

Power, Identity, Resistance II

SOSC 11500

Winter 2021

Time: Tue & Thurs, 9:40-11:00am

Room: Virtual

Professor: Austin Carson, Department of Political Science, acarson@uchicago.edu

Virtual Office Hours: Mon & Weds, 3:15-4:15pm. *Sign up at my website:*

<https://austinmcarson.com/teaching/>

Course description

This is the second course in the Power, Identity, and Resistance (PIR) sequence in the Social Sciences Core. In general, the sequence analyzes various aspects of political power, including how economic activity and governments influence socio-economic outcomes and racial, class, and gender inequalities. This term we focus on canonical works addressing society and the politics of the economy, with a focus on the ideas of Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and F.A. Hayek. The goal of this course is, most broadly, to introduce students to thinking critically about history, society, economics, and politics. How historically distinctive is the modern form of capitalist economy? Do human beings "naturally" act in certain ways in the economy and society? What is the role of power in economic life? What is the division of labor and what are its social and political consequences? How should we balance the power of government planning with the social and political order created by free markets? In answering these questions, we will exercise thinking about normative issues and scientifically studying society and politics.

Required texts

You will spend a lot of time with these books. I highly recommend purchasing them from the Seminary Co-Op or another local book store.

- Adam Smith, *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Cannan Ed, Modern Library)
- Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume I (Penguin Classics)
- Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (Free Press)
- Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (UChicago Press, ISBN 0226320553)

Requirements

The class grade will be based on the following:

- Regular attendance & discussion participation (20%)
- Three memos (3 x 15% = 45%)
- Final essay (35%)

Discussion participation (20%). Students are expected to attend every class; I will take attendance. Students should attend each seminar with all assigned readings completed and try to thoughtfully contribute to discussion. I will mark down for both under- and over-participating. A good rule of thumb is 2-3 substantive contributions per session. I will share preliminary participation grades around Week 5. Note: I take student discomfort with participation in a seminar setting seriously. Please email me or meet with me during office hours if you foresee or are struggling with this part of the course.

Memos (3x15=45%). Students will write three short essays – one each for Smith, Marx, and Durkheim – in response to a prompt. The memo prompt will ask the student to think deeply and critically about a central idea or issue in the assigned texts. Grades will be based on clarity of writing, careful engagement with the text, and originality of the argument. Memo assignments will take place after the last reading of each author. Further details, including examples from past courses, will be shared early in the quarter.

Final essay (35%). Students will write a final, longer essay which puts all the readings of the quarter in dialogue. The essay will respond to a prompt that highlights a cross-cutting theme. For example, in the Fall PIR course I might ask students to assess how Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, etc., think about the problem of the “tyranny of the majority.” This assignment will take place during finals week. Details will be announced early in the quarter.

Professionalism

We will create a quarter-long community with its own intellectual culture. A core value I want in our little intellectual community is shared comfort in participation. All students should feel welcome to develop and rigorously test their ideas. To enable this, we all must follow basic norms of respectful exchange. Verbal contributions during seminar should be respectful of other students. Please avoid a confrontational tone; it is critical for each of us to practice the skill of disagreeing via thoughtful suggestion rather than forceful contradiction (e.g. “I wonder if” vs. “I disagree”). Be professional. Acts of sexual misconduct, which encompass a range from sexual assault to sexual harassment, are unacceptable and incompatible with the purpose of our intellectual community. Other forms of misconduct based on race or other identity categories are equally unacceptable. A useful university resource on sexual misconduct is [here](#). I encourage you to come to me with concerns about anyone’s professionalism, including your own.

Course content warning

None of the written material in this course is known to feature vivid or realistic descriptions or images of violence. All students are welcome to alert me to any concerns about the reaction they may have to material. If any problems arise, I am open to accommodations though this will not include alternative readings.

Email policy

Note that in general I may not read or respond to student emails in the evening. On weekends, I often do not read/respond at all. Do not expect immediate replies.

Late policy and incompletes in the time of covid-19

I normally treat deadlines as strict (“papers/assignments received late will be dropped a full letter grade for each 24 hour period past the deadline”). However, given the challenges from covid-19, distance learning, the 2020 election, police violence (the list goes on)... I will be understanding and accommodating if students need deadline extensions or request an incomplete. Advanced communication, to the extent it is possible, is important for any alterations to deadlines.

Academic integrity

Language and ideas that are not your own must be properly cited. I will strictly follow the University’s policy on academic integrity: “It is contrary to justice, academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another’s statements or ideas as one's own work.” More details on the policy are [here](#).

Disability accommodations

If you need any special accommodations, please provide me with a copy of an Accommodation Determination Letter (provided to you by the Student Disability Services office) as soon as possible so that you may discuss with him/her how your accommodations may be implemented in this course.

Schedule and Readings

Week 1

Jan 12

Introduction (no readings)

Jan 14

Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, vol. I, Book 1 Chapters 1-8.

Week 2

Jan 19

Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, vol. I, Book 1, Chapters 9-10.

Jan 21

Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, vol. I, Book 2, Introduction & Chapters 1-3, 5.

Week 3

Jan 26

Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, vol I, Book 3, Chapters 1, 3-4 and Book 4 Intro, Chapters 1-2.

Jan 28

Marx, *Capital*, Chapter 1.

Smith memo

--Email prompt will be sent out Friday morning (Chicago), Jan 29th

--Memo due within 24 hours

--Email to acarson@uchicago.edu

Week 4

Feb 2

Marx, *Capital*, Chapters 4, 6, 7, 8.

Feb 4

Marx, *Capital*, Chapters 9.1-9.2, 12, 13, 14.

Week 5

Feb 9

Special session to catch our breath (no readings)

Feb 11

Marx, *Capital*, Chapters 15.1-15.5.

Week 6

Feb 16

Marx, *Capital*, Chapter 15.8 a-e and 25.1-25.3.

Feb 18

Marx, *Capital*, Chapters 26, 27, 28, 32, 33.

Marx memo

--Email prompt will be sent out Friday morning (Chicago), Feb 19th

--Memo due within 24 hours

--Email to acarson@uchicago.edu

Week 7

Feb 23

Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Introduction, Book 1: Chapters I, II, II.

Feb 25

Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 1: Chapters V, VI, VII.

Week 8

Mar 2

Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book II: Chapters I, II, III, IV.

Mar 4

Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book II: Chapter 5. Book III: Chapters I, II.

Durkheim memo

--Email prompt will be sent out Friday morning (Chicago), Mar 5th

--Memo due within 24 hours

--Email to acarson@uchicago.edu

Week 9

Mar 9

Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, Chapters 1, 3, 5-7.

Mar 11

Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, Chapters 8-11, 14-16.

Final essay

--Email prompt will be sent out Weds morning (Chicago), March 17th

--Memo due within 24 hours

--Email to acarson@uchicago.edu