Professor Robin
crobin@brooklyn.cuny.edu
3413 James
Office Hours: Thursday, 5-6 or by appointment

POLS 4000/Capstone Seminar
Spring 2016

This course looks at the relationship between political and economic life through an examination of a series of canonical texts in political theory, from ancient Greece through contemporary America. The questions we will be asking include: What is the economy? When did it come into being? What role should it play in political life? To what extent should the requirements of political life govern or supersede the requirements of the economy (and vice versa)? How has our thinking about these questions changed through time? To what extent is the contemporary political economy a reflection of—or a departure from—our canonical ways of thinking about these questions?

This course is also a capstone seminar where you are expected to write one substantive paper about a specific theme. Rather than write a research paper, you will be expected to undertake an analysis of one contemporary book about today's political economy through the lens of one or more of the canonical texts we will be reading in this class. By the conclusion of the seminar, you will have engaged in a sustained effort at close reading and textual analysis, political thinking, and good writing.

Course Requirements

1. Average of 50 pages reading per week.
2. Class Paper: 15-page analysis of one book on the contemporary economy that relates its findings to one or more of the canonical texts we read in class.
    a. One-page précis
    b. Detailed outline
    c. Rough draft
    d. Final draft
3. In-class presentation on your class paper.

Grading Policy

1. Reading and participation 20%
2. In-class presentation 20%
3. Class Paper 60%

Reading and participation are important in this course. You will be expected to do all the reading and to come to class prepared to contribute to the discussion. Grades for participation will be assigned as follows: If you show up for every class and say nothing, you will receive a participation grade in the D range. If you show up for every class and occasionally make a contribution, you will receive a grade in the C range. If you show up for every class and make regular contributions, which demonstrate knowledge of the reading, you will receive a grade in the B range. If you show up for every class and make regular

contributions, which demonstrate knowledge of the reading and independent as well as critical thought, you will receive a grade in the A range. Frequent absences and/or consistent silence in class will earn you a failing grade for participation. You will be allowed one absence throughout the course that will not count against your grade.

Except in the most extreme circumstances, there will be no incompletes. Any failure to complete all assignments will result in your receiving a failing grade for the course. All assignments must be handed in on time; each day's lateness will cost you 1/3 of a letter grade.

Plagiarism on any assignment—including rough drafts—will earn you a failing grade for the assignment in question. See http://ww.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies.

Texts

Course reader may be purchased for $23.50 at Far Better Copy, 43 Hillel Place.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1: February 4
Introduction

No Reading

Week 2: February 11

No class

Week 3: February 18
The Ancients

1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald (New York: Macmillan, 1962), I.1-2, IV.1-4, V.3-6, X.7-9 [3-5, 83-100, 118-130, 288-302]
2. Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), I, III.1-6, 9, VII.1-3, 8-10, 13-15 [1-25, 65-77, 79-82, 191-197, 203-208, 212-219]

Week 4: February 25
The Moderns

1. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 285-302
2. Locke, *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
    a. "An Essay on the Poor Law," 182-198
    b. "Trade," 221-222
    c. "Labour," 326-328

Week 5: March 3

Economic Sentiments

1. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 50-66, 179-193, 212-217

Week 6: March 10
Labor Rules

1. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981), 13-30, 44-54, 65-104, 781-788

Week 7: March 17
Capitalism

1. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker ((New York: Norton, 1978), 302-343, 351-367, 373-376

Précis due Sunday, March 20, via email.

Week 8: March 24
Neoliberalism

1. Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, ed. Bruce Caldwell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 124-133
1. Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, ed. Ronald Hamowy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 80-84, 96-102, 190-196
2. Gary Becker, "The Economic Approach to Human Behavior" and "The Economic Way of Looking at Behavior", in *The Essence of Becker*, ed. Ramón Febrero and Pedro Schwartz (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1995), 3-17, 633-658

Week 9: March 31
No class

Outline due Sunday, April 3, via email.

Week 10: April 7
In-class presentations

Week 11: April 14
In-class presentations

Week 12: April 21
In-class presentations

Week 13: April 28
Spring Break

No class

Rough draft due Sunday, May 1, via email.

Week 14: May 5
In-class presentations

Week 15: May 12
In-class presentations

Final Paper due on Tuesday, May 26, via email.

Books on Contemporary Political Economy

1. Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton, *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015)
2. Mark Blyth, *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)
3. Andrea Louise Campbell, *Trapped in America's Safety Net: One Family's Struggle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014)
4. Kathryn Edin and Luke Shaefer, *2.00 Dollars a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2015)
5. Chrystia Freeland, *Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else* (New York: Penguin, 2012)
6. Ted Genoways, *Chained: Farm, Factory, and the Fate of Our Food* (New York: Harper, 2014)
7. Steven Greenhouse, *The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker* (New York: Knopf, 2008)
8. Peter Griffiths, *The Economist's Tale: A Consultant Encounters Hunger and the World Bank* (New York: Zed, 2003)
9. Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer—and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009)
10. David Cay Johnston, *Free Lunch: How the Wealthiest Americans Enrich Themselves at Government Expense (and Stick You with the Bill)* (New York: Portfolio, 2007)
11. David Cay Johnston, *Perfectly Legal: The Covert Campaign to Rig Our Tax System to Benefit the Super-Rich—And Cheat Everybody Else* (New York: Portfolio, 2005)
12. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan, 2007)
13. Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism Versus the Climate* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014)
14. Michael Lewis, *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine* (New York: Norton, 2010)
15. Jane Mayer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (New York: Random House, 2016)
16. Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009)
17. Pietra Rivoli, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Politics, and Power of World Trade* (New York: Wiley, 2004)
18. Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New York: Penguin, 2009)