

Self, Culture and Society  
 Section 5  
 The University of Chicago  
 The College  
 Fall 2013

Walker Museum of Paleoacademica Room 302; Tu Th 9:00-10:20

Instructor:

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*Course Outline:* There are two kinds of people out there. One kind says that everything has always pretty much been the same, but we've got more and more of it. The other kind says that something happened and that things are different. Most academics like the second kind because (1) something (supposedly) happened, which means things are already getting interesting; (2) we can argue over where and when it happened. This course is tracing thoughts on the biggest something of all that happened, starting from someone who was a bit more of the first kind (the more and more) and ending up with folks who were decidedly of the second kind. (See how much fun we're having already, because something happened—we went from the first kind of analyst to the second kind!)

Sometimes people thought that what happened was that Western society became qualitatively different, as a whole, from other societies and from its earlier self. Nowadays, we (confusingly) often use the word “modernity” to mean this allegedly new social form. (The confusion comes about because the word can either mean “what’s happening right now” or “what’s been happening for the past four hundred years.”) Lots of things happened in Western society in this time, but many people focused on the social organization of production, and for good reason. We're going to look at the development of one particular important, and particularly interesting, set of approaches to the ways in which society and economy developed in the West and then (allegedly) spread to the whole world.

We'll be looking at three pivotal theorists of this transformation coming from three different intellectual, disciplinary, and temporal backgrounds, namely Adam Smith, Karl Marx and Max Weber. We flesh these theories out with some other interpretations of the key transitions to a market society and, because one always like to know how things turn out, some information on where we are today.

*Readings:*

Most of the readings are books available at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore. Other readings will be posted to our CHALK site. If printing things out from this is a burden to you, let me know, and we'll work out another way.

*Requirements:*

Not surprisingly, a big part of the class is doing the readings, and perhaps re-reading if you realize after class that you missed a lot of what was going on. Regular and cheerful attendance is

expected; that means and contributing not only about what you understand and appreciate, but also what you don't understand and/or hate. There are three five page papers. A "five page paper" is one that can be anywhere from a single word to five pages (double-spaced, 12 point, 1" margins) but not an n-dash more. You can put a cover page on if you want, or if you have the space, your name can be at the top. The idea is to work on expressing your thoughts in as direct and elegant a fashion as you can.

Tuesday, October 1: *What's up?*

Who are we, particularly and generally? What do we do, here and elsewhere? Why?

Thursday, October 3: *The Division of Labor and the Theory of Value*

Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*,  
New York: The Modern Library, 2000 [1776].

**Read:** Introduction and Plan of the Work (pp. xxiii-xxvi), Book I Chapters I-IV (pp. 3-32); in Chapter 5 read half (pp. 33-43) and then Chapters VI-VIII (53-99).

We will continue our discussion of value and price next time.

Tuesday, October 8: *Goods (Freeing Markets)*

**Read:** Book IV, Chapter II (pp. 481-488 [middle]), Volume II, Book IV, Chapter IX, (pp. 745-746); Jan DeVries, *The Industrious Revolution*, Chapter 2 (pp. 40-72).

Thursday, October 10: *Bads (Public Goods)*

**Read:** Book V, Chapter I, Part III, Article II (pp. 819-846), Book V, Chapter I, Conclusion (pp. 876-878); *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Part I, Section I, Chs 1-2; Part II, Section II, Chs 2-3; Part IV, Ch 1.

*The first paper is assigned today, due next Wednesday (October 16) at 4:30.*

*If you wanted...* Smith's views may be seen as an advance on those of John Locke. See his *Second Treatise on Civil Government*.

Tuesday, October 15: *Rousseau and the Cost of Dependence: The State of Nature*

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men*. Rousseau: *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*. Ed. and Trans. by Victor Gourevitch. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1997 [1755].

**Read:** Part I. The Preface and Epistle Dedicatory is strongly recommended but not required, though you need to read the "exordium" (begins page 131 in our edition).

**NOTE BENE**—there are *two* things in this book named "Discourse." We want to read the **second** one.

Thursday, October 17: *Rousseau and the Cost of Dependence: Civil Society*

**Read:** Part II. And I strongly urge you read Rousseau's notes, though this is not required.

Tuesday, October 22: *Estrangement*

All of our readings from Marx are to be found in R. Tucker (Ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (Second Edition). New York: Norton, 1978.

**Read:** Estranged labor (pp. 70-81)

*If you wanted...* These writings are difficult to understand without familiarity with Hegel. The *Marx for Beginners* comic book is actually quite good, but you might explore Hegel, especially the *Philosophy of Right*.

Thursday, October 24: *Dialectical Materialism*

**Read:** Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, (pp. 149-163, 172-174)

Tuesday, October 29: *History and Ends*

**Read:** Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (pp. 469f, 473-491)

Thursday, October 31: *Marx: Theory of Value*

**Read:** Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 221-226, 236-244; *Capital I*, 302 -312, 319-336.  
A specter haunts Europe...boo! Happy Halloween!

Tuesday, November 5: *Marx: Theory of Surplus Value*

**Read:** Marx, *Capital I*, 336-364.

Thursday, November 7: *Implications*

**Read:** Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 247-250, 278-292; *Capital I*, 384-417, 422-438

*The second paper is assigned today, due next Wednesday (November 13) at 4:30.*

Tuesday, November 12: *The Great Transformation*

We now turn to some strong theories of how markets were formed in the great transformation.

**Read:** Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, Chapters 1-10

Thursday, November 14: *And A Little Bit More Greatness*

**Read:** Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, Chapters 11-18

Tuesday, November 19: *Weber: The Spirit of Capitalism*

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Trans. Talcott Parsons. New York: Routledge, 1992 [1905]

**Read:** Author's introduction, Part I, and as far as you can...things will be best if we have read as much of this as we can for both days.

Thurs, November 21: *Practical Ethics*

**Read:** Part II

*If you wanted...* Sociologists pit Weber against Marx; Weber vainly claimed Hegel as his only challenge; but intellectual historians might emphasize Nietzsche's blast (*Beyond Good and Evil*, *Genealogy of Morals*, *The Antichrist*) as the most important context for Weber's circle to rethink values and history.

Tuesday, November 26: *Weber and Rationalization*

Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions," in *From Max Weber*, edited by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills. Oxford.

**Read:** all (of the shortened version on CHALK, that is).

*The third paper is assigned today, due next Wednesday (December 4) at 4:30. Now you know what to be thankful for....*

*If you wanted...* For the last reading coming up, we usually read something about how this all is relevant in today's world (defined as anything after 1968). In recent years people read Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2001, which is quite good...but perhaps overly optimistic, as this was written in the days when people *could* get jobs that would run them into the ground.... We've also read Stephen Greenhouse's *The Big Squeeze*... But we still have some history to do, so we'll dispense with the "make it relevant" stuff.

Tuesday December 3: *The Creation of Markets*

**Read:** Marglin, Stephen A. 1974. "What Do Bosses Do? The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production." *The Review of Radical Political Economics* 6: 60-112.

*If you wanted...* you could follow up with Marglin, Stephen A. 1975. "What Do Bosses Do? Part II." *The Review of Radical Political Economics* 6: 60-112, and Landes, David S. 1986. "What Do Bosses Really Do?" *The Journal of Economic History* 46: 585-623. We traditionally read E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism" (*Past and Present*: 38 [1967], pp. 56-97) but this was voted off the island last time.

**Other little things....**

\* Office hours “by appointment” are usually best for you, though you are always welcome to drop by during my scheduled hours. The way to do it is to email me a set of times you can meet in order of preference, and then I’ll choose the one I can do. This shortens the number of back-and-forth emails and allows us to set something up quicker.

\*\* Of course we run on the honor system here, but the internet has changed the nature of academic misconduct in such a way as to lead to more “borderline cases.” As you are responsible for knowing where this line is, if you have any doubts, definitely talk to me and advisors here. Please hand in papers on time; late papers go down .5 grades for every day late.

\*\*\* Your grade average is 60% papers, 20% non electronicized attendance, 20% participation.