Course Syllabus:

History of Economic Thought
UVM EC 196B/SPRING 2013/JEFFRD 110/MWF 3:00-3:50

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Office Hours: MWF 3:55-5:10 (or by appointment)
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Required Texts:*


Recommended Texts: **

Adam's Fallacy (Paperback edition), Duncan Foley
New Ideas from Dead Economists (2nd revised edition), Todd Buchholtz

* The required texts have been ordered by UVM's bookstore and should be available by start of classes. New and used editions are available through a number of online book vendors, such as Amazon.com and CampusBooks.com.

** Recommended texts will be placed on reserve. There will be some assigned readings from recommended texts (and other sources) that will supplement reading assignments from the required texts. When possible, these readings will be placed at Blackboard (Bb).

Course Objectives:

The course lectures will follow closely the required texts. You are responsible for all the readings assigned from the required/recommended texts, and the lectures pertaining to those readings, and related class homework, in-class games/exercises and classroom discussions.

One of the most important objectives of this course is to provide students with an understanding of how and why new economic ideas and theories emerge historically. To achieve this goal of understanding the development of economic thought, we will need to keep one eye on the watershed events and social transformations that preoccupied each of the great economic thinkers. Specifically, we want to ask: How did historical events influence development of new thinking about society and economics?
A second objective and emphasis in this course relates to a central question in economic thought – what is value? What is this thing called value? It is not an easy question to answer and we will spend a great deal of the semester exploring how such a seemingly simple question could become so contentious. We will explore the “evolution” of views on value beginning with pre-classical thought, continuing through the classical economists, and ending with neo-classical thinkers. Theories of value have significant implications politically, a dimension that will be fully explored.

A third learning focus will be on the question of distribution – who gets what and why from the economic pie? Here it is important to pay attention to why some individuals get bigger slices than others and how the distribution of income impacts prospects for economic growth and viability of capitalism in the long run. We will trace theories of distribution (and value) of all the great thinkers and explore the implications of, and problems with, such theories.

Finally, there will be some off-the-beaten-path explorations of the unique contributions that major thinkers have made to the study of economics. These are not necessarily connected to the objectives outlined above. Generally speaking, the aim of the course is to foster development of a broad grasp of the main schools of economic thought – old and new – and provide students with an understanding of the important current and historical economic debates (clashing views that persist today).

**Learning Methodology:**

With a subject as vast as the history of economic thought, and with so little time in a 3-credit course, we will need to develop an efficient methodology for learning – and one that helps students achieve the objectives outlined above. Reading assignments and related class lectures, therefore, will need to be approached with a detective's mindset, looking for the important clues to getting the story right and not fixating on unnecessary details.

To help students parse the important details from the unimportant, I created a set of essential study questions to use while reading and attending lectures. These questions (see below) should be kept in mind when reading and participating in lectures. This will help keep the learning process more organized and productive.

The questions below (and homework exercises at Bb) should frame the focus of your attention throughout the course.
Study Guide Questions:

1. How did economic/social/political events shape development of each school of economic thought?
2. What value concept underlies each theory or school of economic thought? How do they differ? How are they the same?
3. Who gets what and why from the economic pie according to each school of economic thought?
4. What key assumptions are made by each school of economic thought? How do these assumptions reflect bias, if any?
5. Is there a major social problem being targeted for solution by each school of economic thought? What is it?
6. Where do the roots of a theory or school of economic thought lead politically? Ideologically?
7. Who appears to gain from a theory or school of economic thought? Who appears to lose, if anybody?
8. What implicit and explicit conclusions are reached about individuals and markets by each school of economic thought?

When readings are assigned, it is expected that students be able to prepare for class using the above questions as a means of preparation (you will be asked to discuss relevance of readings to questions above where applicable and answer related questions on exams). Occasionally, additional readings will be assigned from non-required text and articles. Homework exercise assignments will be made available for each chapter covered in Hunt (the principal text) at Bb to keep you on your toes with regards to the readings (see below). Deadlines will be announced by the instructor.

Lecture Topic Outline/Class Schedule: ***

1. Introduction: The Emergence of Capitalism
2. Economic Ideas Before Adam Smith
3. Adam Smith and the Invisible Hand
4. Thomas Robert Malthus on Welfare, Population, Crisis
5. David Ricardo's Principles of Political Economy
6. Rationalistic Subjectivism in Bentham, Say and Senior
7. Political Economy of the Poor and Ideas of Thompson/Hodgskin
8. Pure Vs. Eclectic Utilitarianism in Bastiat and Mill

[Midterm 1: Exam given on 2/23] – Subject to modification by instructor.

9. Karl Marx's Critique of Capitalism
10. The Triumph of Utilitarianism in Jevons, Menger, Walras
11. Thorstein Veblen's Critique of Economics
12. Theories of Imperialism in Hobson, Luxemburg, and Lenin
13. Consummation, Consecration, and Destruction of the Invisible Hand (Neoclassical welfare economics)
Midterm 2: Exam given on 3/29 - Subject to modification by instructor.

14. Annulment of the Myth of the Measurable Productivity of Capital (Sraffa)
15. Contemporary Economics I (Bifurcation of Orthodoxy)
16. Contemporary Economics II (Institutionalism and Post-Keynesian Economics)
17. Contemporary Economics III (The Revival of Critical Political Economy)

[Final Exam: Thursday 5/09/2013, 7:30-10:15 AM, JEFFRD 110]

*** The instructor reserves the right to alter the course outline at any time. The above outline is derived from the principal text by Hunt. Readings from the three other required texts will be assigned periodically to supplement and provide additional perspectives on topics covered in the outline above.

Grading Policy:

Grades will be based on two mid-term exams (25% each), a final exam (35%, non-cumulative), and homework assignments & in-class quizzes (15%). Exam format is a mixture of short answers, multiple choice and true/false. The same format is used for homework assignments, which will be placed on Blackboard and are to be completed online. Homework deadlines will be announced in-class. Late assignments receive a 50% discount. The lowest homework grade is dropped at the end of the semester. Homework exercise solutions will be provided to homework exercise questions and reviewed by the instructor.

Attendance Expectations:

You are required to attend every class and will be held responsible for material assigned and presented in class. Exams will be based on readings/exercises and any material presented or discussed in lectures. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to acquire the material presented and assigned in that class. The professor may assign in-class quizzes without notice.

Email Policy:

The instructor cannot guarantee a timely response to e-mail inquiries/communication in terms of any course requirement deadlines (inside of 48 hours), although the instructor does try to respond to e-mail inquiries as quickly as possible.
Electronic Devices:

No electronic devices are permitted during class time unless pre-arranged with the professor. For pre-approval, the student must demonstrate appropriate classroom use of a device (i.e., laptop for note taking).

UVM Code of Academic Integrity:

Violations of the UVM's Code of Academic Integrity are any acts which would have the effect of unfairly promoting or enhancing one's academic standing within the entire community of learners. Such acts are serious offenses and will not be tolerated. Any suspected violations of the Code will be forwarded to the Center for Student Ethics & Standards.

Go to http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmpgp/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf to read the Code of Academic Integrity.

UVM Diversity Statement:

The University of Vermont holds that diversity and academic excellence are inseparable. An excellent university, particularly one that is a public land grant, needs to actively seek to provide access to all students who can excel at the institution, without respect to their backgrounds and circumstances, including, among other differences, those of race, color, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin, socio-economic status, cultural and/or geographic background, religious belief, age, and disability. There is, moreover, a compelling national interest in a higher education sector rich in diversity and opportunity, and a clear state interest in making the educational benefits of this diversity and opportunity accessible to all.