SYLLABUS
Philosophy 234a1: Wealth, Ethics, and Liberty
Spring 2012 semester

MWF 3:00-4:00, CAS 116
Dr. Charles L. Griswold (griswold@bu.edu)
Office Hours: M 4:00-5:00; W 11:00-12:00; F 12:00-1:00; & by appointment, room 624 STH (353-5546).
Teaching Fellow: Ms. Candice Delmas (cdelmas@bu.edu); office hour W 2:00-3:00, room 641 STH (353-4226).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Controversy about the morality of wealth and the drive to acquire wealth has been lively since antiquity. Recent global economic problems have only intensified the debate. This course will examine several of the issues at stake in the controversy, drawing on ancient as well as modern sources. The questions to be discussed include: Is the pursuit of wealth ethically neutral, or is it a sign of greed and thus moral corruption, or is it a commendable effort to improve life? Is the drive to attain wealth “natural”? Given that the free market produces or at least sometimes co-exists with vast inequalities of wealth, is there a duty to remedy them (for example, through redistribution of wealth)? Is significant inequality of wealth morally bad? What are the basic philosophical views about distributive justice? Is a society that is structured so as to promote the creation of wealth especially liable to such ills as the objectification and commodification of the workers, alienation, and social division? What are the fundamental arguments in favor of a free market in classical political economy (Adam Smith in particular) and what are some of the fundamental criticisms of those arguments?

Prerequisites: none. In SMG, the course will fulfill a Level A Humanities elective, a Level B liberal arts elective, a Level C elective, or a Free Elective.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The required texts are available at the university bookstore, in paperback.


M. Zwolinski, Arguing about Political Philosophy, Routledge 2009. ISBN 9780415990790

Jan. 14, 2012 (rev. 3.3.12)
As indicated below, a number of readings are available on the course website (through Blackboard; http://blackboard.bu.edu/ with BU password). While they include the Rousseau texts, I encourage you to buy the entire volume so as to be able to follow up cross-references and to explore further.

Additional readings may be assigned as the course progresses; they will be put on reserve in Mugar, or be posted on Blackboard, or will be available on-line.

RECOMMENDED READINGS


SCHEDULE OF READINGS

The classical background

    Ecclesiastes; Psalms 49; Luke xii.1-40, xvi; Matthew vi, xix.

Jan. 14, 2012 (rev. 3.3.12)


Jan. 27: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics bk. I, chs. 5-8 (1095b13-1099b8); and bk. IV, chs. 1-2. See Blackboard for the R. Crisp translation. About 14 pp. The old Peters translation of the entire text is available at the following URL, but the Crisp translation is much better:


M Jan. 30: Aristotle, Politics bk. I, chs. 1-11 (from start to 1259a36) and bk. 3, ch. 9. About 20 pp. total. See Blackboard for the C. Lord translation. The old Jowett translation of the entire text is available at the following URL, but the Lord translation is much better.


Feb. 1: Sallust, The Conspiracy of Catiline (43-42 BCE), “The First Oration of Cicero Against Catiline. Spoken in the Senate.” Read from the start (“It is incumbent upon all men …”) to the end of the 34th paragraph (it starts with “In a City so immense and debauched …”).


(Make sure to scroll down to “The Conspiracy of Catiline,” then to the First Oration, then move past the “To his Grace” address to “Catiline’s Conspiracy.”)

Feb. 3: Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II-II, Q.’s 117-119. Blackboard. About 26 pp. total. For an older and probably inferior translation of the entire text, you may consult:


M Feb. 6: review

Feb. 8: TEST #1

The transition to modernity

Feb. 10: Montaigne, Essays (1580), bk. I, chs. 42 (“On the Inequality there is Between

Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government* (1698), ch. II, Section 25 (“Courts are more subject to Venality and Corruption than Popular Governments”; pp. 251-258). Blackboard. 7 pp. You may find the entire text here:


**Feb. 15:** Montesquieu, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline* (1734), ch. IX.
- [http://www.constitution.org/cm/ccgrd_l.htm](http://www.constitution.org/cm/ccgrd_l.htm)

Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), book VII, sections 1 (“Of Luxury”)–9; bk. VIII (“Of the Corruption of the Principles of the Three Governments”), sections 1-7; bk. XX (“Of Laws in Relation to Commerce Considered in its Nature and Distinctions”). Blackboard. 30 pp. total. The complete text may also be found here:

Commerce, morality, private property

- [http://constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm](http://constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm)

**M [Feb. 20: classes suspended; Tuesday Feb. 21 = Monday schedule of classes]**


**Feb. 22:** Mandeville, the *Fable* cont.; read “An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue.” Blackboard. (Mandeville readings: about 56 pp. total). Read also:


**QUIZ #1**


Jan. 14, 2012 (rev. 3.3.12)

Liberty, wealth, moral corruption, and the free market

Feb. 29: A. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (*TMS*; 1rst ed. 1759, 6th ed. 1790), I.i.1-13 (pp. 9-13, on sympathy); I.iii (pp. 50-66, the account of our sympathy with the wealthy, as well as the corruption of the moral sentiments).


March 2: Smith, *TMS*, II.ii.2.1 - II.ii.3.12 (pp. 82-91, on justice); III.2.3-4 (pp. 114-115, vanity); IV.1.1 – IV.2.12 (pp. 179-193, the “invisible hand,” beauty and utility, the role of government). About 24 pp.

March 5: Smith, *TMS*, VI.i.1-16 (pp. 212-217, on prudence); VI.ii.2.17-18 (pp. 233-234, the criticism of the “man of system”); VI.ii.3.1-6 (pp. 235-237, on “universal benevolence”). About 8 pp.

March 7: A. Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (*WN*; 1rst ed., 1776, 3rd ed. 1790), I.i. pp. 13-24, the division of labor; I.i.1-5 (pp. 25-30, barter and trade). About 16 pp. It’s best if you have purchased the text, but you may also find our passages here:


March 9: Smith, *WN* I.viii.1-17, I.viii.36-57 (pp. 82-86, 96-104, equity, labor); I.x.c.12 (p. 138, foundation of property); I.x.c.27 (p. 145, businesspersons conspiring against the common good). About 14 pp.

QUIZ #2

(March 10-18, Spring break)

March 19: Smith, *WN* II.iii.28-37 (pp. 341-349; bettering our condition); IV.ii.9-12 (pp. 455-457, the invisible hand); IV.introduction (p. 428) and IV.ii.39 (p. 468, the science of the legislator); IV.v.b.16 (pp. 530-531, liberty); IV.ix.51 (p. 687, system of natural liberty). About 15 pp.

March 21: Smith, *WN* V.i.f.48 - V.i.g.25 (pp. 781-804, on remedies for social and personal decay under conditions of liberty; religion, education, etc.). About 23 pp.

March 23: Smith, *WN* V.i.i.3 (p. 815, injustice); V.ii.b.6-7 (pp. 826-827, taxes). Discussion.
Critiques


M  April 2: Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844). Read “Alienated Labour” (about 13 pp.) from the First Manuscript; “Private Property and Labour” and “Private Property and Communism” (about 20 pp.) from the Third Manuscript.
   ▪  [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/epm/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/epm/index.htm)

April 4: review

April 6: TEST #2


M  [April 16, no classes]

April 18: Ackerman, “On Getting What we Don’t Deserve,” in Zwolinski, ch. 31. (7 pp.)

April 20: Nielsen, “A Moral Case for Socialism,” in Zwolinski, ch. 32. (6 pp.)

M  April 23: Frankfurt, “Equality as Moral Ideal,” in Zwolinski, ch. 38. (11 pp.)

   QUIZ # 3

   April 25: Schmidtz, “Equal Respect and Equal Shares,” in Zwolinski, ch. 41. (19 pp.)

   April 27: Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” in Zwolinski, ch. 44. (8 pp.)

M  April 30: Kukathas, “The Mirage of Global Justice,” in Zwolinski, ch. 46. (19 pp.)

May 2: summary and conclusion

(for the date of the final examination, see below)
GRADING

The grade for the course will consist of the average of the grades on the tests, the final examination, and any quizzes. A quiz will count as 1/3 of a test grade. The final examination counts the same as the tests. Extra credit and class participation are also taken into account, as described immediately below.

I often but not always distribute the test questions several days before the test, and then on the day of the test I select several for you to answer.

The final examination takes place in our classroom on the date set by the registrar (Tuesday May 8, 12:30-2:30).

Extra credit: students are encouraged to attend philosophy lectures outside of class. Extra credit is offered for attending two of them, up to a total of 4 extra credit points for both. Those points are added to the raw sum of your grades, before the grade is averaged. You will find philosophy lectures listed through www.bu.edu/philo.

Class participation: constructive and sustained class participation will definitely count in your favor. A lack of participation will not lower your grade.

Regular attendance is required: you may have no more than four unexcused absences the entire semester. Attendance will be taken. Each unexcused absence after that limit will lower the grade by half a point (e.g., a “B” will become a “B-”).

You are expected to arrive to class on time, and are responsible for all the class discussions in addition to the assigned texts, whether or not you have an approved reason for missing a particular class.

I do not give "incompletes" in the course and do not give "make ups" of tests or quizzes, unless a very convincing reason for doing so is offered (e.g., a written medical excuse). Note that according to the CAS policy on incompletes, work not completed within one calendar year following the end of the course automatically and irrevocably turns the final course grade into an “F”. An “I” grade will not be submitted to the registrar unless you and I have agreed in writing as to the nature of the work to be completed and the date by which it is to be completed.

Academic misconduct (such as plagiarism) is, of course, prohibited. If you have any question about what academic misconduct consists in, please consult the professor, and read BU’s code (effective 9.1.11): http://www.bu.edu/academics/files/2011/08/AcademicConductCode.pdf