistance

- a) Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street," in *Melville's Short Novels*, ed. D. McCall (Norton, 2002) pp. 3-34.\*
- b) John Stuart Mill, "Of the Stationary State" in *Principles of Political Economy*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Vol. 3 (Liberty Fund, 2006), pp. 752-757.\*

- c) Bertrand Russell, "In Praise of Idleness," *Harper's Magazine* (October 1932).\*
- d) John Maynard Keynes, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren," in *Essays in Persuasion* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932), pp. 358-373.

### Friday, 23 February

Reading week, no class meeting.

### Friday, 2 March: Laborers as Property: Slavery and Its Legacies

- a) Voltaire, "Eighth conversation, on physical serfdom," in *Political Writings*, ed. D. Williams (Cambridge UP, 1994), pp. 134-138.\*
- b) Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, III.15, eds. A Cohler, B. Miller, and H. Stone (Cambridge UP, 1989), pp. 246-263.\*
- c) Diderot, "Extracts from the *Histoire des Deux Indes*, # 6-9, 14, *Political Writings*, eds. J.H. Mason and R. Wokler (Cambridge UP, 1992) pp. 175-180, 185-188.\*
- d) Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*, ch. 1 and 4 (Harvard UP, 1999), pp. 19-44, 117-134.\*
- e) W.E.B. DuBois, "Of the Dawn of Freedom," "Of the Quest of the Golden Fleece," "Of the Sons of Masters and Men," in *The Souls of Black Folk* pp. 14-33, 103-141.\*
- f) Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 313, No. 5 (June 2014), pp. 54-71.\*

### Friday, 9 March: Market Societies and Commercial Culture

- a) Bernard Mandeville, "Preface" and "The Grumbling Hive," in *The Fable of the Bees and Other Writings*, pp. 19-35.
- b) David Hume, "Of Commerce," in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. E. Miller (Liberty Fund, 1985), pp. 253-267.\*
- c) Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, IV.20 and IV.21.1-5, eds. A Cohler, B. Miller, and H. Stone (Cambridge UP, 1989), pp. 337-357.\*
- d) Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book III, pp. 407-453.

### Friday, 16 March: Markets and Freedom?

- a) F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago UP, 2007) ch. 1-4, 8, 14, pp. 65-99, 134-146, 210-222.\*
- b) Milton Friedman *Capitalism and Freedom*, ch. 1 (Chicago, 1962), pp. 7-21.\*
- c) Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, ch. 1, 4-5 (Anchor, 1999), pp. 13-34, 87-145.\*
- d) Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*, introduction and ch. 3, pp. 3-16, 93-130.\*
- e) David Harvey, "Contradiction 14: Freedom and Domination," in *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Oxford UP, 2015), pp. 199-215.\*

### Friday, 23 March: Commodities, Needs, and Luxuries

- a) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality Among Men", Preface and Part I, in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, pp. 67-107 (Note: Don't forget Rousseau's Notes!).
- b) Karl Marx, "Capital, Volume 1," in *The Marx Engels Reader*, pp. 302-329.
- a) Bernard Mandeville, "Remarks F, G, I, I, K, L, M, N, Q, and T" in *The Fable of the Bees and Other Writings*, pp. 55-106.
- b) Voltaire, "The Man of the World" (1738), in *Commerce, Culture, and Liberty: Readings on Capitalism Before Adam Smith*, ed. H.C. Clark (Liberty Fund, 2003), pp. 271-275.\*
- c) David Hume, "Of Refinement in the Arts," in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. E. Miller (Liberty Fund, 1985), pp. 268-280.\*

**Friday, 30 March**

Good Friday, university closed.

**Thursday, 5 April (makeup class): The Commodification of Culture**

- a) Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford, 2002), pp. 94-136.\*

**Important Due Dates:**

Class Synopsis:

Response paper 1:

Response paper 2:

Midterm exam:

Seminar paper abstract:

Seminar paper:

**Wednesday, 7 March, by noon.**

**Monday, 19 March, by 5 pm.** (earlier also fine!)

**Thursday, 5 April, by 5pm.**

## A WARNING ABOUT PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an academic offence with a severe penalty.

It is essential that you understand what plagiarism is and that you do not commit it. In essence, it is the theft of the thoughts or words of others, without giving proper credit. You must put others' words in quotation marks and cite your source(s). You must give citations when using others' ideas, even if those ideas are paraphrased in your own words. Plagiarism is unacceptable in a university. What the university calls "plagiarism", non-university institutions might call "fraud".

The University of Toronto provides a process that faculty members must initiate when they suspect a case of plagiarism. In the Department of Political Science, suspected evidence of plagiarism must be reported to the Chair; in most cases, the Chair passes the case on to the Dean.

A faculty member may not mark an assignment or assess a penalty if he or she finds evidence of plagiarism – the matter must be reported. Penalties are assigned by the Chair, by the Dean or by the University of Toronto Tribunal.

### **The following are some examples of plagiarism:**

Submitting as your own an assignment written by someone else.

1. **Quoting an author without indicating the source of the words.**
2. **Using words, sentences, or paragraphs written by someone else and failing to place quotation marks around the material and reference the source and author.** Using either quotation marks or reference alone is not sufficient. Both must be used!
3. Adapting an author's ideas or theme and using it as your own without referencing the original source.
4. Seeking assistance from a friend or family member in respect to work you claim as your own.

Ignorance of the rules against plagiarism is not a defense; students are presumed to know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. Students are especially reminded that material taken from the web **must** be quoted and cited in the same manner as if it came from a book or printed article.

If you are not sure whether you have committed plagiarism, it is better to ask a faculty member or teaching assistant than risk discovery and be forced to accept an academic penalty.

Plagiarism is **cheating**. It is considered a **serious offence** against intellectual honesty and intellectual property. Penalties can be **severe**, ranging from a mark of "0" for the assignment or test in question, **up to and including expulsion from the university**.

### **Some website listed below on avoiding plagiarism:**

'How to Use Sources and Avoid Plagiarism' - available at:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Other Advisory Material available at: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/home>