Syllabus—Revised 11/19/07

This course covers the origins of economics as a discipline and the development of different schools of economic thought (classical, Marxian, neoclassical, institutionalist, and Keynesian) since the eighteenth century. Where possible, readings and discussion will focus on the original texts. These will be supplemented by modern interpretations and texts that give broader coverage and critiques of various thinkers and theories. The emphasis will be on the evolution of economic theories and comparisons between alternative perspectives on economics, as well as their relevance to contemporary economic issues. Coverage will be limited to major economists and schools of thought in order to permit in-depth analysis and discussion. The prerequisites for this course are ECON-500 and 501 (master’s level micro and macro theory) or admission to the economics Ph.D. program. We will use mathematical economic tools and models when they are relevant to the theories covered in this course.

Class Website and Web Links

A class website will be created using Blackboard (http://blackboard.american.edu). The website will contain this syllabus (and any updates) plus announcements, assignments, links, and other useful information. Required articles that are available in electronic form will be posted either as E-Reserves (if they are copyrighted) or as Course Documents (if they are not). The website will also be used for sending e-mail messages to class participants; I will use this feature extensively for making announcements. You are responsible for accessing the class website and checking it (and your e-mail) regularly. By default, the Blackboard system sends e-mail to your @american.edu student address; if you wish, you can use the my.american.edu web portal to have messages forwarded to another e-mail address, or you can change your default e-mail address under your personal settings in Blackboard. It is your responsibility to configure and check your e-mail so that you receive messages regarding this course. If you have any problems with the website, please inform the professor immediately.

One useful website you may wish to visit is the McMaster University Archive for the History of Economic Thought at http://socserv2.soceci.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ugem/3l3/. Texts on this site are in the public domain (i.e., copyrights have expired) so they may be downloaded for free. There will be a link to this site under “External Links” on the class website, along with other useful links (if you find any, please let the professor know and he will add them).

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Books

The following books (all paperback editions) have been ordered at the Campus Store:

Required Texts:


Recommended Texts


NOTES: If you have another edition of the same text, you are welcome to use it, but the page numbers will be different from the ones cited in class. Many classic economic texts are available for free or less money on-line, but electronic versions will be difficult to use for class discussions. I strongly recommend that you buy at least the four major required texts (Smith, Ricardo, Marx, and Keynes) in the editions listed above and the Medema & Samuels collection of readings, either from the Campus Store or elsewhere (e.g., Amazon—in which case, you should use the 13-digit ISBN numbers to make sure you are ordering the right edition). Please note that the Medema & Samuels book contains many selections not included elsewhere. Also, Blaug is indispensable for his coverage of the origins of the neoclassical school, but he can be accessed via library reserves.
**Background References**

The following are some major works of criticism and appraisal in the history of economic thought, as well as some conventional “history of thought” textbooks, which will be placed on reserve in the library:


**NOTE**: Most important readings (including these background references and all the required and recommended texts) will be available on reserve in the library; in some cases, the editions placed on reserve will differ from those ordered at the bookstore.

**Course Requirements**

Every student must write two essays, approximately 8-10 pages each, and take a final examination. The essays will be on a choice of topics to be assigned; three lists of topics will be distributed and you need only choose topics from two of them. The tentative due dates for the three essays are October 15, November 12, and December 7 (note December 7 is a Friday, four days after the last class). **If you miss the deadline for any of the first two essays, then you must submit the remaining one(s) on time.** If you turn in three essays on time, I will count the two highest grades. **The final exam will be given at the regularly schedule time (Monday, December 10, at 5:30-8:00 p.m.). No exceptions.**

**Grading**: Class participation 10%; Essays (2) 25% each; final exam 40%.
**Reading List**

*Denotes minimum required reading *(subject to change)*; other readings are recommended, and you should try to do as much reading on each topic as time permits (some of the recommended readings may be especially useful for particular essay topics). All required readings will be on reserve in the University Library, except as indicated.

**NOTE:** You are expected to do the readings in advance and to participate in class discussions. Bring the main texts we are reading each week to class so that we can discuss them!!

**Week 1 (Aug. 27): Overview and Early (Pre-Modern) Economic Thought**

*Medema & Samuels, readings by Aristotle,† Aquinas.
†or read Aristotle, *The Politics*, class handout.

**Weeks 2-3 (Sept. 10-17): Mercantilism, Physiocracy, and Early Classical Economics**

*Medema & Samuels, readings by Mun and Quesnay are required [Petty, Cantillon, Turgot, Mandeville, and Hume are recommended/optional].
*Ronald L. Meek, editor, *Precursors of Adam Smith* (only the selections by Mirabeau and Quesnay are required; the rest are recommended/optional).
NOTE: There is some overlap between the Quesnay selections in Medema and Meek.

**Weeks 4-5-6 (Sept. 24 and Oct. 1-8): Adam Smith**

*David L. Carr, “European Industrialization and the Wealth of Nations: Was Adam Smith Right?” unpublished manuscript, November 2002. **Blackboard Course Document** [NOTE: you are not responsible for the math in this article.]
Dobb, *Theories of Value and Distribution*, chap. 2.
Samuel Hollander, *The Economics of Adam Smith*.

**Week 6 (Oct. 8):** The Malthusian Theory of Population and Wages

*Blaug, Economic Theory in Retrospect, chap. 3 (sections 1-6 only)

**Weeks 7-8 (Oct. 15-22): David Ricardo**

*Blaug, Economic Theory in Retrospect, chap. 4 and chap. 3 (sections 7-11 only).
Dobb, *Theories of Value and Distribution*, chaps. 3-4.
Samuel Hollander, *The Economics of David Ricardo.*

**Weeks 8-10 (Oct. 22-29, Nov. 5): Karl Marx**

*Marx, Capital*, vol. I, First Preface (pp. 89-93), and chaps. 1-9, 10 (sections 1-2 only), 12-15, 19, 23-24, 25 (sections 1-4 only), 26, 32; vol. III, chaps. 13-15 (1-3, 8-9 optional).
*Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party* (class handout).
*Paul M. Sweezy, Four Lectures on Marxism*, Lectures 1-2 (including Appendixes A, B).
Ian Steedman, *Marx After Sraffa*.
Megnad Desai, *Marxian Economics*.

*Medema & Samuels, readings by Jevons, Menger, Walras, Edgeworth, Marshall, and Böhm-Bawerk. [Bentham is recommended].
*Blaug, *Economic Theory in Retrospect*, chaps. 8 (sections 1-10), 9 (sections 1, 6-12), 10 (skim), 11 (sections 1-5, 10-12, 18-23), 12 (sections 19-23), 13 (sections 1-5, 16-24).
*Lionel C. Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, 2nd ed., chaps. 1-2. and/or (one of these two is required, the other is recommended)
Paul A. Samuelson, *Foundations of Economic Analysis*.
Dobb, *Theories of Value and Distribution*, chap. 7.

Week 13 (Nov. 26): Institutionalist-Evolutionary Approaches

*Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, chaps. II-V. [OR read the excerpt in Medema & Samuels] (note: the other chapters are optional/recommended).
Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, chaps. VII-VIII.
Medema & Samuels, chap. 34 (Commons).


*Medema & Samuels, readings by Say (A Treatise on Political Economy, 245-55) and Malthus (Principles of Political Economy, 291-311).
OR the following may be substituted for the latter Malthus reading:
*Ricardo, *Principles*, re-read: chap. XXI (this is also excerpted in Medema & Samuels).
Medema & Samuels, chapters by Wicksell and Fisher.
*Blaug, *Economic Theory in Retrospect*, chap. 5 (15-16 are recommended).


