

Course Syllabus
Morality, Markets, and Government
PPE 101, Spring, 2021

Instructor: Dr. Matt Zwolinski

Office Hours: TR: 9:00 - 10:30 AM; 1:00 - 2:00 PM (By appointment via [Calendly](#))

Office: F167A

Course Website: <http://ole.sandiego.edu> [Blackboard]

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Required Books:

Matt Zwolinski, *Arguing About Political Philosophy*, 2nd edition (Routledge)

Matt Ridley, *The Rational Optimist: How Prosperity Evolves* (Harper Perennial)

Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (Crown)

Brink Lindsey and Steven Teles, *The Captured Economy: How the Powerful Enrich Themselves, Slow Down Growth, and Increase Inequality* (Oxford)

Other readings on Electronic Reserve at Copley Library

Core Requirements: This course fulfills the Core Curriculum requirement for Ethics.

Content:

We live in one of the wealthiest nations on the planet, during the wealthiest period of human history. For many of us, this wealth is so commonplace that we take it for granted and think of it almost as though it were an inevitable fact of nature.

But for most of human history, wealth was not the normal condition of mankind. Poverty was. And, even today, desperate, crushing poverty is still all that many individuals and communities will know over the course of their lives.

How did our world become so much wealthier today than it was 500 years ago? And what explains the fact that today some nations are so much wealthier than others?

This course provides a starting point to thinking about these questions through an introduction to the interdisciplinary cluster of *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics*. The goal of this course is to introduce you to some of the key intellectual tools from each of these disciplines, and to show you how they can be used together to shed light on important theoretical and practical debates in morality, economics, and politics. Topics to be discussed include the nature and justification of property rights, the uses and limits of market prices in coordinating economic activity, the role of government regulation in correcting market failure, and the moral dimensions of economic growth, exploitation, and repugnant transactions.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course...

- Students should be able to describe, in essay form, the moral and economic dimensions of key concepts in PPE such as property rights, market prices, externalities, and exploitation.
- Students should be able to apply these concepts to key issues of public policy such as pollution and the regulation of noxious markets.
- Finally, students should be able to critically engage with normative public policy debates involving these concepts.

Course Requirements:

Philosophical readings are dense and difficult. It will probably take longer than you expect to read them once, and it will probably be necessary to re-read most pieces at least once to come to an adequate understanding of the material. You should expect to spend at least **six hours per week outside of class** time reading and re-reading the material.

- **Daily Reflections** – By **9:00 am** before each class session for which there is a new reading assignment, you must post to Blackboard approximately **200 words** responding to the readings assigned for that day. You are not expected to write something that shows mastery of the reading. Rather, your purpose is to demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the readings. You must also **ask a question** about the readings. You should come to class prepared to be accountable for what you have written and to answer questions about it. All students are responsible for these posting regardless of whether they attend class that day.
Forum postings will be graded 5 (excellent), 4 (solid), 3 (poor), or 0 (could have been written without doing the reading at all). One way to ensure achieving a 5 for any particular forum is (in addition to making an original post) to compose a thoughtful and respectful reply to another student's posting.
- **Key Ideas Presentation** – Throughout this course, we will be examining a variety of key ideas in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. In groups of up to four students, you will be responsible for researching one of these ideas, and making a 10-15 minute presentation on the topic to our class. Your presentation should provide an introductory-level explanation of the idea, and demonstrate its relevance to some current social, political, or economic issue. You will have the ability to share your screens during your presentation, and are encouraged to use PowerPoint or other visual aids. Your grade will be based on your own individual performance as judged by me, the other members of your group, and the rest of the class. You must sign up for one of these presentations [at this link](#) **no later than February 1st**. See the handout for more details.
- **Research Paper** – In this 8-10 page paper, you will use both *economic* and *philosophical* methodologies and insights in order to address a *political* problem. Your paper should be both analytical and argumentative, and should draw on external research in addition to the material covered in this course. Topic Proposals are due on **April 8th**. Working bibliographies are due on **April 22nd**. Your summary of sources is due on **May 6th**. And the final paper is due on **May 18th, at 1:00 pm**. My advice: start thinking about, and working on, this project sooner than later! I am happy to talk with you about it in office hours, help you with an outline, read rough drafts, and so on. See the handout for more details.
- **Participation** – Philosophy is best learned through active conversation with others. It is therefore important that you be a regular participant in classroom discussions. In my experience, participation comes much more naturally in face-to-face settings than in remote learning. But an interactive class will be *much* more enjoyable and rewarding than one where you simply listen to my voice emanate from your computer for an hour. So, with that in mind, here are some tips to help facilitate our conversation:
 - **Keep your camera on.** It's hard to have a sense of community with people you cannot see. And it's hard to feel responsible to a community that cannot see you. So, unless you have a special reason for turning your camera off on a particular occasion, please keep it on. Contact me if this will be a problem for you.
 - **Show up on time, and stay the whole time.** Treat your virtual class with the same respect that you would treat an in-person class.
 - **Keep up with the reading.** In order to play a constructive role in the conversation, it is vital that you do your homework beforehand. I want to hear your opinion, but I want it to be your *informed* opinion. Please finish all assigned reading before the beginning of class.
 - **Stay focused.** This is a hard one. Remote learning comes with a multitude of opportunities for distraction, both physical and virtual. Do your best to minimize them, and stay focused on the conversation. Close your email, close your browser, and (if possible) close your door.
 - **Set the Stage** – How we dress and where we place ourselves can have a big impact on our ability to focus. Try to treat our virtual meetings like you would an actual, physical class. Get dressed in appropriate clothing. Get off your bed and seat yourself in a quiet environment conducive to serious work. It's amazing how much these small things can help.
 - **Use the Discussion Board.** Some of you might not be able to attend every class synchronously. And some of you might feel reluctant to speak up during class. Please, do your best to overcome these obstacles. But, as a supplement to your participation in class, you can also earn participation credit by posting thoughtful responses to others' Daily Reflections on Blackboard.

Your Grade

Each activity in this class is worth a certain number of points. Your grade will be determined based on a straight (un-curved) analysis of percentage of points earned vs. total points possible.

Daily Reflections:		25
Key Idea Presentation:		25
Topic Proposal:		5
Working Bibliography:		5
Summary of Sources:		5
Research Paper:	40	
Participation:		15

A+	97 - 100%
A	93 - 96.9
A-	90 - 92.9
B+	87 - 89.9
B	83 - 86.9
B-	80 - 82.9
C+	77 - 79.9
C	73 - 76.9
C-	70 - 72.9
D+	67 - 67.9
D	63 - 66.9
D-	60 - 62.9
F	59.9 or below

Academic Integrity

You are expected to know and follow University Policies on cheating and plagiarism. See the Code of Academic Integrity. Outside research is *a good thing* in philosophy. Just cite it! If it is determined that you have cheated, you will fail the course and I may recommend that you be expelled from the University. Also, you'll get a 5% bonus on your participation grade if you email me a picture of Eddie van Halen or a bowl of M&M's by the beginning of class, Wednesday, January 27th.

Schedule for PPE 101: Morality, Markets, and Government
Spring, 2021
Professor Zwolinski

KEY DATES AT A GLANCE

Feb 1	-	Deadline to sign up for Key Ideas Presentation
Mar 29 - Apr 5	-	No classes: Spring/Easter Break
April 8	-	Topic Proposal Due
April 22	-	Working Bibliography Due
May 6	-	Summary of Sources Due
May 18	-	Final Paper Due, 1:00pm

Schedule of Readings

Note:

[ER] = Electronic Reserves

[AAPP] = *Arguing About Political Philosophy*

[RO] = *The Rational Optimist*

[WNF] = *Why Nations Fail*

[CE] = *The Captured Economy*

Week 1 (Jan 26 - 28) – Introduction: From Anarchy to Affluence

Jan 26

- Introduction to course
- Thomas Hobbes, “The State of Nature as a State of War”, [AAPP, pp. 7-10 only]
- Matt Ridley, *The Rational Optimist*, Chapter 1, “A Better Today, The Unprecedented Present,” pp. 11-28. [RO]

Jan 28

- Daron Acemoğlu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, Preface and chapters 1-2 [WNF]

Week 2 (Feb 2 - 4) – Why Nations Fail

Feb 2

- Daron Acemoğlu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, chapters 3-4, 7 [WNF]

Feb 4

- Daron Acemoğlu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, chapters 9, 13 [WNF]

Week 3 (Feb 9 - 11) – Property Rights

Feb 9 – ***Key Ideas Presentation #1***

- Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons” [ER]
- Video: “[The Tragedy of the Commons](#)”

Feb 11

- David Schmidt, “The Institution of Property” [AAPP, pp. 374-387]
- Podcast: “[The Secret Document that Transformed China](#)”

Week 4 (Feb 16 - 18) – The Division of Labor and Gains from Trade

Feb 16 - *Key Ideas Presentation #2*

- Adam Smith, “The Wealth of Nations ”[ER]
- Matt Ridley, *The Rational Optimist*, Chapter 1, “A Better Today, The Unprecedented Present,” pp. 32-46. [RO]
- Video: “[Specialization and Trade: Because We Can’t Be Good at Everything](#)”

Feb 18

- Matt Ridley, *The Rational Optimist*, Chapter 2, “The Collective Brain: Exchange and Specialization After 200,000 Years Ago,” pp. 47-84. [RO]

Week 5 (Feb 23 - 25) –The Emergence of Trust and Cooperation

Feb 23 - *Key Ideas Presentation #3*

- Robert Axelrod, “The Evolution of Cooperation” [AAPP]

Feb 25

- Matt Ridley, *The Rational Optimist*, Chapter 3, “The Manufacture of Virtue: Barter, Trust, and Rules after 50,000 Years Ago” [RO, pp. 85-100 only.]
- Podcast: “[Trust Me](#)”

Week 6 (Mar 2 - 4) – Opportunity Cost and Market Prices

Mar 2

- Frédéric Bastiat, “What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen,” sections 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8 only [ER]
- Video: “[Opportunity Costs: The Parable of the Broken Window](#)”

Mar 4 - *Key Ideas Presentation #4*

- Friedrich Hayek, “The Use of Knowledge in Society” [ER]
- Video: “[Coordination Through Prices](#)”
- Video: “[What if There Were No Prices?](#)”

Week 7 (Mar 9 - 11) – Market Failure, Externalities

Mar 9 - *Key Ideas Presentation #5*

- Charles Wolf, “Market Failure” [AAPP, pp. 330-338]

Mar 11

- Edwin Dolan, “Controlling Acid Rain” [ER]

Week 8 (Mar 16 -18) – Rent-Seeking

Mar 16 - *Key Ideas Presentation #6*

- *The Captured Economy*, chapter 1 (“Rigged”), chapter 2 (“The Rents are Too Damn High”) [CE]
- Video: “[Rent Seeking](#)”
- Video: “[Special Interest Groups](#)”

Mar 18

- *The Captured Economy*, chapter 5 (“Occupational Licensing”), chapter 6 (“Land Use”) [CE]

Week 9 (Mar 23 – 25) – The Rule of Law

Mar 23 - *Key Ideas Presentation #7*

- Lon Fuller, “The Morality That Makes Law Possible” [ER]

Mar 25

- Todd Zywicki, “The Rule of Law, Freedom, and Prosperity” [ER]

No class, March 29 – April 5 (Spring / Easter Break)

Week 10 (Apr 6 - 8) - Exploitation and Unfair Prices

Apr 6 - *Key Ideas Presentation #8*

- John Locke, “Venditio,” Michael Munger, “Guide to the Merchant of Venditio” [ER]

Apr 8

- Matt Zwolinski, “The Ethics of Price Gouging” [ER]
- **Video:** [“Is Price Gouging Immoral? Should It Be Illegal?”](#)
- **Podcast:** [Mike Munger on EconTalk](#)

Week 11 (Apr 13 - 15) - Marx’s Critique of Capitalism

Apr 13

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The Communist Manifesto” [AAPP]

Apr 15

- Karl Marx, “Value, Price and Profit” [ER]
- **Video:** [“The Labor Theory of Value”](#)
- **Video:** [“The Ownership of Capital”](#)

Week 12 (Apr 20 - 22) - Debating the Value of Economic Growth

Apr 20 - *Key Ideas Presentation #9*

- John Maynard Keynes, “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren” [ER]

Apr 22

- Tyler Cowen, excerpts from *Stubborn Attachments* [ER]

Week 13 (Apr 27 - 29) - Repugnant Markets

Apr 27 - *Key Ideas Presentation #10*

- Debra Satz, “Introduction” and “Noxious Markets,” from *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale* [ER]
- **Podcast:** [Debra Satz on EconTalk](#)

Apr 29

- Jason Brennan and Peter Jaworski, *Markets Without Limits*, chapters 1-2 [ER]

Week 14 (May 4 - 6) - Kidneys for Sale?

May 4

- Arthur Caplan, “Organ Transplantation” [ER]

May 6

- Janet Radcliffe-Richards, “Nepharious Goings-On: Kidney Sales and Moral Arguments” [ER]
- **Podcast:** [Tina Rosenberg on the Kidney Market in Iran](#)

Tuesday, May 18th, 1:00pm

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Final Paper Due