

Virtue and Commerce: Republicanism and the Development of the Global Economy

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Office Hours: MW 2:00–3:30 and by appointment

Spring 2016
Location: Covel 210
Time: Thursday 12:00–2:50

The financial crash of 2008 brought questions of virtue and commerce to the forefront of the American consciousness as people grappled with the causes of the financial collapse. This course examines the history of virtue in the context of the expanding global economy from the Renaissance to the early twentieth century. The Italian Renaissance was made possible by both an expansion of industry, banking, and trade and a rediscovery of ancient Greek and Latin texts. As much as the economic expansion might be seen to coincide with the flourishing intellectual

and artistic accomplishments of the period, many Renaissance thinkers perceived commerce to be in tension with the ancient concept of republican virtue. The course follows the growth of the European economy from the Italian Peninsula in the sixteenth century to the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century, the development of colonial and worldwide economies in the eighteenth century, and the process of industrialization in the nineteenth century. We track the changing understandings of virtue and commerce through the writings of leading theorists of the day, including James Harrington, Bernard Mandeville, Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Max Weber.



Required Texts

Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings*

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Expectations:

As a seminar, this class requires a good amount of critically engaged reading and discussion of that reading. You can expect to read around 70–100 pages a week. Students are required to arrive with the texts readily at hand for reference during class. Students should be prepared to share

their critical engagements with each week's readings with the class. Active participation is expected at all times, which also means that use of phones and computer devices is restricted to class based activities. The weekly reading will provide students with a foundation upon which your research paper will be constructed. The seminar will operate with an assumption of discursive ethics, which is to say a sense of respect (not just toleration) for opposing viewpoints expressed in the seminar.

In addition to the reading, students are expected to complete weekly assignments designed to facilitate the writing of the Research Paper. Time and opportunity will be present throughout the seminar for students to discuss their research and receive peer feedback. We hope to be able to create a community of scholars that will enable all students to develop their historical skills of critical reading, writing, and research.

Attendance: Considering we meet only once per week and that a seminar is based upon active student participation, attendance in class is mandatory. Any more than **two** absences will result in an automatic failing grade.

Online Forum: In order to facilitate discussion, there will be a weekly forum on the class website in which students can ask questions and participate in discussions with fellow students and the instructor. There will also be a forum dedicated to questions and discussions concerning the Research Paper. Active participation in the forums will influence the participation grade.

Academic integrity will be assumed and rigorously enforced. Students who present or hand in plagiarized material will automatically fail the class and be referred to the Department and Academic Dean for disciplinary measures. Research methodology will be discussed throughout the class to familiarize students with ethical academic practice. Students who are confused about this should consult with the instructor as well as the academic integrity guidelines published by the University.

Grading:

Participation and Weekly Critiques: 30%

Presentation: 20%

First Final Draft: 20%

Second Final Draft: 30%

Weekly Critiques: Students will write a one-page critique on the weekly reading. Critiques are not to be summaries, but rather a critical assessment of one of the main ideas and the significance of the reading. Critiques will be graded on a check, check plus, and check minus basis.

Presentation: Students will make an 8–10 minute presentation during class in 10th week. In place of our normal discussion students will present their research project to the class. Presentations will provide students with the ability to share their work and receive feedback from

their fellow students. Presentations are expected to be well rehearsed and may include multimedia.

Research Paper: 10–12 page research paper that will be grounded in, but not limited to, the assigned readings for the class. It will be developed in personal consultation with the instructor as well as with peers in seminar. During the quarter, two versions of the paper will be due and graded. A **First Final Draft** will be handed in during 8th week and submitted for a grade. Students will then continue to work on the paper and turn in a thoroughly revised **Second Final Draft** during Finals Week in lieu of a final exam. Further information will be provided in class.

Weekly Schedule

Note that readings may change throughout the quarter. All changes will be announced in class and through email. Readings not from the required texts can be found on the course website.

Week 1: Introduction, March 31

Week 2: Republicanism, Land, Arms, and Virtue, April 7

- James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656): Introduction, Preliminaries I, and Preliminaries II
- Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters* (1721): Myth of the Troglodytes, Letters 11–14

Week 3: Dutch Commerce and Republicanism, April 14

- Pieter de la Court, *True Interest and Political Maxims of the Republic of Holland* (1662)

Week 4: Mandeville and the Luxury Debate, April 21

- Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (1714–1721)

Assignment: Choose research topic

Consultations with instructor by appointment

Week 5: The Financial Revolution and the South Sea Bubble, April 28

- Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator* (1711–1712)
- John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters* (1720–1723)

Assignment: Annotated bibliography

Week 6: Rousseau on Virtue and Commerce, May 5

- Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (1754)
- Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy* (1755)

Assignment: Introduction and Thesis statement

Week 7: The French Debate on Wealth and Luxury, May 12

- Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, *Reflections on the Formation and Distribution of Wealth* (1769–1770)
- The *Encyclopedie*

Assignment: Rough Draft

Week 8: Commerce and Republicanism in the American Republic, May 19

- Readings to be announced

First Final Draft Due

Week 9: The Sociology of Virtue and Commerce, May 26

- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905)
- Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (1900) (selections)

Consultations with instructor by appointment

Week 10: Presentations, June 2

Second Final Draft Due Wednesday, June 9