

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO  
POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

# INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ECONOMY

Fall semester, 2002  
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Class hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, 12-1.15 pm  
Office hours: Sundays, 2-3pm, Wednesdays 1.30-3pm

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**“Political Economy is to the State, what domestic economy  
is to the family.”**  
James Mill

**“The market’s freedom is the freedom of the stupid to starve.”**  
Theodor Adorno

This course serves as a broad introduction to the field of “Political Economy.” Political economy is not just about economics. It is not the poor cousin of business studies. Rather, political economy is a knowledge about, perhaps originally the science of, one of the greatest problems ever to face modern man: the problem of synchronizing populations and resources, bodies and materials. Out of this problem has arisen theories and counter-theories, as well as concepts, values and social relations that continue to color our whole lives. “Capitalism” is not a natural outgrowth of economic activity. It is a political negotiation that goes to the heart of the question of how modern societies have been formed. “Political economy” was—and can still be—a way of understanding, or revealing that bargain; a way of responding that examines the politics at the heart of economic relations—the same relations that dominate so much of our lives. Rather than accept “work”, “production”, “efficiency” and “property” as natural or self-evident, our aim is to pick apart these concepts, review the evolution of modern political economy, and in doing so reveal something profound about the formation of the world around us.

## Objectives/outcomes

At the end of the course we hope to have:

- 1) Come to an understanding of “Political Economy”, its core concepts and value as an approach to social reality.
- 2) Reviewed, and come to an understanding of, the main schools of thought concerning the intersection of politics and economics, how these schools developed and why, and how—despite the so-called “triumph” of liberalism—these debates are still very much relevant to our contemporary world, its transformation and its future.

- 3) Come to an understanding of the ways in which concepts such as “efficiency”, “production”, “work”, “market” are multi-dimensional: grounded in a political as well as an economic space, one intersecting with so many other socio-political relations, such as culture, media, environment, religion and rebellion.

### Organization and assessment (read carefully!)

This course is mailing a guided lecture course. As we progress through the course I will aim to deal with the broad evolution of modern political economy—touching upon concepts, history and present controversies. There will, however, be plenty space for discussion. Often what is most valuable—and the thing you take away from courses like this—is not what *I* say, but what I can help *you* to say. Participation, then, is deeply valued and necessary. Above all, I don’t want this to be boring for you; our aim is to examine “Political Economy,” in a broad enough way that you understand the general field, can see how applicable it is, and can use it in your general university studies. Hopefully we can use our discussion time to “get off the text”, so to speak, and apply what is said in the readings, or by me, to our everyday lives.

The assessment of this course will be as follows:

Written assignment #1 (due Monday of Week 6)	15%
Written assignment #2 (due Monday of Week 10)	25%
Class participation (no credit is given for attendance alone)	15%
Final research paper (due the last day of class)	35%

The written assignments will take the form of two short essays, and a research paper. The first essay must be at least 1500 words in length. The second must be 2500 words in length. Your task in these assignments is to respond critically and thoughtfully to a specific question. A list of questions will be distributed for each essay assignment. Class participation is assessed overall. Throughout the course, participation is strongly encouraged and welcomed. The final research paper will be a more involved process; involving consultation with me **on at least one occasion**. You will be responsible for demonstrating **originality of thought** in this paper. This paper should be a minimum of 3500 words. You will be responsible for identifying a research question. The only stipulation is that it relates to the material we have covered in class (no essays about Nasser please), and that you **gain clearance from me**. If you fail to clear your topic with me, it won’t be graded. No exceptions.

There is no final examination for this course; all assessment is by way of written papers.

## Grading

- A = Excellent command of the literature, independent and directed thinking, innovation and style. The essay/assignment would be meticulously referenced, and well-structured. A strong contribution not simply to the particular class, but overall to the student's own education and development. Very few have courage enough to push for this, but all are capable, without exception.
- B = A good solid effort. The kind of essay that tries hard, is well sourced, but doesn't break through, or add much that is new or insightful (i.e., more a case of good repetition of an existing literature, rather than thinking/researching/striving for oneself).
- C = An honest effort, but sloppy in presentation and foresight. Some good ideas, but jumbled or confused. Remember that thought is like any sport, or any art. There is a point at which the mind becomes lean and fast, but it can only be attained through great effort. An essay that is worthy of the grade "C" is perhaps only a few hours from being worthy of a "B," and only a certain level of intensity—or perhaps passion—away from an "A." Test yourself out. Have courage.
- D = A bare pass. Just enough effort shown to warrant passing the course but not enough to impress or inspire in any way. Typical of a D grade essay would be one that simply "went through the motions", without much thought, care, or interest on the behalf of the student.
- F = Fail.

## Class policies

1. Cell phones are to be switched off. I will confiscate for 72hrs any mobile phone that rings during class time.
2. No one is to think of entering the classroom after the instructor. Classes will begin and end at the assigned times.
3. Attendance is compulsory. You will be allowed a maximum of 5 missed classes without penalty. 6 missed classes—for whatever reason—will warrant an automatic "F" for the class, as per university regulations (see the University handbook for official policy). In general, the least you can do is show up to class.
4. No medical excuses will be accepted. I'm sick of receiving them: I must have hundreds in my office. If you're sick when the assignments are due, tough luck.
5. If you miss an assignment deadline you may hand in your work at the next class (i.e., 48 hrs later). Miss this deadline (i.e., fail to hand in your work within 48hrs of the deadline), and you will lose two whole grade points (i.e., from a B you would drop to a D). No exceptions.
6. Essays are to be submitted typed in hard copy to one of the secretaries in the Departmental Office. It is your responsibility that they stamp it with an appropriate time to prove that it was handed in on time. Do not hand your essays to me in class; only to the Departmental secretaries .
7. When preparing the first two papers you must only respond to questions that I set. Question sheets will be distributed well in advance of essay deadlines. Essays that do not address a question set by me will not be accepted.
8. There are no make-ups on this course.

9. All communication is to be in English. I reserve the right to dismiss students who persistently hold conversations in Arabic, or who generally are disrupting class.
10. Plagiarism (or any form of cheating) is not simply an academic offense of dishonesty; it is a personal insult to me, and I will take it as such. All cases will be immediately—without exception—referred to the Dean of Students. The student will fail instantly.
11. Grades are non-negotiable.
12. Despite the tenor of the above rules and procedures, **never** be afraid to ask if something is not understood.
13. Dare to know. Have courage to use your own understanding.
14. Come to class prepared.

## Readings

There will be no main textbook, but rather a “reader” of key articles, chapters, essays, and quotes. I do not expect you to read everything there, but this reader should be used as solid basis. Students are expected to be resourceful in finding additional materials beyond of the assigned texts. Good library research is a basic skill in any university context. You should work to master this skill—or certainly, at the least, to be proficient in it. We’re here to read, explore, and to find things out. Think of yourselves as detectives trying to solve puzzles or crimes. “Political economy”—for however accepted, invisible, it has become—is not, as we shall see, entirely self-evident.

## Course outline

### 1. Introduction

“Rights”  
 “New Liberal Speak,” Pierre Bourdieu & Loïc Wacquant  
 “The Global Political Economy and Social Choice,” Robert W. Cox  
 “To Be Like Them,” Eduardo Galeano

### 2. Conceptualization

“The Economy as Instituted Process,” Karl Polanyi  
 “What is Economic Statecraft?” David Baldwin  
 “On The Relation of State and Market,” Jean-Jacques Gislain

### 3. Past I

“A Political Genealogy of Political Economy,” Denis Meuret  
 “A Discourse on Political Economy,” Jean-Jacques Rousseau  
 “Political Economy and the Legitimation of the State: a Detour via the Eighteenth Century,” Denis Meuret  
 “The Successive Transformation of Man’s Exploitation of Man and of the Rights of Property,” Henri Saint-Simon

### 4. Past II

“The Meanings of Work,” Adriano Tilgher  
 “From Workhouse to Institution,” and “Workhouse Discipline and the Total Institution,” M. A. Crowther

### 5. The Rise of the Industrial West

“Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” E. P. Thompson  
 “The European Science of Work,” and “The Americanization of Labor Power and the Great War, 1913-1919,” Anson Rabinach

### 6. Reality Bites

"Mass Production and Human Automation," Lewis Mumford  
 "The Machine, the Worker, and the Engineer," Robert K Merton  
 "The Attributes of an Industrial Order," Wilbert E. Moore  
 "Personality and the Market Place," Erich Fromm  
 "Factory Work," Simone Weil

### **7. Revolution!**

"The Abolition of Work," Bob Black  
 "The Abolition of Work and Other Myths," Neala Schleuning

### **8. The 20thC**

"The State Economy," John Bellamy Foster  
 "Transformations in the Labor Process," Michel Aglietta  
 "A New Paradigm of Work Organization and Technology?" John Tomaney

### **9. Now I**

"State and Market: A New Engagement for the Twenty-First Century?" Robert Boyer  
 "International Capital Mobility and the Scope for National Economic Management," Gerald Epstein  
 "Is a Strong National Economy A Utopian Goal at the End of the Twentieth Century?" Manfred Bienefeld  
 "Fredrich List and the Political Economy of the Nation-State," David Levi-Faur

### **10. Now II**

"Public Power Beyond the Nation-State," Wolfgang Streeck  
 "Globalization and Internationalization," Riccardo Petrella  
 "From Keynes to K-Mart," Daniel Drache  
 "The World Unbound," Elmar Altvater and Birgit Mahnkopf  
 "Escape from Fordism," Isabella Bakker and Riel Miller

### **11. Future I**

"Capitalism and its Future: Remarks on Regulation, Government and Governance," Bob Jessop  
 "Has Globalization Ended the Rise and Rise of the Nation-State?" Michael Mann  
 "The Political Economy of Virtual Reality: Pan-Capitalism," Arthur Kroker and Michael A., Weinstein

### **12. Future II**

"The New Cultural Domination by the Media," James Petras  
 "Humane Governance for the World: Reviving the Quest," Richard Falk  
 "After Seattle, World Trade System faces Uncertain Future," Chakravarthi Raghavan

### **13. A Final Word**

"Divide and Rule: The International Character of Modern Citizenship," Barry Hindess  
 "Governing "advanced" Liberal Democracies," Nikolas Rose  
 "Governing Economic Life," Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose



Production

Production

Production

“ .. what blindness, what deafness, what density of ideology would have to weigh me down to prevent me from being interested in what is probably the most crucial subject to our existence, that is to say the society in which we live, the economic relations within which it functions, and the system of power which defines the regular forms and the regular permissions and prohibitions of our conduct. The essence of our life consists, after all, of the political functioning of the society in which we find ourselves.”

—michel foucault