1. General Information

This is a course in the History of Economic Thought. The prerequisites are introductory micro- and macro- economics (Econ 101 and 102). The course is a survey of ideas from some of the major western economic thinkers from ancient times to the present. We will concentrate on a small number of such thinkers, and consider what questions they asked, why they asked them, and how they answered these questions.

There are many reasons to take an interest in the ideas and methodologies of “dead” economists. For one, studying the history of thought is a good way to learn principles of economics. We might also be interested in tracking the intellectual history of the discipline. By considering ideas corresponding to different historical stages of development of economic institutions, we have an opportunity to ask how and why economic ideas have developed and why some have persisted while others have not. Many of these “old” ideas are directly relevant to current economic debates. Some of them are familiar, showing up in contemporary thought, while some have been neglected for better or worse. The study of the history of thought also raises questions about the methodology of economics in general. How is economics as a social science practiced, and can we distinguish good practice from bad.

The secondary source texts for the course are:

- **Heilbroner, Robert L.,** *The Worldly Philosophers*, Seventh Edition

Landreth and Colander is available on line. Heilbroner is available at the bookstore and on reserve at the library.

We will also read selections from Smith, Marx, Keynes, and Schumpeter in the original. The following books are on reserve at the library and (depending on the text, either at the bookstore or on-line).

- **Keynes, John Maynard,** *The General Theory* (Harcourt)
- **Schumpeter, Joseph A.,** *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Third Edition (Harper)

2. Grades

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- Four short (2-3 page) papers, worth 30% of your grade.
- Midterm Exam: Tuesday, October 15, in class, worth 25% of your grade.
- Final Exam/Essays, Due by Tuesday, December 17, 5:00 pm, worth 25% of your grade.
- Class participation, worth 20% of your grade.

You are required to take the midterm examination at the time listed above and turn in the final exam essays no later than the time listed above. If you believe that you have a legitimate scheduling conflict, you must see me during the first two weeks of class to see if it can be resolved. Otherwise, no exceptions will be granted. The short papers are due in class and will be assigned one week in advance of their due dates. Late papers or final exams will not be accepted.
This course is Writing-Intensive (WI). Because learning to write well is an on-going process, the faculty has committed to a WI Program that will assist students in learning to write well in multiple disciplines and throughout their time at Hamilton.

We will devote part of our class time to talking about writing and doing in-class edits of written work. You may revise (any) two of the four short papers. Revisions must be turned in within one week of the day that I return the paper and must be accompanied by a memo detailing the specific ways in which you have improved your paper. The grade for that paper will then be 60% of the original grade plus 40% of the new grade. You will not have an opportunity to revise the take home final exam essays.

3. Office Hours

My office hours are posted above. Please feel free to schedule appointments with me outside of these hours by calling me at x4472 or catching me after class.

4. Readings

The course divides naturally into two sections. The first half of the course covers classical thought. The second half of the course covers neo-classical and 20th century thought. We will devote some time at the beginning and end of the course to methodology and philosophy of science issues in the history of economic thought.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

I. Introduction

Aug 29: Introduction. (no assignment)


- L&C Ch 2,3
- Heilbroner Ch 2

II. Classical Thought

Sept 5,10: Adam Smith: Division of Labor, Theory of Prices and Income Distribution.

- L&C: Ch 4
- Heilbroner: Ch 3


- L&C: Ch 5–6
- Heilbroner: Ch 4

Sept 21,24: Marx: Historical Materialism.

- Preface to the Critique of Political Economy
- Letter to Block
- selections from the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts
- L&C: Ch 7
- Heilbroner: Ch 6

Sept 26, Oct 1: Marx: Historical Materialism.
Oct 3, 8: Marx: Later Economic Writings:
  - *Capital* Vol. 1. Ch 1 sec 1, 4; Ch 4, 6; Ch 7 sec 2; Ch 19, Ch 24 sec 3; Ch 25 sec 1, 3, 4; Ch 26, 27, 31, 32
  - *Capital* Vol. III, Ch. 48
Oct 10: no assignment
MIDTERM EXAM: Tuesday, Oct 15, in class
Fall Break

II. Neoclassical and 20th Century Economics

  - L&C Ch 8-11
  - Heilbroner Ch 7
SPRING BREAK
Oct 29, 31: Veblen and Institutional Economics.
  - L&C Ch 12
  - Heilbroner Ch 9
Nov 5, 7, 12, 14: Keynes.
  - Theory of Effective Demand: *The General Theory* Ch 1-3; Ch 6 sec 2; Ch 7 sec 5; Ch 8 sec 1, 3; Ch 9 sec 2; Ch 10 sec 1, 6; Ch 11 sec 1, 3-5; Ch 12, Ch 13 sec 1-3; Ch 16 sec 1, Ch 18.
  - L&C Ch 15
  - Heilbroner Ch 9
Nov 14, 19, 21: Topics in 20th Century Economics.
  - L&C Ch 14, 16, 17
Thanksgiving Break
Dec 3, 5: Hayak and Schumpeter.
  - “Can Capitalism Survive?”: Part II of *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*
  - L&C Ch. 13
  - Heilbroner Ch 10
  - Haussman: Introduction to The Philosophy of Economics (handout)
  - Friedman: The Methodology of Positive Economics (handout)
  - McCloskey: The Rhetoric of Economics (handout)
  - L&C Ch 1, incl. appendix
  - Heilbroner Ch 11
Dec 12: Conclusion
FINAL EXAM, Due Dec 17, 5:00 pm.