SACRAMENTO STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
FALL 2012
ECON 101: History of Economic Thought

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CLASS MEETINGS: MW 12:00-1:15 pm, Amador Hall 240
OFFICE HOURS: M 1:30-3 pm, W 10:30 am-12 pm, & by appt.

Course Description  Beginning with ancient civilizations, this class will progress historically to the present day, taking a broad view of what constitutes “economic thought,” (e.g., a mixture of institutional, philosophical, policy-oriented and “purely” theoretical). We will put this thinking into a general historical context of human affairs (political, religious, social, and scientific), noting major ideas and thinkers, emphasizing some thinkers more than is common, and sometimes going off the beaten track.


Suggested Texts  Heilbroner. The Worldly Philosophers.
Backhouse. The Ordinary Business of Life.
Buchholz. New Ideas from Dead Economists.

Grading  Written Assignments 20 points (or 5% each)
Mid-term Exams 60 points (or 20% each)
Final Exam 20 points

The actual letter grade you earn in this course will be based on a grading scale to be determined after the final exam. For this reason, I do not “curve” individual assignments. However, I will be happy to provide feedback over the semester on how to interpret your scores so that you know how you are progressing in the course.
NOTE ON THE CONTENT OF THIS COURSE SYLLABUS
I view the information in this syllabus as a contract between my students and myself. I try to be very clear about my expectations and policies so that everyone knows the basic rules and we all go home happy after each class and, ultimately, at the end of the semester. Please read the following carefully.

Attendance
Attendance at lecture is left up to your discretion, although it should be obvious that spending almost 3 hours with me each week will have a positive effect on how much you learn and your final grade. I do not take roll, but I am observant and will be able to ascertain who is there on a regular basis (and who is not). Please note that if you choose NOT to attend class, you are still responsible for any information, updates, reading assignments, etc that were announced or distributed in class.

Writing Assignments
The writing assignments in this class are designed to demonstrate your knowledge of a particular economist/thinker or concept we have discussed in class. Each assignment is to be no more than 2 typed, double-spaced pages (~500 words) that specifically addresses the writing prompt I will give you.

Exams
You may regard the exam dates listed below as carved in stone. Put them in your calendar immediately because there are no make-up exams and very few acceptable excuses for missing one. Acceptable excuses include a death in the family, a University-sponsored event or excursion, or a serious illness documented by a doctor. Exams are closed-book, closed-note, and closed-friend/neighbor.

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ADDITIONAL REQUESTS
• I know about the traffic/parking nightmares on campus and am sympathetic, but I do request that you be on time if you choose to attend. If you arrive late, please come in quietly, settle quickly, and at least muster an apologetic expression for me. It is your responsibility to get any material that you miss. I will not provide lecture notes under any circumstances, so I recommend that you find a study-buddy or two in class.
• Please make sure that all cell phones and pagers are shut off during lecture. At a minimum, put these devices in silent mode and refrain from answering calls/pages/text messages during class.

• If you have a physical or learning disability that requires accommodation, please let me know as soon as possible and contact Services to Students with Disabilities at (916) 278-6955 to get the proper documentation well in advance of the first exam. Please note that legally, I cannot provide you accommodation without this documentation.

• Don’t cheat. Ever. Under any circumstances. My job is to teach you economics and then give you a grade that accurately reflects your knowledge of the subject. If you cheat, you force me to assume that you have cheated because you know nothing and your grade will reflect that assumption.

• Cheating also includes plagiarism on your papers. If you are dumb enough to plagiarize, the result will NOT be pretty. As a student at CSUS, I expect you to understand the rules that preserve academic honesty as listed in the University Policy Manual and abide by them at all times. Ignorance of these rules is not a defense to a charge of academic dishonesty.

• This is not the type of class where you can learn the material on your own by looking through the textbook and someone else’s notes the night before the exam. (Not only is this not a good idea generally, but we are covering far too much material to even think this is a good idea). You must keep up with the reading and seek help when you don’t understand something. Utilize class time, my office hours, and email to get your questions answered. Although I do have specific office hours set aside, I maintain an open-door policy for students in my upper-division classes. If I’m in my office, I’ll make time for you if at all possible, so please BE PROACTIVE and stop by.

• I am interested in your feedback and would prefer not to rely on the generic and basically useless evaluation questions that I am only able to read after the semester is already over. I am happy to listen to suggestions and criticisms in person or via email, but if you feel uncomfortable telling me what you really think, I’ve set up an anonymous feedback form on my website at www.csus.edu/indiv/c/chalmersk/Links%20Teaching.html. Yes, it’s really anonymous.
**Brief Course Outline**

**Introduction to the History and Methodology of Economic Thought**
- Relativist vs. Absolutist approaches
- Scientific Idea Transfer Theories

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**Pre-classical Economics**
- Ancient and Medieval Economic Thought and Institutions
- Mercantilism
- Emergence of Capitalism

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**The Classical Period**
- Adam Smith
- Utility, Population and Money
- The Ricardian System and Its Critics
- John Stuart Mill
- Economic Policy in the Classical Period

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**Challenges to Economic Orthodoxy**
- Heterodox Economic Thought
- Karl Marx

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**The Marginal Revolution**
- Early Neoclassical Economists: Menger, Walras, Jevons
- The proto-Austrian School
- Alfred Marshall
- Hegemony of Neoclassical Economics

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**Twentieth Century Paradigms**
- Veblen and American Institutional Economics
- John Maynard Keynes and Modern Macroeconomics
- Rational Expectations
- Austrian Economics

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**The New Millenium**
- Mathematical Formalism
- The Modern Methodological Debate