

REPOLITICISING CAPITALISM: CONTRADICTIONS, CRITIQUE AND ALTERNATIVES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIETY AND GLOBALISATION SUMMER SCHOOL

Date: 1–12 August 2016

Location: Roskilde University

Content: Modern mainstream economic theory is based on highly political assumptions, which are rarely challenged: dogmas of deregulation, mathematical models and austerity are treated as objective scientific facts, rather than ideological tools with a social and political history of their own. This course aims to repoliticize the study of economics and challenge the hegemony of neoclassical economic theory. This will be accomplished through a historical examination of the development of economic thought, and critical engagement with original economic texts. As such, the course objective is to understand the varied historical effect of these theories on both the object of study and the discipline itself.

The first part of the course, “Economic Thought from Oikos to Economics,” traces the history of economic ideas with an emphasis on critical and heterodox approaches. The individual sessions will introduce students to carefully selected primary literature from classical, critical and heterodox strands of economic thought. The objective is to understand the varied historical effect of these theories on both the object of study and the discipline itself. This will provide the foundation for further elaboration on contemporary issues such as debt, unemployment, inequality, and growth.

The second part of the course, “Contemporary Challenges, Critiques and Alternatives,” addresses present and pressing issues through the lens of critical and heterodox political economy. This theoretical and applied pluralism will provide insights on issues such as e.g. the development crisis, financialisation, austerity politics and climate change, that are not conceptually possible if sticking to mainstream approaches. Through the employment of recent critiques, the latter section of the course offers potential pathways towards different conceptualisations and alternatives to “the economy” as we know it.

Learning outcomes: The course objective is to:

- introduce students to carefully selected primary literature from classical, critical and heterodox strands of economic thought
- provide students with a thorough understanding of core concepts and debates in critical political economy
- enable students to apply core theoretical and methodological aspects of heterodox perspectives to a given case-based event or process
- encourage students to critically reflect on contemporary dynamics and developments in the global economy
- address key methodological challenges linking theory and empirical research for critical analyses

Course format: The course takes place over a two-week period and comprises a range of activities. Each week there are four days of teaching and one day of self-study. Each half-day session consists of an interactive lecture of 1½ hours and a workshop of 1½ hours.

The lectures will present a variety of critical approaches, drawing on the readings and the lecturers’ own work. The core element of the summer school is active learning-oriented workshop seminars, in which the participants discuss the theoretical, methodological and empirical issues raised in the lectures. There will also be opportunities for participants to present their own work to the group. Self-study periods, facilitated by the

enabling learning environment Roskilde University campus provides, offer an opportunity for students to improve their knowledge and understanding.

Assessment: The basic requirements of the course are active participation in the sessions, including presentation in a group. Please note that there are different examination formats, based on which programme you are enrolled in, and/or how many ECTS points you have registered for.

For Global Studies, IDS and international students:

- **7.5 ECTS (Complementary Seminar):** The summer school is assessed on the basis of an individually written paper of a maximum of 13,500 keystrokes incl. spaces. The topic(s) for the paper (on the basis of the teaching and literature) will be handed out simultaneously to all students after the conclusion of the seminar, on Monday 15 August. Students must upload their completed papers no more than 48 hours later. The paper is assessed by the course instructors, and the grade is awarded according to the seven-point scale.
- There is a re-examination opportunity for this examination on 5–7 September 2016 (same format).
- **10 ECTS (Advanced Seminar):** The examination consists of an individually written research paper, of a length not exceeding 24,000 keystrokes (incl. spaces and bibliography, ca. 6–8 pages). Students are free to choose a topic for the paper; however, at least 300 pages of the course literature should be used. More details for this assignment in the first session. The paper must be submitted before 26 August at 12.00 (noon). If necessary, the re-examination period for this assignment will be in September 2016.
- **Students of Public Administration and Politics and Administration – Advanced Study Course (10 ECTS):** The examination consists of one written assignment (further details in the first session) during the course and a 48-hour examination (see above).

Recommended background literature: If you would like to prepare for the course other than reading the specific session literature, we would recommend you start with the following titles:

- Chang, Ha-Joon. *Economics: The User's Guide*. London: Pelican, 2014.
- Fine, Ben, and Dimitris Milonakis. *From Political Economy to Economics: Method, the Social and the Historical in the Evolution of Economic Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Pradella, Lucia, and Thomas Marois, eds. *Polarizing Development: Alternatives to Neoliberalism and the Crisis*. London: Pluto Press, 2014.
- Selwyn, Benjamin. *The Global Development Crisis*. Cambridge: Polity, 2014.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View*. London: Verso, 2002.

Course plan and literature

Part I: Economic Thought from Oikos to Political Economy

1. The Emergence of “the Economy”

The idea of the economy as a separate sphere of production, exchange and consumption is a fairly recent invention. This session traces the movement from the Greek conception of *oikos* (household), over political economy, to the emergence of “the economy” as a distinct sphere in modern society, focusing specifically on the works of Adam Smith and G. W. F. Hegel, where this development was first registered.

Required readings

- Avineri, Shlomo. *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, 87–94, 132–137, 141–147.
- Hegel, G. W. F. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Edited by Allen W. Wood. Translated by H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 220–228 (§§182–189).

- Screpanti, Ernesto, and Stefano Zamagni. *An Outline of the History of Economic Thought*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 29–31, 54–55, 65–73.
- Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations*. Books I–III. London: Penguin, 1999, 104–106, 109–116.

Suggested readings

- Buck-Morss, Susan. “Envisioning Capital: Political Economy on Display.” *Critical Inquiry* 21, no. 2 (1995): 434–467.
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins. “The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism.” In *Democracy against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*, 19–48. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

2. Karl Marx and the Critique of Political Economy (guest: Bob Jessop)

Karl Marx presented one of the earliest and most convincing critiques of classical political economy and capitalism. This session will introduce his system of historical materialism with emphasis on his conception of exploitation, class struggle and the workings of the capitalist system – and their relevance to contemporary political economy.

Required readings

- Marx, Karl. “Preface to *A Critique of Political Economy*.” In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd ed., edited by David McLellan, 424–428. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. 1. Translated by Ben Fowkes. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976, 125–177.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. “The Communist Manifesto.” In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd ed., edited by David McLellan, 246–254. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Reading suggestions from Bob Jessop

- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. 1. Translated by Ben Fowkes. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976, chap. 4, 247–257.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. 3. Translated by David Fernbach. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981, chap. 21, 459–479.

Suggested readings

- Harvey, David. *A Companion to Marx’s Capital*. London: Verso, 2010, 15–37.

3.-4. The Marginalist Revolution: the Birth of Modern Economics + Keynes and the Post-Keynesian Counter Revolution (Jesper Jespersen)

This double session focuses on economic thought as it developed from the late nineteenth century and onwards. This period saw the emergence of a new (radical) conceptualization of the economy. It will trace how “the marginalists” and neoclassical economists came to rely on depoliticized mathematics and redefined the economy as guided by subjective calculative decisions in the sphere of consumption, with value being determined by “marginal utility.” It will then contrast this with Keynes’ *General Theory*, the birth of macroeconomics and demand-led state policies. Finally, it will present a heterodox post-Keynesian framework, where the role of distribution is reinvented.

Required readings

- Jespersen, Jesper. *Macroeconomic Methodology: A Post-Keynesian Perspective*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2009. Introduction and chap. 1.
- Jevons, W. Stanley. *The Theory of Political Economy*. 5th ed. New York: Kelley & Millman, 1957, 1–27.

- Keynes, John Maynard. “Poverty in Plenty.” In *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*. Vol. 13, 485–492. London: Macmillan, 1973.
- Keynes, John Maynard. *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*. London: Macmillan, 1936. Preface and chaps. 1–2.

Suggested readings

- Fine, Ben, and Dimitris Milonakis. *From Political Economy to Economics: Method, the Social and the Historical in the Evolution of Economic Theory*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009, 216–244.
- Mirowski, Philip. “The When, the How and the Why of Mathematical Expression in the History of Economic Analysis.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5, no. 1 (1991): 145–157.
- Piketty, Thomas. “Putting Distribution Back at the Center of Economics: Reflections on *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 29, no. 1 (2015): 67–88.

5. Thorstein Veblen and Evolutionary Institutionalism

While famous for coining the term “neo-classical economics,” the theoretical contributions of the American-Norwegian Thorstein Veblen remain overlooked in contemporary debates on the economy. Writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Veblen saw social and economic behavior guided not by general deductive principles but by the prevailing habits of a given society. Departing from American pragmatism, Veblen and his contemporaries stressed the evolutionary aspect of institutions, and the destructive aspect of markets, namely how capitalist businesses functioned by means of sabotage, thereby limiting competition and the efficiency of the economy as a whole.

Required readings

- O’Hara, Phillip Anthony. “The Contemporary Relevance of Thorstein Veblen’s Institutional-Evolutionary Political Economy.” *History of Economics Review* 35, no. 1 (2002): 78–103.
- Veblen, Thorstein. *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America*. New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1923, 1–15 and 82–100.
- Veblen, Thorstein. “Why Is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science?” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 12, no. 4 (1898): 373–397.

Suggested readings

- Kier, Dan. “Finance Capital, Neo-Liberalism and Critical Institutionalism.” *Critical Sociology* 35, no. 3 (2009): 395–416.
- Plotkin, Sidney. “War and Economic Crisis: What Would Veblen Say?” *Society* 47 (2010): 240–245.

6. Capitalism and Ideology

Capitalism is not what it appears to be; it systematically distorts our perception of society and our role in it. This is the reason that we find it easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism; the reason we perceive the economy as determining our existence, even though it is merely the sum of our collective behavior. This session is dedicated to examining the role of ideology in sustaining contemporary capitalism via Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism and Žižek’s analysis of ideology.

Required readings

- Harvey, David. *A Companion to Marx’s Capital*. London: Verso, 2010, 38–47.
- Marx, Karl. “The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret.” In *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. 1. Translated by Ben Fowkes, 163–177. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.
- Žižek, Slavoj. “How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?” In *Mapping Ideology*, edited by Slavoj Žižek, 296–331. London: Verso, 1994.

Suggested readings

- Osborne, Peter. *How to Read Marx*. London: Granta Books, 2005, 11–21.
- Žižek, Slavoj. “Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology.” In *Mapping Ideology*, edited by Slavoj Žižek, 1–33. London: Verso, 1994.

Part II: Contemporary Challenges, Critiques and Alternatives

7. Labour and Production (guest: Lucia Pradella)

The recent phase of “neoliberal globalisation” and the global economic crisis have had a profound impact on labour and production. Undermining the neoclassical view that technological development results in increasing wellbeing and reduced working hours, the crisis is determining, also in “rich” Western European countries, a trend towards impoverishment and longer working hours. How can we explain this trend? How can we understand the effects of the crisis on labour and production? And, on the other side, what is the impact of labour and production on the global economic crisis? This session addresses these questions from historical, theoretical and empirical points of view. It first seeks to provide students with tools for developing an understanding of the relationship between labour, production, and social change. It then applies these tools to analyse the effects of the crisis in Western Europe and reflect about alternatives.

Required readings

- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. 1. Translated by Ben Fowkes. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976. Chap. 10, sections 5 and 6, 375–411.
- Pradella, Lucia. “The Working Poor in Western Europe: Labour, Poverty, and Global Capitalism.” *Comparative European Politics* 13, no. 5 (2015): 596–613.

Suggested readings

- Braverman, Harry. *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998 [1974], chap. 4, 59–85.
- Clua-Losada, Mònica, and Laura Horn. “Analysing Labour and the Crisis: Challenges, Responses and New Avenues.” *Global Labour Journal* 5, no. 2 (2014): 102–113.
- Ohno, Taiichi. *Toyota Production System: Beyond Large-Scale Production*. Cambridge, MA: Productivity Press, 1988, chap. 3, 45–74.
- Silver, Beverly. “Theorizing the Working Class in the Twenty-First Century.” In *Workers and Labour in a Globalised Capitalism: Contemporary Themes and Theoretical Issues*, edited by Maurizio Atzeni, 46–69. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

8. Social Reproduction and Gender

Throughout the twentieth century the relationship between production and social reproduction has been at the forefront of socialist feminist political struggles and theoretical analyses. Social reproduction enables us to apprehend capitalism as a social totality entwining, albeit unevenly, the sphere of production and the sphere where the gendered, raced and largely devalued reproduction of labour power is made possible. This section will provide a historical and theoretical introduction to past and contemporary theoretical debates on social reproduction in order to understand the gendered causes and consequences of the recent financial crisis and the rise of transnational business feminism.

Required readings

- Bakker, Isabella. “Social Reproduction and the Constitution of a Gendered Political Economy.” *New Political Economy* 12, no. 4 (2007): 541–556.
- Fraser, Nancy. “Behind Marx’s Hidden Abode: For an Expanded Conception of Capitalism.” *New Left Review* 86 (March–April 2014): 55–72.

- Hajek, Katharina, and Benjamin Opratko. “Crisis Management by Subjectivation: Toward a Feminist Neo-Gramscian Framework for the Analysis of Europe’s Multiple Crisis.” *Globalizations* 13, no. 2 (2016): 217–231.
- Roberts, Adrienne. “Financial Crisis, Financial Firms... and Financial Feminism? The Rise of ‘Transnational Business Feminism’ and the Necessity of Marxist-Feminist IPE.” *Socialist Studies / Études socialistes* 8, no. 2 (2012): 85–108.

Suggested readings

- Bakker, Isabella, and Stephen Gill, eds. *Power, Production and Social Reproduction: Human In/security in the Global Political Economy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Chaps. 1–2.
- Butler, Judith. “Merely Cultural.” *Social Text* 15, no. 3/4 (1997): 265–277.
- Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. New York: Autonomedia, 2004, chap. 1, 1–20.
- Fischer, Anita, and Daniela Tepe. “What’s ‘Critical’ about Critical Theory: Capturing the Social Totality.” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 14, no. 3 (2011): 366–375.
- Prügl, Elisabeth. “Neoliberalising Feminism.” *New Political Economy* 20, no. 4 (2015): 614–631.
- Viewpoint Magazine. “Issue 5: Social Reproduction.” November 2, 2015.
- Waylen, Georgina. “You Still Don’t Understand: Why Troubled Engagements Continue between Feminists and (Critical) IPE.” *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 145–164.

9. Neoliberalism and Marketization

The neoliberal doctrine that markets are a social and moral good in themselves was developed by the Chicago School and came to the fore with the election of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. The financial crisis of 2008 strengthened this ideology, which has by now come to define our political and economic horizons. This session investigates the origins, development and limitations of this doctrine.

Required readings

- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79*. Edited by Michel Senellart. Translated by Graham Burchell. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 215–238.
- Friedman, Milton. “The Role of Government in a Free Society.” In *Capitalism and Freedom*, 22–36. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 5–38.

Or

- Konings, Martijn. “Neoliberalism and the American State.” *Critical Sociology* 36, no. 5 (2010): 741–765.

Additional readings

- Bonefeld, Werner. “Freedom and the Strong State: On German Ordoliberalism.” *New Political Economy* 17, no. 5 (2012): 633–656.
- Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone Books, 2015, 201–222.
- Panitch, Leo, and Martijn Konings. “Myths of Neoliberal Deregulation.” *New Left Review* 57 (May–June 2009): 67–83.

10. Development and its discontents

Immediately after decolonization the “third world” was established as an object of intervention and “development.” However, critical voices in the global south soon contended that the theories and practices of development constituted a continuation of colonial exploitation, resource extraction and domination. This session will provide an overview of different theories of development and their discontents, namely dependency theory and post-development thought.

Readings

- Escobar, Arturo. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, 3–20. (And/or chap. 2 up to around p. 47.)
- Ferguson, James. “The Anti-Politics Machine: ‘Development,’ Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho.” *The Ecologist* 24, no. 5 (1994): 176–181.
- Kiely, Ray. “The Last Refuge of the Noble Savage? A Critical Assessment of Post-Development Theory.” *European Journal of Development Research* 11, no. 1 (1999): 30–55.

11. Growth and Degrowth in the 21st Century

For mainstream economists economic growth is all good and a goal to be pursued everywhere and at all times. Due to the scientific status of economics the positive nature of growth seems to be beyond dispute and the great majority of politicians, left and right, consider growth to be the primary object of politics. However, in recent years growth has also been challenged by degrowth theorists and activists because of the ecological, human and social ills of growth. Since the financial crises, growth has been low throughout the rich countries of the world, and much has been done to restore high growth, but with poor results. Why is growth structurally low in the twenty-first century? What is wrong with growth and what are the alternatives? This session looks at growth and degrowth from an ecological economics perspective and a neo-Marxist perspective.

Readings

- Jackson, Tim. *Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet*. London and New York: Earthscan, 2009, chaps. 3–4, 49–86.
- Nielsen, Peter. “No Future: Degrowth as Dissent in the Wealth Society.” In *Politics of Dissent*, edited by Martin Bak Jørgensen and Óscar García Agustín, 203–220. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015.

Additional readings

- Jackson, Tim. *Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet*. London and New York: Earthscan, 2009, chaps. 5–8, 87–142.
- Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. London: Allen Lane, 2014, introduction, 1–28.

12. Social struggles and alternative ways of (re)producing everyday life

Repoliticising Capitalism would be a meaningless project if we do not also discuss strategies and avenues for alternatives. But is another world really possible? Where do we locate spaces of hope in an increasingly unequal global political economy? Should we spend our time thinking about future projects, when there is a world of concrete social struggles out there? In this session, we start out by examining three conceptual frameworks for thinking about transformation and social struggle, which we will then use in our discussion of case studies of alternatives.

Required readings

- Brenner, Neil, Jamie Peck, and Nik Theodore. “After Neoliberalization?” *Globalizations* 7, no. 3 (2010): 327–345.
- Featherstone, David. “Introduction: Thinking Solidarity Politically” and “Solidarity: Theorizing a Transformative Political Relation.” In *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism*, 1–39. London: Zed Books, 2012.
- Wright, Erik Olin. “Elements of a Theory of Transformation.” In *Envisioning Real Utopias*, chap. 8, 273–307. London: Verso, 2010.