

LGST 226: Markets, Morality, and Capitalism

Robert Hughes

Fall 2019 Syllabus

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Instructor office hours: JMHH 668, Tuesdays 3-4:30 or by appointment

Class meetings: TR 1:30-2:50, JMHH F65 (note the room change)

Markets are a central feature of most modern societies, but there are many ways a market economy can be structured. Should markets be allowed to determine who will be rich and who will be poor? Are there some goods that should not be allocated via markets? This course will examine ways in which markets promote or hinder various social values. Our aim will be to determine what sort of market system we should want.

The first half of the course will concern the values of economic equality and economic liberty. Many people are troubled by the large economic inequalities we see today. There are principled reasons to think that some forms of economic inequality are morally objectionable. At the same time, many people value economic liberty, and there are good reasons to think that markets and private property contribute to economic liberty. Are economic equality and economic liberty fundamentally in conflict, or can a market economy protect economic liberty while limiting economic inequality? We will examine how different conceptions of liberty and equality lead to different answers to this question.

The second half of the course will concern ways in which specific market conditions or markets for particular goods can raise distinctive moral problems. Are there market conditions in which an offer can be coercive? Are there market conditions in which there can be transactions that are exploitative despite being beneficial and mutually consensual? Are there market conditions that make exploitation impossible? Is it objectionable to have markets for the sale of human organs, human infants, sex, or primary education? What moral limits are there, and what legal limits should there be, on the use of money to influence politics?

Readings

Readings for the course will be available via the course website (via Library Course Reserves). Though digital versions of these three books are available, you may wish to use hard copies:

G.A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?*

Jason Brennan, *Why Not Capitalism?*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings*

These books will be available for purchase in the campus bookstore. Copies will also be available on reserve at Lippincott Library. We will be reading all of the short books by Cohen and Brennan in the first two weeks of class. The Rousseau work we are studying is his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. If you have a different translation of this work, you are welcome to use it instead.

Assignments and grading

15% Questions on the Reading

15% Class participation

30% First paper (1800-2400 words, due 2pm Friday, October 25)

40% Second paper (2400-3000 words, due 2pm Thursday, December 19)

For the first paper, I will offer several possible topics from which you may choose. You will develop your own topic for the second paper. I will give you guidance about how to do this. Both paper assignments will address normative questions, questions about what actions, institutions, or social practices are good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust, desirable or undesirable. Papers should not focus on describing the economic world as it is or has been. A paper for this course might explain an argument we discussed, offer an objection to the argument, and attempt to resolve the problem. Or a paper might critically evaluate a dispute between two authors we have studied. Or a paper might apply one of the normative theories we have discussed to a contemporary social question.

Grades for paper assignments will be on an absolute scale. I will not use a curve. The main criteria for the evaluation of papers will be the clarity of the writing and organization, the accuracy and charity of the presentation of others' views and arguments, and the effectiveness of critical discussion.

To help guide you through the readings, I will ask you to write up answers to a questions on each of the reading assignments. Sometimes I will ask you to write brief (1-3 sentence) answers to several questions. Sometimes I may instead ask for a full paragraph answer to a single question. Answers to questions on the reading are due on Canvas before every class except for the first session, which has no reading assignment, and two sessions in October that coincide with religious holidays. Answers to questions on the reading will be graded S/U. You may skip any five sets without penalty (though you should still do the reading on days that you skip the QR assignment). I will not give written feedback on these assignments, but you are welcome and encouraged to discuss your answers to questions on the reading with me in office hours. We will always discuss the questions on the reading in class.

Grades for participation will be based on both the frequency and the quality of active participation, with an emphasis on quality. Comments in class do not have to be true or deep to be helpful (though if you are in possession of deep truths, I hope you will share). Any effort to help the class think through the material is potentially valuable, including mistakes, tentative suggestions, devil's advocacy, and requests for clarification. That said, it will probably not help your participation grade to bullshit, i.e., to speak with the aim of sounding good without caring whether you are saying something true. It also will not help your grade either to be hyper-aggressive or to pretend to have read the day's readings when you haven't. To ensure that all students get opportunities to speak, I will not always call on the first students to raise their hands.

Regular attendance is required. A large number of unexcused absences (more than three) may result in a failing grade for the course.

Papers should be submitted to Canvas and automatically checked with Turnitin. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day late, including weekend days. Answers to questions on the reading must be submitted on time to receive credit.

Academic integrity

Information on academic integrity will be available on the course website. Students are expected to know and comply with University regulations regarding academic integrity.

If you use or discuss someone else's ideas—including ideas you get from discussing the course with classmates, friends, or family—you must cite the source. If you use someone else's words, you must clearly identify the quotation as a quotation, and you must cite the source. You are always welcome to speak with me about when it is necessary to cite a source. If you must make a last-minute decision about citation, it is better to cite too much rather than too little.

Dual submissions are not allowed in this course. No part of any assignment for this course may consist of work that you (or others) have submitted for assignments in other courses, at the University of Pennsylvania or elsewhere.

Though you are welcome and encouraged to discuss the readings with other students in the course, you should write up answers to the “Questions on the Reading” assignments on your own.

Classroom policies

A recent study indicates that students perform better on conceptual questions if they take notes longhand, rather than typing. Partly for this reason, I will ask you to refrain from using electronic devices in class, including laptops, and you should silence devices before class begins. If you have a disability that requires you to take notes on a computer, or if you have *really* bad handwriting, come talk to me. When there are large blocks of text you need in your notes, I will provide copies.

We will sometimes have small group discussions in class. So that you can have these discussions with different people, I may ask you to vary where you sit. To help me keep participation records and to help us all to learn each others' names, I will ask you display name cards.

Audio or video recording of class sessions is prohibited.

Faculty lunches

I will arrange group lunches with students through the Student-Faculty Meals Program. I invite and encourage you to sign up on Canvas. These lunches are voluntary, and there is no charge to students.

Tentative schedule of readings

The dates listed are the dates reading assignments are due. For some reading assignments, you will not have to read the whole of the article that is posted online. Please look at the daily “Questions on the Reading” assignment on Canvas (even if you are not writing up answers that day) for page numbers and advice about where to focus.

I may adjust the reading list in later units in response to the interests students express earlier in the term.

Unit 1: Two economic utopias

August 29: The ideal of economic equality

G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* Chapters I-III

September 3: What distinguishes capitalism from market socialism?

G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* Chapters IV-V

John Roemer, “A Future for Socialism”

Jason Brennan, *Why Not Capitalism?* pp. 3-46

September 5: The ideal of economic liberty

Jason Brennan, *Why Not Capitalism?* pp. 47-99

Unit 2: Markets and equality

September 10: A classic challenge to economic inequality

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Introduction and Part I

September 12: A classic challenge to economic inequality

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part II

September 17: Justifying limited inequality: Rawls's proposal

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§1-3, 11-13

September 19: The original position and the two principles

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§ 4, 20, 24-26

September 24: Economic equality and democratic citizenship

Elizabeth Anderson, "What is the Point of Equality?" pp. 287-289, 312-337.

September 26: Justice and inheritance

D. W. Haslett, "Is Inheritance Justified?"

October 1 (No written QR): Economic inequality in contemporary societies

Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, pages TBD

Unit 3: Markets and freedom

October 3: A libertarian view of economic freedom

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, & Utopia*, pp. 150-74, 262-5

October 8 (No written QR): A classical liberal view of economic freedom

Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, Chapters II and III

October 15: Economic freedom for the poor

G. A. Cohen, "The Structure of Proletarian Unfreedom"

October 17: Are liberty and equality compatible? Left-libertarianism

Michael Otsuka, "Self-Ownership and Equality: A Lockean Reconciliation"

October 22: Are economic liberty and regulation compatible? Civic republicanism

Phillip Pettit, "Freedom in the Market"

October 24: Economic liberty and the prevention of poverty

Arthur Ripstein, *Force and Freedom*, pp. 267-286

Unit 4: Coercion and exploitation on the market

October 29: Threats, offers, and warnings

Robert Nozick, "Coercion," pages TBA

October 31: Can job offers be coercive?

David Zimmerman, "Coercive Wage Offers"

November 5: Exploitation and its regulation

Alan Wertheimer, *Exploitation*, pp. 3-34, pp. 296-309

November 7: Another view of exploitation

Ruth Sample, *Exploitation: What It Is and Why It's Wrong*, pp. 55-96

Unit 5: Ethical Limits of the market

November 12: Noxious markets

Debra Satz, *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale*, pp. 91-112, 189-205

November 14: Another view on limits of the market

Elizabeth Anderson, "Ethical Limitations of the Market"

November 19: Selling parental rights

In re Baby M

Landes & Posner, "The Economics of the Baby Shortage"

November 21: Education markets and problematic incentives

Daniel Halliday, "Private Education, Positional Goods, and the Arms Race Problem"

November 26: Money, democracy, and political influence

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, § 39

Excerpts from *Buckley v. Valeo*

December 3: Vote-selling and self-interested voting

Steven Reiber, "Vote Selling and Self-Interested Voting"

Greg Mankiw, "On Selling Votes"

December 5: Markets and political influence

Thomas Christiano, "The Uneasy Relationship Between Democracy and Capital"