8/31: Introduction

9/2: Wealth of Nations 7-33 – 9-26, 27-42


9/7: Labor Day


9/14 Wealth of Nations 420-445 – 504-536


9/18: Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 70-93

9/21: Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 93-105, 109-119

9/23: Marx, Wage Labor and Capital 203-217

9/25: Marx, Capital 302-308, 319-329

9/28 Marx, Capital 361-376

9/30 Marx, Capital 397-417

10/2 Marx and Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party 473-491

10/5 Hayek, The Road to Serfdom 57-75

10/7 Hayek, The Road to Serfdom 76-90

10/9 Hayek, The Road to Serfdom 91-111

10/12 Hayek, The Road to Serfdom 112-133

10/14 Hayek, The Road to Serfdom 134-156

10/16 Hayek, The Road to Serfdom 157-180

10/19 Sandel, What Money Can’t Buy 3-16

10/21 Sandel, What Money Can’t Buy 17-30
10/23 Sandel, *What Money Can’t Buy* 30-42
10/26 Sandel, *What Money Can’t Buy* 43-60
10/28 Sandel, *What Money Can’t Buy* 60-76
10/30 Sandel, *What Money Can’t Buy* 76-92

11/2
11/4
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11/11
11/13
11/16
11/18
11/20
11/23

11/25: Thanksgiving
11/27: Thanksgiving

11/30
12/2
12/4
12/7
12/9
12/11

12/18: Final Paper Due
Participation: 20%

This course deals with a collection of (sometimes difficult) economic and philosophical texts. Our class will not function unless you read the material for each class and have made a good faith effort to understand it. It will also not function if nobody other than me talks during class. We will go through the assigned reading every day and discuss it, which means that you will need to participate in our class discussions. As such, I want to reward keeping up with the reading as much as possible.

However, this semester comes with a twist courtesy of the coronavirus. The format of this course is face-to-face hybrid, which means only a third of you will come to class on any given day. As such, your participation grade will come in two segments. The first third of your participation will come from the questions you ask over Zoom when you are tuning in to our class remotely. You will be expected to follow along with the discussion and send in at least one question per class. We will periodically pause to answer Zoom questions during lecture. If you submit a question, then you will receive participation points. It is possible we will not have time to cover all of the questions, so we will introduce an element of randomness to determine whose question we will discuss. The other two thirds of your participation grade will come from your contributions on the days that you come to class. Given that it is much harder for people to participate in class discussion over Zoom, I will expect the people in class to help carry the discussion. On the days you come to class, you will need to come up with at least two questions or comments about that day’s readings. You will need to email the TA in advance of our discussion, and I will expect you to ask it during class. We may not get to everyone’s submitted questions, so we may have to introduce randomness to the process. Even if your questions are not covered specifically in the course of lecture. When questions come in from Zoom, I will throw them out to the students who have come to class, and I will give them the opportunity to expand on or respond to the questions before I do. If you are involved in this process, you will earn your participation points for the semester. All of this means that you need to pay special attention to the readings on the days you come to class so that help carry our discussions.

If you cannot attend class in person on the days you have been assigned for academic-excused or medical reasons, then you will need to send the questions in advance so that we can cover them.

This semester, participation will depend on your compliance with all of the COVID rules that USU has set out. You must always wear a mask while in class and maintain six feet of distance between yourself and other people.

Response Papers: 20%

The other writing assignments in this course will be graded primarily on quality. This assignment is more of a measure of your effort in doing and engaging with the readings. Each week, I will post two writing prompts on Canvas. You will need to pick five weeks over the course of the semester (and three before the halfway point of the course) and answer one of the weekly prompts with a one- to two-page answer. If you are in the ballpark here, you will get credit. You do not need to get everything right about the prompt; so long as you have made a
good faith effort to answer the question, you will get full points. You will post response papers to Canvas and email them to papersformike@gmail.com

Adam Smith Paper: 10%

Adam Smith is foundational to almost everything else we cover in this course, so there will be a short writing assignment (three pages) that asks you to explain what Adam Smith means by the “invisible hand” and to offer at least one critique that Smith offers of it from later in Wealth of Nations. This will also allow me to get an early look at your writing and give you feedback that will help you on later assignments that are worth more points.

Ask a Question: 10%

In the context of most papers in college, you argue for and defend a thesis. That is, you argue for a positive answer to some question or topic. This assignment will focus on asking, rather than answering, a question. However, unlike the questions that can count for credit in the context of classroom discussion, this question has to be more than just clarification. This question will first ground itself in an understanding of the text. It will show that the student comprehends key aspects of the author’s perspective. Through it, the student should demonstrate that they grasp the contours of the theory in question and can find rough edges or material for further discussion or thought. This question will be substantive in the sense that it will deal with a key aspect of the text and suggest avenues or pathways for further work or analysis. The student will schedule an appointment via Zoom with me and will have five to ten minutes to ask the question. I strongly encourage you to make this question the basis of your longer paper.

Podcast Debate: 20%

Questions of economics are amongst the most hotly contested in the modern age. As we will see from the course material, there are many and varied perspectives on how we should distribute material goods and services, how we should determine the value of various things and products, and what human beings need from their economic environment, and a range of other questions. This assignment asks you to enter into this debate by inhabiting the perspectives of one of the authors or economic theories in question in tandem with one or two other classmates. You will need to work with other students to pick two economic philosophies we have covered in the course and create characters that hold their respective positions. You will need to correctly represent with a proponent of the economic theories in question believes based on the readings for the course, and how that person might respond to the perspective and philosophy of their interlocutor in the conversation. You will need to record the audio of your conversation and submit it. I will evaluate your podcast based on how well and charitably you represent each side of the debate and how thoughtfully and constructively the “characters” engage with each other. Also, it should have the feel of a real conversation and not just a rote script or essay that you are reading from. There will also be a self and group assessment of each other’s contributions to the collective effort. This assignment should be fifteen to twenty minutes.

Paper: 20%
There will be two general tracks for this assignment which you can choose from:

1) Write a paper about the two of the foundational economic philosophies that we encounter in this course. Your job will be to compare and contrast one against the other. This assignment involves describing two of the economic theories by carefully examining and unpacking the texts we read in this course. Next, you will explain the similarities and differences between the two economic philosophies and then argue for which position you find more plausible. You will be evaluated on how well you can extract the parameters of each theory from the text and how cogent your final argument is in favor of one or the other.

2) Write a paper about a contemporary economic question or policy and explain how one of the theories we cover in the course would evaluate that policy. You must clearly explain what the policy is, and then describe one of the economic theories we cover in the course. After this, you will explain how the economic philosophy would view or evaluate the policy in question. Finally, you will say whether or not you agree or disagree with the evaluation of the economic theory and why.

Either of these options will be eight to ten pages.

Course Description

Over the past two and a half centuries, the Western world has seen the emergence of economics as a dominant and indispensable area of inquiry. Economic theories and figures have shaped much of the modern and contemporary world. Few fields generate more heated debate and widespread controversy. In this course, we are going to examine the underlying first principles and philosophical paradigms of the major theories of economics in existence today. One of the theses of this course is that the history of economic philosophy can be understood as how different figures have read and taken inspiration from Adam Smith and his classical liberal approach to the allocation of goods and services in various societies in world history. As such, we will carefully examine both Smith and other key figures in the history of the philosophy of economics.

This is not an economics course per se. Rather, it is an investigation into the metaphysical, epistemological, and normative questions (“should/should not”) surrounding wealth and the distribution of goods and services in society. What is wealth (or money or capital)? How does society distribute wealth? How should society distribute wealth? What is the nature of work? What are markets, and how should government be involved in them (if at all)? Furthermore, we will consider the place of the economic life within the context of the good life. How does access to material goods and services contribute to human happiness? How might it detract or distort human flourishing?

Course Description

Few periods in the history of the world have been more productive than classical Greece between 600 BCE and 300 BCE. The history of Western civilization would be entirely different without Greek advancements and contributions in history, architecture, science, medicine, poetry, drama, and a host of other fields and disciplines. This course will focus specifically on
Greek philosophy from this period. Philosophy in the Western tradition first emerged on the western coast of Anatolia among Ionic city-states, but beginning in 5th century Athens, philosophy took a fateful turn. Atomists and sophists began to undermine the foundation of Greek society, religion, and culture, which set the stage for new figures to pioneer novel approaches questions of ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology.

It is into this void that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle emerged. It is hard to overstate the influence of either Plato or Aristotle. Some combination of both Platonism and Aristotelianism became orthodoxy in the Western intellectual world for two thousand years after they lived. Even after the advent of the Scientific Revolution and Modern philosophy, it is still possible to find acolytes of Plato and Aristotle in every significant philosophical epoch up to and including the present day. In all likelihood, there will always be philosophers who call themselves Platonic or Aristotelian (or both) so long as there is any memory of the ancient history or philosophy itself. It is impossible to consider either intellectual history or serious philosophical questions without understanding what either figure thought and said.

This course aims to examine and unpack both Presocratic philosophy and some of the critical texts of both Plato and Aristotle. Their work touches on the foundational questions of human existence: what does it mean to be human; how should we live our lives; what is the nature of reality itself; how do we “divide nature at its joints”; how do we know what we know; what is beauty; what constitutes logical inferences? While it is possible to spend a lifetime asking these questions and studying the classical Greek answers to them, we will do our best to survey some of the most important aspects of their writings.

**Presocratics Paper: 10%**

The first writing assignment for this course will be a short essay (three pages) explaining some aspect of Presocratic philosophy. You may write on the moral skepticism of the sophists, the materialism of the atomists, Heraclitus, Parmenides, or monism of the Milesians (and perhaps on Xenophanes). This paper is purely exegesis and will help me get a first look at your writing. This will enable me to give you feedback for later work.

**Ask a Question: 10%**

In the context of most papers in college, you argue for and defend a thesis. That is, you argue for a positive answer to some question or topic. This assignment will focus on asking, rather than answering, a question. However, unlike the questions that can count for credit in the context of classroom discussion, this question has to be more than just clarification. This question will first ground itself in an understanding of the text. It will show that the student comprehends key aspects of the author’s perspective. Through it, the student should demonstrate that they grasp the contours of the theory in question and can find rough edges or material for further discussion or thought. This question will be substantive in the sense that it will deal with a key aspect of the text and suggest avenues or pathways for further work or analysis. The student will schedule an appointment via Zoom with me and will have five to ten minutes to ask the question. I strongly encourage you to make this question the basis of your longer paper.

**Final Paper:20%**
The final paper for this course will ask you to represent and enter into dialogue with the ancient philosophers we have covered in this course. Your paper should explore a serious question that deals with philosophically substantive aspects of the authors we read. I will give you broad latitude to come up with a topic you want to explore in your essay provided that you check it off with me (the “Ask a Question” assignment is a great way to do this). However, if you are looking for topics, here are a few areas that would prove fruitful:

- The nature of God
- The nature of matter (that is, what is the material world)
- The human good
- The fundamental constituents of the universe
- Morality
- Epistemology

Ideally, your paper will deal with how two figures from the course deal with one of the topics above (if you go this route). However, you can also explore one philosopher provided that you can find enough material for an entire essay. Again, there is a lot of latitude here provided you check things off with me. This paper should be eight to ten pages.

*Participation: 20%*

This course deals with a collection of (sometimes difficult) philosophical texts. Our class will not function unless you read the material for each class and have made a good faith effort to understand it. It will also not function if nobody other than me talks during class. We will go through the assigned reading every day and discuss it, which means that you will need to participate in our class discussions. As such, I want to reward keeping up with the reading as much as possible.

However, this semester comes with a twist courtesy of the coronavirus. The format of this course is face-to-face hybrid, which means only a third of you will come to class on any given day. As such, your participation grade will come in two segments. The first third of your participation will come from the questions you ask over Zoom when you are tuning in to our class remotely. You will be expected to follow along with the discussion and send in at least one question per class. We will periodically pause to answer Zoom questions during lecture. If you submit a question, then you will receive participation points. It is possible we will not have time to cover all of the questions, so we will introduce an element of randomness to determine whose question we will discuss. The other two thirds of your participation grade will come from your contributions on the days that you come to class. Given that it is much harder for people to participate in class discussion over Zoom, I will expect the people in class to help carry the discussion. On the days you come to class, you will need to come up with at least two questions or comments about that day’s readings. You will need to email the questions to me in advance of our discussion, and I will expect you to ask it during class. We may not get to all of the submitted questions, so we may have to introduce randomness to the process. When questions come in from Zoom, I will throw them out to the students who have come to class, and I will give them the opportunity to expand on or respond to the questions before I do. If you are involved in this process, you will earn your participation points for the semester. All of this means that you need to pay special attention to the readings on the days you come to class so that help carry our discussions.
If you cannot attend class in person on the days you have been assigned for academic-excused or medical reasons, then you will need to send the questions in advance so that we can cover them.

This semester, participation will depend on your compliance with all of the COVID rules that USU has set out. You must always wear a mask while in class and maintain six feet of distance between yourself and other people.

**Podcast Debate: 20%**

As we will see from the course material, dialogue and dialectic are central to Plato’s approach to philosophy. According to reports from ancient sources, Aristotle also wrote dialogues that have not survived. There are reasons that both figures turned to dialogue as a means to explore fundamental questions of human existence. This assignment will ask you to enter into this kind of dialogue. You will need to work with other students to pick two philosophers we have covered in the course and create characters that hold their respective positions. You will need to correctly represent what the philosophers in question believes based on the readings for the course, and how that person might respond to the perspective and philosophy of their interlocutor in the conversation. You will need to record the audio of your conversation and submit it. I will evaluate your podcast based on how well and charitably you represent each side of the debate and how thoughtfully and constructively the “characters” engage with each other. Also, it should have the feel of a real conversation and not just a rote script or essay that you are reading from. The reason for this is that I don’t just want you to repeat with the author in question said. I want you to think like they thought, or to inhabit their perspective and see through their eyes. There will also be a self and group assessment of each other’s contributions to the collective effort. This assignment should be fifteen to twenty minutes.

**Response Papers: 20%**

The other writing assignments in this course will be graded primarily on quality. This assignment is more of a measure of your effort in doing and engaging with the readings. Each week, I will post two writing prompts on Canvas. You will need to pick five weeks over the course of the semester (and three before the halfway point of the course) and answer one of the weekly prompts with a one- to two-page answer. If you are in the ballpark here, you will get credit. You do not need to get everything right about the prompt; so long as you have made a good faith effort to answer the question, you will get full points. You will post response papers to Canvas and email them to papersformike@gmail.com

Hello all,

My name is Michael Otteson. I am your instructor for Ethics and the Economic Life. While we are starting under unusual circumstances, I couldn’t be more excited about our upcoming course. We are going to cover some of the most influential intellectual figures of the past two hundred years who have shaped much of our contemporary world.
As you probably know, this course is hybrid face-to-face. This means that you will not attend every day of class. The cap for our room is 13, and we have 25 people enrolled in the class. That means only 13 of you will be in class on any given lecture. We will alternate days so that each cohort will come every other class period.

I take it from your signing up for the course that you can in principle make it to all our class times. Thus, the method I use to create the two groups shouldn’t matter and can be random. I have divided the class by alphabetical order. If you last name starts with any letter between A and Jon, you can come to class on Monday. Otherwise, you will attend on Wednesday in person, and you will need to stream the lecture Monday. The Zoom link will be posted to Canvas under the Zoom tab.

If you would prefer to come on a different day than I have assigned you, you have a golden opportunity to engage in some economic exchange! If you don’t like your time slot, then you can attempt to trade your slot with someone else. If you can do this, tell me and I will let you switch days.

In regards to our COVID policy, I expect everyone to follow the guidelines for class attendance that USU has laid out. If you are in class, you need to maintain six feet of distance from other individuals and to wear a mask. If you have come into contact with someone who has COVID or if you have COVID or COVID symptoms yourself, you need to stay home. If possible, you can follow along with lectures via Zoom. In the event your illness prevents you from even doing this, I will work to make whatever accommodations are necessary to allow you to make up work when you are able.

Finally, a word about the books: there are many different versions of the texts that we are using in this course. I picked versions that I thought were reasonably priced. However, if you already have different versions, want to purchase different versions, or can find free versions online, I think this is fine, so long as you can figure out a way to keep up with lectures and discussions where we use the assigned versions of the texts.

Again, I am excited for this semester, and I look forward to meeting you all. I will post the syllabus in short order, and we will discuss it on Monday.

Regards,

Michael Otteson

**Ancient Philosophy**

Hello all,

My name is Michael Otteson. I am your instructor for Ancient Philosophy. While we are starting under unusual circumstances, I couldn’t be more excited about our upcoming course. We are going to cover some of the most influential intellectual figures in the history of the world
who have profoundly shaped almost all intellectual thought that came afterwards (either as a direct influence or a foil to react against).

As you probably know, this course is hybrid face-to-face. This means that you will not attend every day of class. The cap for our room is 9, and we have 25 people enrolled in the class. That means only 9 of you will be in class on any given lecture. We will alternate days so that each cohort will come every third class period.

I take it from your signing up for the course that you can in principle make it to all our class times. Thus, the method I use to create the two groups shouldn’t matter and can be random. I have divided the class by alphabetical order. If you last name starts with any letter between A and Hog, you can come to class on Monday. If your last name starts with anything in the alphabet between Hor and M, you can come to class Wednesday. Otherwise, you will attend on Friday in person. The Zoom link will be posted to Canvas under the Zoom tab so that people not attending class in-person can stream the lecture.

If you would prefer to come on a different day than I have assigned you, you have a golden opportunity to engage in some economic exchange! If you don’t like your time slot, then you can attempt to trade your slot with someone else. If you can do this, tell me and I will let you switch days.

In regards to our COVID policy, I expect everyone to follow the guidelines for class attendance that USU has laid out. If you are in class, you need to maintain six feet of distance from other individuals and to wear a mask. If you have come into contact with someone who has COVID or if you have COVID or COVID symptoms yourself, you need to stay home. If possible, you can follow along with lectures via Zoom. In the event your illness prevents you from even doing this, I will work to make whatever accommodations are necessary to allow you to make up work when you are able.

Again, I am excited for this semester, and I look forward to meeting you all. I will post the syllabus in short order, and we will discuss it on Monday.

Regards,

Michael Otteson

**Social Ethics**

Hello all,

My name is Michael Otteson. I am your instructor for Social Ethics. While we are starting under unusual circumstances, I couldn’t be more excited about our upcoming course. We are going to cover some of the most consequential topics of contemporary ethics and politics.

As you probably know, this course is hybrid face-to-face. This means that you will not attend every day of class. The cap for our room is 31, and we have 50 people enrolled in the class.
That means only 31 of you will be in class on any given lecture. However, to make things even, I will divide the class in half and have one group come on Tuesdays and the other on Thursdays.

I take it from your signing up for the course that you can in principle make it to all our class times. Thus, the method I use to create the two groups shouldn’t matter and can be random. I have divided the class by alphabetical order. If you last name starts with any letter between A and La, then you can come to class on Tuesday. Otherwise, you can come Thursday. The Zoom link will be posted to Canvas under the Zoom tab so that people not attending class in-person can stream the lecture.

If you would prefer to come on a different day than I have assigned you, you have a golden opportunity to engage in some economic exchange! If you don’t like your time slot, then you can attempt to trade your slot with someone else. If you can do this, tell me and I will let you switch days.

In regards to our COVID policy, I expect everyone to follow the guidelines for class attendance that USU has laid out. If you are in class, you need to maintain six feet of distance from other individuals and to wear a mask. If you have come into contact with someone who has COVID or if you have COVID or COVID symptoms yourself, you need to stay home. If possible, you can follow along with lectures via Zoom. In the event your illness prevents you from even doing this, I will work to make whatever accommodations are necessary to allow you to make up work when you are able.

Again, I am excited for this semester, and I look forward to meeting you all. I will post the syllabus in short order, and we will discuss it on Monday.

Regards,

Michael Otteson