“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” George Santayana

“The past is not dead. It’s not even past.” William Faulkner

In this course we will explore a selection of works, many famous, some less so, about economic matters and their relationship to the larger society. By the end of this course you will know more about the “big questions” in economics, about some of the most well-known people who have written about them and the times in which they were writing, and about the relevance of these early ideas for past and current debates in political economy.

Duke University is a particularly good place to study the history of economics. The premier academic journal in the field, History of Political Economy, is published here. The Economists’ Papers Archive in the Rubenstein Library houses one of the best archival collections of economists’ papers in the world, including those of 13 Nobel laureates in economics. There is a Center for the History of Political Economy which sponsors Research Fellows (many of whom come to Duke to work in the archives), an annual conference, and an annual Summer Institute. The various activities of the Center may be found at http://hope.econ.duke.edu/

In this class you will not only learn about the history of economics, in a structured exercise you will get your first taste of how to use an archival collection to undertake research.

Course Structure and Requirements:

The syllabus should be considered provisional, and topics may be added or deleted as we go along. The number of topics ultimately covered will depend on how quickly we move through the material. We may occasionally have guest lecturers who may assign their own material.
To get the most out of this class, it is essential that you read and think about the assigned material **before class**, and to be prepared to discuss it. To encourage you, before certain classes I will ask you to prepare a 1-2 page typed “response” to an assigned reading, or to a question about the reading, which you will turn in to me before the class. The “responses” should provide us with a good starting point for any class discussions. I will also ask you to prepare a response to one of our DFC speakers, Glen Weyl.

For the class to be a success, everyone must attend class and participate: your absence imposes negative externalities on your classmates and on me. If you cannot commit to this, this class is not for you. Any absence not signed off on by your dean is graded as a zero, as is any failure to turn in the reading response.

Grades will be determined as follows: 40% for the assigned “response” papers and general classroom participation; 30% for performance on your team archival research project (to be described on a separate sheet); and 30% for your performance on a take home final exam.

Students will purchase the books below. PDFs of other material (articles and book excerpts) will either be posted on Sakai or their availability online will be noted.


Course Outline

1. **Introduction to the Course and to Economics**

   Readings:

2. **Scholasticism**

   Readings:
   Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Medema and Samuels (henceforth M&S), pp. 18-27. (This is a tough reading! Don’t stress over it; just try to get a sense of how Aquinas writes, and what the issues are surrounding the idea of a “just price.”)
3. Mercantilism

Readings:
Thomas Mun, England’s Treasure by Forraign Trade (1664), M&S, pp. 35-44.

4. Physiocracy

Readings:
François Quesnay, Tableau Economique, M&S, pp. 106-108. (This is just an introduction – I will go over their ideas quickly in class.)

5. Adam Smith

Readings:
Adam Smith, Theory of Moral Sentiments (1766), excerpts. Sakai.
Smith, The Wealth of Nations (1776), Book I, chapters 1, 2, 3 (sections 1 – 4), 4 (sections 1-4, 11-18), 7 (sections 1 – 33), 10 (section 82), 11 (sections 262-264). Book II, chapter 3 (sections 1-3, 12-18, 30-32); Book IV, chapter 1 (sections 1 – 10), 2 (sections 1-15, 23-24, 31, 37-38, 40, 43).

6. Thomas Robert Malthus

Readings:

7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

Readings:
Engels, “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific” (1880),
https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/index.htm
Marx and Engels, “The Communist Manifesto” (1848), Omit section III.
https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/
8. The Marginal Revolution: Carl Menger and the German Historical School

Readings:

9. Institutionalism

Readings:

10. Alfred Marshall

Readings:

11. John Maynard Keynes

Readings:
John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1936), Chapter 1, p. 3; Chapter 2, pp. 18-22; Chapter 3, pp. 32-34; Chapter 12; Chapter 22, pp. 313-320; Chapter 24. Sakai.

12. Joseph Schumpeter

Readings:
*Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942), Chapter 7. Sakai.

13. Friedrich Hayek

Readings:
Video, Bruce Caldwell, “The Life and Ideas of F. A. Hayek” (skip the introduction of Caldwell; start at minute 4:12) [http://hope.econ.duke.edu/media/chope-faculty-talks](http://hope.econ.duke.edu/media/chope-faculty-talks)