

Introduction to Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE)

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Class Time:

Office Hours:

Overview: This course will serve as an introduction to the fast-growing, interdisciplinary field of politics, philosophy, and economics (PPE), with a particular focus on moral, economic, and political issues related to new technologies. In learning the basics of PPE, we will learn how to use a variety of different ideas and perspectives from the fields of philosophy and economics to better understand the complex, ever-changing socio-political world. Politics, then, in the broadest sense, will be our primary *subject* or *focus*, and philosophical and economic concepts and analyses will be our principal *tools*.

Our topics will include: wealth and opportunity costs; prices, information, and economic planning; moral character and market activity; capitalism and culture; the costs and benefits of automation; the moral and political dangers of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.); consumerism and addiction; and the dangers of new infrastructures of high-tech surveillance.

Our readings will include classic and contemporary thinkers in political theory, philosophy, economics, and technology studies: Frederic Bastiat, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Russell Roberts, F.A. Hayek, J.M. Keynes, Michael Sandel, Hans Rosling, Leonard Read, Joseph Schumpeter, Max Weber, Joseph Weizenbaum, Shoshana Zuboff, among others.

Grading Method: The grading will be based on attendance and participation (20%), and two tests (40% each). Students must come to class having done the readings and ready to discuss the material.

Preliminary Course Schedule (Subject to Adjustment)

Class One: Introduction: What is “PPE”?

Part I: Value, Wealth, and Opportunity Costs

Class Two: Frederic Bastiat, “That Which is Seen and That Which Is Not Seen”

Class Three: Russell Roberts, “Getting the Most Out of Life: The Concept of Opportunity Costs”; Opportunity Costs (video from Marginal Revolution University)

Class Four; Hans Rosling, “The Magic Washing Machine”; Don Bourdeux, “The Hockey Stick of Human Prosperity”

Part II: Free Trade and Market Advantages

Class Five: Adam Smith, “Of the Division of Labor,” From *The Wealth of Nations*

Class Six: Adam Smith, *continued*; Frederic Bastiat, “The Candle Makers’ Petition”

Class Seven: Leonard Read, “I, Pencil”

Part III: Capitalism and Culture

Class Eight: Max Weber, “The Protestant Ethic and the ‘Spirit’ of Capitalism”

Class Nine: Max Weber, *continued*

Class Ten: Max Weber, *continued*

Part IV: Markets and Morals

Class Eleven: Karl Marx, “Alienated Labor”

Class Twelve: Fredrick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management*

Class Thirteen: Michael Sandel, “How Markets Crowd Out Morals”

First Test Period

Part V: Automation, Productivity, the Future of Work

Class Fourteen: J. M. Keynes, “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren”

Class Fifteen: Joseph Schumpeter, “Creative Destruction”

Class Sixteen: Martin Ford, *The Rise of the Robots*

Class Seventeen: Martin Ford, *The Rise of the Robots*, continued

Class Eighteen: Nicholas Carr: *The Glass Cage: Automation and Us*

Class Nineteen: Matthew Crawford, *Shop Class as Soul-Craft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*

Part VI: The Moral Risks of Artificial Intelligence

Class Twenty: Adam Alter, *Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technologies and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked*

Class Twenty-One: Joseph Weizenbaum, *Computer Power and Human Reason*

Class Twenty-Two: Roberto Simanowski, *The Death Algorithm and Other Digital Dilemmas*

Part VII: Surveillance Capitalism and Surveillance Authoritarianism

Class Twenty-Three: Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*

Class Twenty-Four: Kenneth Roth and Maya Wang, “Data Leviathan: China’s Burgeoning Surveillance State” (NYRB)

Second Test Period