

PHIL 445: NINETEENTH CENTURY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Government and Society: The Rise of Political Economy

Winter 2009: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:35-9:55 in Leacock 210

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Office Hours: TBA

Draft course outline: subject to revision

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The Nineteenth Century saw the dramatic decline of the classical model of political philosophy that had dominated the previous two centuries, and had consisted largely of defining the natural rights of persons and proposing the sovereign legal framework within which these rights would be best respected. The modern political order had taken hold to such an extent that such encyclopedic articulations of that order were no longer necessary. Instead, the new century was marked by “sociological” and historical investigations into the conditions of modernity (Tocqueville, Burkhardt, etc.), polemical defenses of and attacks upon the ascendant modern order (Constant, Nietzsche, etc.), imaginative utopian schemes (Fourier, Cabet, etc.), and most importantly for the purposes of this class, increasingly elaborate and rigorous efforts to establish a scientific discourse that would amount to a social physics of this modern order. This aspirational physics of society was originally called “political economy” but came to be known simply as “economics.”

In this course, we will consider the rise of economics by observing its effect on two of the great tomes of Nineteenth-Century political thought: Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* and Marx’s *Capital*. The former is, in a sense, the last of the classical articulations and large-scale apologies for the new social and political order. Hegel was deeply impressed by Adam Smith early in his life, and was deeply respectful of political economy’s claim to explain the laws of motion of modern society. In the *Philosophy of Right*, he writes; “Political economy is the science which must go on to explain mass relationships and mass movements in their qualitative and quantitative determinacy and complexity. This is one of the sciences which have originated in the modern age as their element” (§189). Nonetheless, Hegel was also quite critical of the civil society described and advocated by political economy, and emphasizes the necessity that other sources of meaning and community justify civil society.

Marx, on the other hand, is the consummate critic of modern society, and the subtitle to *Capital* is “A Critique of Political Economy.” Economics is the primary ideology of the modern world, according to Marx, mystifying and sanctifying historically and violently created relations such that they appear as natural and immutable, the destiny of human life. However, Marx’s relationship with political economy is just as complex as Hegel’s, in that he too accepts that the economic relations are very real and very determinative of modern social and political existence.

Our investigations of these two works will be illuminated by supplementary readings from political economy itself. We will seek to understand the basic outlines of both classical political economy and the rise of marginal utility theory that overturned the classical model in favor of what would become neo-classical economics. We will look carefully at Hegel's attempt to synthesize this economic model of society with classical and even ancient understandings of the political republic. Finally we will delve into Marx's critique of political economy. The readings for this course are extremely difficult, and will therefore require patience and careful attention. Our course meetings will be spent in close, interactive examination of the texts.

Prerequisite: at least one course in political philosophy

Restriction: Not open to students who have taken POLI 434

Both the prerequisite and the restriction can be overridden by the instructor's permission.

COURSE TEXTS:

GWF Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, translated by Alan White, Focus/R. Pullins Co.

Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, translated by Ben Fowkes, Penguin/Vintage

These texts are available from The Word Bookstore at 469 Milton Street (cash/check only).

There will also be additional readings available via WebCT.

COURSEWORK:

1. Your attendance and participation will be worth 25% of the course grade.
2. There will be a term paper due at the end of the class. This assignment will include a number of marked preliminary stages, and will be worth, in sum, 75% of the course grade. I will distribute more details on 11 January.

READING SCHEDULE:

NB: I have divided the assigned texts by week, rather than by individual class meeting.

J 4/6 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel's Introduction & Abstract Right

J 11/13 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Ethicality: The Family
de Tracy, from "Elements of Ideology"

J 18/20 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Ethicality: Civil Society, A
Smith, from *The Wealth of Nations*

J 25/27 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Ethicality: Civil Society, B
J. S. Mill, from *Principles of Political Economy* (Book IV, Chapter 1)

F 1/3 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Ethicality: Civil Society, C
James Mill, "The End of Government," from *Government*

F 8/10 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Ethicality: The State

	Constant, "The Liberty of Ancients [and] Moderns" Bastiat, "The State," from <i>Selected Essays on Political Economy</i>
F 15/17	Marx and Engels, from the manuscripts of 1845 ("The German Ideology")
F 22/24	Mid-winter Break
M 1/3	Marx, Preface to <i>A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy</i> (1859) Marx, <i>Capital</i> , Preface to the First Edition and Postface to the Second Edition
M 8/10	Marx, <i>Capital</i> , Chapter 1 Ricardo, from <i>On the Principles of Political Economy</i> Jevons, "Theory of Utility," from <i>The Theory of Political Economy</i>
M 15/17	Marx, <i>Capital</i> , Chapters 4-7, 10 Jevons, "Theory of Labour," from <i>The Theory of Political Economy</i> Bastiat, "Producer and Consumer" from <i>Economic Harmonies</i> Bastiat, "Capital," from <i>Economic Harmonies</i> Say, "On the Formation of Capital," from <i>A Catechism of Political Economy</i>
M 22/24	Marx, <i>Capital</i> , Part Four Mill, from <i>Principles of Political Economy</i> (Book IV, Chapter 7) Bastiat, "Human vs. Mechanical Labor," from <i>Economic Sophisms</i>
M 29/31	Marx, <i>Capital</i> , Chapters 16, 24, and 25 Sismondi, "Introduction," from <i>Inquiries Into Political Economy</i>
A 5/7	Marx, <i>Capital</i> , Part Eight

RULES, POLICIES AND OTHER PEDANTRIES:

It is essential that you keep up with the reading and bring the text to every class meeting.

Because it is in everyone's interest that the coursework end when the course ends, I will not give anyone a K in the absence of a documented medical situation.

I strongly encourage you to stop by my office hours to talk about your written assignments before turning them in. However, if you want me to read a draft, you must give it to me a) in person, and b) at least one full week before the due date.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. I can suggest French editions of (most of) the texts, if you would prefer. Please ask.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (for more information see: <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity>). *L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter www.mcgill.ca/integrity).*

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.