

POLI 391 (Honors): Capitalism and Democracy (Spring 2023)

Location: Gambrell 321

Hours: MW @ 3:55-5:10

Instructor: Prof. Samuel Bagg (samuel.bagg@sc.edu)

Office Hours (Gambrell 312): W 11:00am-1:00pm

Objectives

Since the fall of the USSR, democratic capitalism has reigned supreme as the only credible political order. But the relationship of its two central pillars—capitalism and democracy—has never been simple. This course examines the complementarities and tensions between these two world-historical forces, whose fraught marriage gives rise to nearly all of the questions and controversies that define modern political life. In the first half, students will trace their tightly linked development through historical thinkers such as Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Joseph Schumpeter, and Eric Williams. The second half turns to contemporary challenges through the work of major figures such as Nancy Fraser, Wendy Brown, and Erik Olin Wright.

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- compare and evaluate historical and contemporary conceptions of capitalism and democracy
- discuss the relationship between capitalism and democracy as world-historical forces
- assess diverse, cross-cutting challenges facing contemporary capitalist democracies

Requirements and Grading

The course meets twice a week for 75-minute sessions, to be divided between lecture and discussion. It is reading-heavy and discussion-based, so get ready to read carefully, think hard about what you have read, and talk about it with your peers in an open-minded and constructive way.

You are expected to attend regularly and come prepared to participate actively in discussions. In addition to doing the reading thoroughly, you will also submit reading responses by 1pm on the day of each class.

All of this will count towards your Engagement score, one of three component parts of your final grade. The other two components are a Midterm and Final Paper. Each component will be graded on a numerical 0-100 scale, and then assigned a letter grade using the following standard conversion:

90-100 = A || 85-89 = B+ || 80-84 = B || 75-79 = C+ || 70-74 = C || 60-69 = D || 0-59 = F

Your final grade will be calculated *qualitatively* from your letter grades on each component, as follows:

A: To receive a final grade of A, you must earn an A for two components and a B or higher for the third.

B+: There are three paths to a final grade of B+: either (i) earning a B+ or higher for two components, and a C+ or higher for the third; (ii) earning an A for one component, and a B for the others; or (iii) earning an A for two components, along with a C+, C, or D for the third.

B: There are two paths to a final grade of B: either (i) earning a B or higher for two components, and a C or C+ for the third; or (ii) earning a B+ or higher for one component, and a C or C+ for the others.

C+: There are two paths to a final grade of C+: either (i) earning a C+ or higher for two components, and a C or D for the third; or (ii) earning a B or higher for one component, and a C or D for the others.

C: There are two paths to a final grade of C: either (i) earning a C or higher for two components, and a D for the third; or (ii) earning a C+ or higher for one component, and a D for the others.

D: There are three paths to a final grade of D: either (i) earning a D for all components; (ii) earning a D for two components and a C for the third; or (iii) getting an F on any component, regardless of other grades.

F: You will receive an F in the course if you receive an F for any two components.

Engagement

Engagement in the day-to-day of the course is one of three major components of your final grade, and will be scored out of 100 points. You start with all 100 points by default, and can lose (or gain back) points based on attendance, written responses, and participation in class, as follows.

Attendance: You can miss up to four classes with no penalty. Beyond that, three points will be deducted from your Engagement score for each additional class you miss. Anyone with perfect attendance will get three bonus points added to their Engagement score.

Please note: there are no “excused” absences, other than those few cases mandated by University policy. If your absence is one of those rare cases (e.g., for sports or COVID), use the official process to send me the forms. If not, there is no need to send me a doctor’s note, police report, mechanic’s bill, obituary, or GroupMe thread about the power outage in your area (all things I have received). This is precisely what your four free absences are for!

If you have used up your freebies, three points will be deducted from your Engagement score, but even then, you can miss three more classes and still get an A. The policy is designed to leave room for unforeseen events without anyone having to bother with documentation. If there are long-term issues that prevent regular attendance, talk to me about alternative ways to demonstrate engagement. Otherwise, no need to let me know you will be absent: I will likely just copy and paste this text. (I am not trying to be a jerk, I just receive a LOT of emails about absences!)

Reading Responses: By 1pm on the day of each class, you will submit a two-part response to the reading for that day, containing: (a) a 300-500-word answer to a prompt given at the end of the prior lecture; and (b) three quotes from different parts of the text that were interesting, surprising, or relevant to the prompt.

I will use these responses to stimulate class discussion, and may call on you to talk about the arguments you made in response to the question for part (a), and / or why you chose the quotes you did for part (b).

You may skip this assignment up to eight times with no penalty. Beyond that, three points will be deducted from your Engagement score each time you fail to submit a complete and on-time response. If you submit a response that is late, incomplete, or fails to meet the substantive standards, one to three points may be deducted, at my discretion. Exceptional responses may be rewarded with a bonus Engagement point.

In-Class Participation: Students who consistently make exceptional contributions to class discussions will be rewarded with up to 10 extra points on their Engagement score. Any students who fail to participate in good faith, or do so in actively unhelpful ways, may lose up to 5 points on their Engagement score.

Midterm Examination

The second major component of your final grade is a midterm examination, covering the materials from Part One of the course, which will take place in class on **Wednesday, March 1**—our last meeting before Spring Break. It will consist of five quote IDs (40 points total) and two essay questions (30 points each).

Students who do poorly on the first midterm may elect to take a final exam on **Friday, April 28** at **4pm**, covering material from the entire course. Their grade on this will replace their grade on the first midterm. The deadline for deciding whether you will take the final exam is **Friday, April 14**. Notify me in writing.

Final Paper

The third major component of your final grade is a final paper of 3000-5000 words (approx. 10-15 pages), addressing the contemporary challenges discussed in Part Two of the course. You may choose to answer one of several prompts that will be distributed after Spring Break, or you may propose your own topic, so long as it uses course texts to address the general questions considered in Part Two.

A proposal of 400-600 words will be due **Friday, March 24**. A full outline with at least one fully drafted section (minimum 1000 words) will be due **Friday, April 7**. The final draft will be due **Monday, April 24**.

Course Policies

1. Academic Integrity: You are responsible for knowing what constitutes academic dishonesty and for avoiding all forms of it. Violations of the university's academic integrity policy will result in receiving a 0 for the relevant assignment and automatic referral to the [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

2. Disabilities: Students with disabilities should contact me during the first week of class to ensure that appropriate accommodations are provided. See also the [Office of Student Disability Services](#).

3. Electronics: Use of cell phones and laptops is prohibited during class, unless you have an official SDRC accommodation or have discussed it separately with me. Tablets without keyboards may be used to display the readings but should not be used for note-taking. Please contact me if you have questions.

4. Grading: I understand graded assignments as tools for helping you achieve your own learning goals. My assumption is that you want to develop the skills and learn the material we cover, but that you also have many other demands on your time. Grades thus give you an external incentive to do things you want to do anyway. My aim is not to be punitive, but in order to give you these incentives and thereby help you learn, I do have to apply the rules fairly and consistently.

Course Texts

All course texts are available for free, either in the public domain, through the library, or on Blackboard.

If you are able, however, I *highly recommend* you purchase hard copies of as many of the books as you can. They are available (new and used) at the University bookstore or various online stores, linked below.

Reading a hard copy makes it much easier to focus on the dense texts that we will be grappling with, and besides, these are classics that will serve you well on your bookshelf for the rest of your life.

Highest Priority (classic works used in multiple classes):

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (Norton)—approx. \$20 used; or online
- Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, & Democracy* (Harper)—approx. \$8 used; or via library
- Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Beacon)—approx. \$18 used; or via library
- Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (Verso)—approx. \$15 used; or online

Medium Priority (classic works used in one class only):

- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Volumes I & II (Liberty Fund)—approx. \$4 each used; or online
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Penguin)—approx. \$4 used; or online
- Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago)—approx. \$6 used; or via Blackboard
- Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (UNC)—approx. \$18 used; or via library
- W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (Oxford)—approx. \$25 used; or via library

Lowest Priority (contemporary works used in one class only):

- Albenaz Azmanova, *Capitalism on Edge* (Columbia)—approx. \$18 used or via library
- Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos* (Zone)—approx. \$10 used or via library
- Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything* (Simon & Schuster)—approx. \$12 used or via Blackboard
- Daniel Bell, *The China Model* (Princeton)—approx. \$6 used or via Blackboard

Course Schedule

January 9 (Monday): Introduction

- Required: Syllabus

Part One: Classical Foundations—Understanding Capitalism and Democracy

January 11 (Wednesday): The logic of commercial society

- Primary Text: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776)—hard copy or [link](#)
Required: Introduction and Plan of Work; Book I, chapters 1-3, 7
Recommended: Book IV, chapter 9, §50-52; Book V, 1b §1-11, 1c, 1d, 1f §46-61, 1g §1-15
- Secondary Resources (optional): Paul Sagar, “The Real Adam Smith” ([link](#)); Dennis Rasmussen, “The Problem of Inequality, to Adam Smith” ([link](#)); Adam Gopnik, “What did Adam Smith believe?” ([link](#))

January 16 (Monday): MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY, NO CLASS

January 18 (Wednesday): Commercial society and democracy

- Primary Text: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835 / 1840)—hard copy or [link](#)
Required: Vol. II, Part 2, chapters 1-8, 20; Part 4, chapters 6-8
Recommended: Vol. I, Part 2, chapters 1-9; Vol. II, Part 2, chapters 9-19, Part 4, chapters 1-4
- Secondary Resources (optional): podcasts ([one](#), [two](#), [three](#)); Colin Kidd, “A Matter of Caste” ([link](#)); James Wood, “Tocqueville in America” ([link](#))

January 23 (Monday): Capitalism as bourgeois revolution

- Primary Text: *The Marx-Engels Reader* (ed. Robert Tucker)—hard copy or Blackboard
Required: Marx and Engels, “Communist Manifesto” (1848), Parts 1 and 2 (p. 473-491)
Recommended: Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program” (1875), selections (p. 525-541)
- Secondary Resources (optional): podcasts ([one](#), [two](#)); comics ([link](#), esp. [this](#)); Louis Menand, “Karl Marx, Yesterday and Today” ([link](#)); Stephen Holmes, “The End of Idiocy on a Planetary Scale” ([link](#))

January 25 (Wednesday): Democracy as bourgeois ideology

- Primary Text: *The Marx-Engels Reader* (ed. Robert Tucker)—hard copy or Blackboard
Required: Marx, “On the Jewish Question” (1844), Essay 1 (p. 26-46)
Recommended: Marx, “Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon” (1852), selections (p. 594-617)
- Secondary Resources (optional): day 1 resources + Wendy Brown chapter (Blackboard)

January 30 (Monday): The logic of capital accumulation

- Primary Text: *The Marx-Engels Reader* (ed. Robert Tucker)—hard copy or Blackboard
Required: Marx, *Capital*, (1867), selections (p. 319-343 and p. 419-438 from *Marx-Engels Reader*)
Recommended: the rest of *Capital* selections in *Marx-Engels Reader*
- Secondary Resources (optional): day 1 resources (esp. [this comic](#)) + David Harvey course ([link](#))

February 1 (Wednesday): The logic of creative destruction

- Primary Text: Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942)—hard copy or [link](#)
Required: chapters 5-7, 9, 11
Recommended: chapters 8, 10, 12-14
- Secondary Resources (optional): podcasts ([one](#), [two](#)), Jill Lepore, “The Disruption Machine” ([link](#)); Geoff Hawthorn, “Schumpeter the Superior” ([link](#)); Tom Leonard, “Prophet of Innovation” ([link](#))

February 6 (Monday): Democracy as a market

- Primary Text: Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942)—hard copy or [link](#)
Required: chapters 20-22
Recommended: chapters 15-19, 23
- Secondary Resources (optional): day 1 resources + additional podcast ([one](#))

February 8 (Wednesday): The market as democracy

- Primary Text: Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944)—hard copy or Blackboard
Required: Introduction + chapter 3 + “The Use of Knowledge in Society” (1945)—[link](#)
Recommended: chapters 1, 2, 4 + “Competition as a Discovery Procedure” (1978)—[link](#)
- Secondary Resources (optional): podcasts ([one](#)), Geoff Hawthorn, “Hayek and his Overcoat” ([link](#))

February 13 (Monday): The logic of central planning

- Primary Text: Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944)—hard copy or Blackboard
Required: chapters 5-8
Recommended: chapters 10-13
- Secondary Resources (optional): day 1 resources + Stephen Metcalf, “Neoliberalism: The Idea that Changed the World” ([link](#)); Timothy Shenk, “The Long Shadow of Mont Pelerin” ([link](#))

February 15 (Wednesday): The logic of market society

- Primary Text: Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944)—hard copy or [link](#)
Required: chapters 3-6
Recommended: chapters 1-2, 7-10
- Secondary Resources (optional): Margaret Somers and Fred Block, “The Return of Karl Polanyi” ([link](#)); Robert Kuttner, “Karl Polanyi Explains it All” ([link](#)) and “The Man from Red Vienna” ([link](#))

February 20 (Monday): Market society and social democracy

- Primary Text: Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944)—hard copy or [link](#)
Required: chapters 11-13, 21
Recommended: chapters 14-20
- Secondary Resources (optional): day 1 resources + Daniel Luban, “The Elusive Karl Polanyi” ([link](#)); Jeremy Adelman, “Polanyi, the Failed Prophet of Moral Economics” ([link](#))

February 22 (Wednesday): The logic of racial capitalism

- Primary Text: Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944)—hard copy or [link](#)
Required: chapters 1, 10, 13
Recommended: chapters 7-9, 11-12
- Secondary Resources (optional): podcasts ([one](#)); Nicholas Lemann, “Is Capitalism Racist?” ([link](#)); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton* (Blackboard), especially chapters 2-5

February 27 (Monday): Racial capitalism and democracy

- Primary Text: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935)—hard copy or [link](#)
Required: chapters 1, 2, 14 (first ten pages, to paragraph ending “for all men.”)
Recommended: chapters 3-4, 10, 13-17
- Secondary Resources (optional): podcasts ([one](#), [two](#)); Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “Review: Black Reconstruction in America” ([link](#))

March 1 (Wednesday): *Midterm Examination*

March 6 (Monday): *SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS*

March 8 (Wednesday): *SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS*

Part Two: Contemporary Challenges—Capitalism and Democracy in the 21st Century

March 13 (Monday): Are capitalism and democracy compatible?

- Required: Maximilian Krahe, “Changing Accounts of... Capitalism and Democracy” ([link](#))
- Recommended: Peter Frase, “Four Futures” ([link](#)); Gabriel Almond, “Capitalism and Democracy” ([link](#))

March 15 (Wednesday): The challenge of inequality

- Required: David Grewal, “The Laws of Capitalism” ([link](#))
- Recommended: Jedediah Purdy, “Wealth and Democracy” ([link](#)), Grewal and Purdy, “Inequality Rediscovered” ([link](#)), Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the 21st Century* ([link](#)); podcasts ([one](#), [two](#))

March 20 (Monday): The challenge of precarity

- Required: Albenaz Azmanova, *Capitalism on Edge*, chapters 3 and 6 ([link](#))
- Recommended: Azmanova, other chapters (esp. 4-5); videos ([one](#), [two](#)), podcasts ([one](#), [two](#))

March 22 (Wednesday): The challenge of cross-cutting cleavages

- Required: Nancy Fraser, “A Triple Movement?”; “Contradictions of Capital and Care” (Blackboard)
- Recommended: Fraser, other essays (see Blackboard); videos ([one](#), [two](#)); podcasts ([one](#))

March 24 (**Friday**): *Paper Proposal Due*

March 27 (Monday): The challenge of neoliberal culture

- Required: Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, chapters 1 and 6 (hard copy or [link](#))
- Recommended: Brown, chapters 3, 4, epilogue; videos ([one](#)); podcasts ([one](#), [two](#), [three](#), [four](#))

March 29 (Wednesday): The challenge of neoliberal globalization

- Required: JW Mason, “The Market Police” ([link](#)) + T Biebricher, “Neoliberalism and Democracy” ([link](#))
- Recommended: Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists* ([link](#)); videos ([one](#), [two](#), [three](#)), podcasts ([one](#), [two](#))

April 3 (Monday): The challenge of ecology

- Required: Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*, Intro + chapter 2 (hard copy or Blackboard)
- Recommended: Purdy, “The World We’ve Built” ([link](#)); videos ([one](#), [two](#)), podcasts ([one](#))

April 5 (Wednesday): The challenge of democracy

- Required: Daniel Bell, *The China Model*, chapter 1 (hard copy or Blackboard)
- Recommended: Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, *Democracy for Realists* ([link](#)); videos ([one](#))

April 7 (**Friday**): *Paper Outline Due*

April 10 (Monday): Open Day / Paper Presentations I

April 12 (Wednesday): Open Day / Paper Presentations II

April 17 (Monday): Hope?

- Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, chapter 6 (hard copy or [link](#))

April 19 (Wednesday): Hope?

- Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, chapter 7 (hard copy or [link](#))

April 24 (Monday): *NO CLASS—Final Paper Due*

April 28 (Friday): Final Exam (4pm)—optional (to replace midterm grade if desired – notify by April 14)