

Department of Economics
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

ECON5841 Special Topic in Economics III - History of Economic Thought (2024-25 Term 1)

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Class Times: Wed 18:30-21:15 (Wu Ho Man Yuen Room 507)(lectures and tutorials)

Course Description

This course covers the development of Economics over three centuries, from Adam Smith in the 18th century to Nobel Prize economists in the 20th century.

You would see how the curiosity to understand the market and how real social issues like poverty, income inequality, economic growth became the focus of study of the brightest thinkers in the Western civilization.

You would also see how economics started as a “practical” subject and evolved into a “theoretical and abstract” subject. However, don’t feel sad, for economics is never completely removed from reality. If you see through the technical (and mathematical) surface of economic theories, the motivation behind economic science is still very practical, and its message directly applicable to decision and policy making. You will see many instances of this in the course.

Mathematical requirement – as we need to cover a wide range of theories, we don’t have enough space to study individual theories closely. For this reason, we try to understand economics from an intuitive point of view. Almost all mathematics will be removed and no proofs provided. Our aim is to see how economists are motivated and how they reason things out, before they start to prove any theorems.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course, the student should:

- 1) Be familiar with the historical development of economic thinking in the last three centuries.
- 2) Be able to understand the logic of the mainstream schools of economic thought.
- 3) See the contrasts among different schools of economic thought.
- 4) Gain insights on how economists reason things out.

References

Hunt, E.K. and Mark Lautzenheiser History of Economic Thought: A Critical Perspective , Third Edition, Routledge, 2015

Heilbroner, Robert Teachings from the Worldly Philosophy , W.W. Norton, 1996

Heilbroner, Robert The Worldly Philosophers (7th ed.), Touchstone, 1999

Blaug, Mark Economic Theory in Retrospect (5th ed.), Cambridge University Press, 1996

Jenkins, Simon A Short History of Europe – from Pericles to Putin, Viking - Random House, 2018

Assessment Scheme

In-class discussion (10%)

Mid-term exam (30%)

Final exam (60%) -- Final exam may be replaced by a paper of 10 pages

Grade Descriptors

A	Outstanding performance in all aspects and on all learning outcomes Demonstrates superior understanding of course materials Far exceeds expectations for students at this level of study
A-	Outstanding performance in most aspects and almost all learning outcomes Demonstrates superior understanding of most course materials Exceeds expectations for students at this level of study
B+	Substantial performance in all/most learning outcomes
B	Substantial understanding of all/most/substantial part of course materials
B-	Meets expectations for students at this level of study
C+	Satisfactory performance in all/most learning outcomes
C	Satisfactory understanding of all/most/substantial part of course materials
C-	Slightly below expectations for students at this level of study
D+	Barely satisfactory performance in all/most learning outcomes
D	Barely satisfactory understanding of all/most course materials Significantly below expectations for students at this level of study
F	Far below expectations for students at this level of study Failure to meet essential requirements of this course

Class Schedule

Lectures	Dates	Topics
1	Sept 4	Introduction
2	11	European History
3	25	An Overview of Modern Economy Theory
4	Oct 2	Adam Smith
5	9	Malthus, Ricardo, Mill
6	16	Mid-Term Exam (60 min.) Bentham, Jevons, Menger
7	23	Walras, Marshall, Clark, Pareto
8	30	Say, Senior, Bastiat
9	Nov 6	Marx
10	13	Keynes
11	20	Samuelson, Friedman, Lucas, etc.

Academic Honesty

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AI tools are not allowed to be used in all assignments and exams. They can be used for self-learning only.