

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Capitalism & Morality: Adam Smith Thought - 56989

Last update 20-10-2016

HU Credits: 4

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: political science

Academic year: 0

Semester: Yearly

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Yiftah Elazar
Dr. Efraim Podoksik

Coordinator Email: yiftah.elazar@mail.huji.ac.il; podoksik@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Dr. Elazar, Mondays 14:30-15:30 Room 4316 (Social Sciences)

Dr Podoksik, Mondays 15:15-16:15 Room 4314 (Social sciences)

Teaching Staff:

*Dr. Yiftah Elazar
Dr. Efraim Podoksik*

Course/Module description:

*Adam Smith is widely regarded as one of the founders of modern economics, due to his classic work, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). He has long been regarded as a laissez-faire economist. Recently, however, another line of interpretation became prominent, seeing Smith's work on political economy as part of his larger corpus of writing on moral philosophy, jurisprudence, politics, history, rhetoric, the arts, natural science, and more. Some of Smith's revisionist scholars have argued that Smith's work points to some of the dangers and shortcomings of modern capitalism. This interpretation was picked up by US President Barack Obama, who drew on Adam Smith's work in arguing for raising the minimum wage in the US.*

*In this seminar, we examine Adam Smith's thought, focusing on his two major works, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *the Wealth of Nations*. We also reconstruct some of the intellectual conversations that Smith was having with his contemporaries, particularly Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Bernard Mandeville.*

The seminar is based on an intensive reading of primary texts. Each student will also be asked to present in class one recent study on Smith.

Through our study of Smith's work, we aim to gain insight into some of the basic dilemmas of modern political thought, in particular the tension between market economy and social values.

Course/Module aims:

To discuss basic dilemmas of modern political thought, in particular the tension between market economy and social values

To learn how to conduct research in the history of political thought

To expose students to recent studies and debates in political thought

To gain deeper insight into the work of one of the most important and influential thinkers in modernity

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

To critically read and analyze primary and secondary texts in history of political thought

To conduct research in the history of political thought - particularly to define a research question and construct an argument

To define a research question and construct an argument in the context of research in the history of political thought

Attendance requirements(%):

85

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Required reading and preparation at home, discussion in class, student presentations in class

Course/Module Content:

Select topics:

Smith's Project and Its Relevance

Smith, Rousseau, and Mandeville

The Concept of Sympathy and the Moral Imagination

The Impartial Spectator

Why Do We Admire the Rich and the Powerful

The Aesthetics of Social Order

The Character of Virtue

Patriotism and Social Reform

The Division of Labor

The Invisible Hand

The System of Natural Liberty

Stupidity in Commercial Society and Public Education

Taxes

Colonialism

Required Reading:

Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759)

Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1776)

Adam Smith, Lectures on Jurisprudence [1762-1764]

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men (1755)

Bernard Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees (1714, 1729)

Additional Reading Material:

See detailed syllabus

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 50 %

Presentation 50 %

Participation in Tutorials 0 %

Project work 0 %

Assignments 0 %

Reports 0 %

Research project 0 %

Quizzes 0 %

Other 0 %

Additional information:

Class Requirements:

1. Attendance and participation. Up to four classes overall may be missed without documentation or penalty.

2. Presentations. Each student will present one secondary text in class and submit a written summary of the presentation (2-4 pages) according to given instructions. Contribution to course grade: 50%.

Students taking this course as a regular class:

3. Take-home exam. Contribution to course grade: 50%.

Students taking this course as a seminar:

4. Research proposal (3-4 pages). Deadline: April 27, 2017. Contribution to course grade: 50%.

5. Research paper (25-30 pages). Deadline: September 30, 2017. Contribution to separate seminar paper grade: %100.

Special observations:

** It is not allowed to use laptops or other electronic devices during the lessons. All mobile phones should be switched off.*

** During the course the teachers may for academic reasons introduce changes into the course programme, including the assignments.*