PPE Fall Courses 2012

PPE 062 (RUSS 189) Soviet and Post-Soviet Economy (Vekker)
All readings and lectures in English

LEC: TR 9:00 - 10:30AM

The course will cover the development and operation of the Soviet centrally planned economy--one of the grandest social experiments of the 20th century. We will review the mechanisms of plan creation, the push for the collectivization and further development of Soviet agriculture, the role of the Soviet educational system and the performance of labor markets (including forced labor camps--GULags). We will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet system and the causes of its collapse. Privatization, called by some "piratization," will be one of the central issues in our consideration of the transition from central planning to a market economy in the early 1990s. Even though our main focus will be on the Soviet economy and post-Soviet transition, we will occasionally look back in time to the tsarist era and even further back to find evidence to help explain Soviet/Russian economic development.

072 (PHIL 72, HSOC 101) Biomedical Ethics Society Sector (Martin)

LEC: MW 12-1 PM
REC: F 10-11 AM, 11-12 NOON, 12-1 PM or 1-2 PM

A survey of moral problems in medicine and biomedical research. Problems discussed include: genetic manipulation, informed consent, infanticide, abortion, euthanasia, and the allocation of medical resources. Moral theory is presented with the aim of enabling students to think critically and analytically about moral issues. The need for setting biomedical issues in broader humanistic perspective is stressed.

110 Introduction to Decision Theory Fulfils the Formal Reasoning General Requirement for the College of Arts and Sciences and Science and Tech (2) Social Structures Requirement for Wharton. (Sen)
This is an LPS course.

LEC: M 6:30-9:30 PM

The course will provide an introduction to models of human decision making. One of the primary purposes of the course is to provide a set of basic tools that will help the student translate qualitative uncertainty into numbers. A substantial amount of the course will deal with the theory of rational choice in the presence of objective and subjective uncertainty. Rational choice under uncertainty is by far the most used theory of decision making, and its applications are widespread in economics, finance, political science, law, managerial decision making, the economics of health care, and artificial intelligence. The course will use examples heavily from
each of these fields (and also fun “paradoxes” such as the Monty Hall Puzzle) in providing an introduction to the basic foundations of decision making. We will also look at the shortcomings of the theory: both from intuitive and empirical perspectives. No mathematical prerequisites are necessary beyond high school algebra and arithmetic. This is an evening course offered through LPS.

140 (CIS 140) Introduction to Cognitive Science Fulfils the Formal Reasoning General Requirement for the College of Arts and Sciences. (Ungar/Brainard)
Prerequisite(s): An introductory course in Computer Science, Linguistics, Neuroscience, Philosophy or Psychology.

LEC: TR 1:30-3 PM

How do minds work? This course surveys a wide range of answers to this question from the disciplines ranging from philosophy to neuroscience. The course devotes special attention to the use of simple computational and mathematical models. Topics include perception, action, thought, learning, memory and social interaction.

153 (PSYC 253) Judgments and Decisions College Quantitative Data Analysis Req. (Mellers)

LEC TR 9-10:30AM

Judgments, decisions under certainty and uncertainty, problem solving, logic, rationality, and moral thinking.

201 (ECON 13) Strategic Reasoning (Dillenberger)
Prerequisite(s): Econ 1

LEC: TR 12-1:30 PM

This course is about strategically interdependent decisions. In such situations, the outcome of your actions depends also on the actions of others. When making your choice, you have to think what the others will choose, who in turn are thinking what you will be choosing, and so on. Game Theory offers several concepts and insights for understanding such situations, and for making better strategic choices. This course will introduce and develop some basic ideas from game theory, using illustrations, applications, and cases drawn from business, economics, politics, sports, and even fiction and movies. Some interactive games will be played in class. There will be little formal theory, and the only pre-requisites are some high-school algebra and having taken Econ 1. However, general numeracy (facility interpreting and doing numerical graphs, tables, and arithmetic calculations) is very important. This course will also be accepted by the Economics department as an Econ course, to be counted toward the Minor in Economics (or as an Econ elective).
This course integrates economic, ethical and political perspectives. It examines competing theories, models, and analytical frameworks for understanding policymaking. The course will focus on: 1. How public problems are framed and described; 2. What criteria are useful in developing and assessing policy choices; and 3. How policy choices and outcomes are mediated and influenced by individuals, organizations and political institutions.

233 Philosophy of Economics (Lindemans)

LEC: TR 1:30-3 PM

In this course, general philosophy of science issues are applied to economics, and some problems specific to economics are tackled. While analytical questions like “What is economics?” or “What is an economic explanation” must be pursued, the ultimate goal is practical: What is good economics? How can economists contribute to a better understanding of society, and a better society? How can we make economics better? Topics to be discussed include the following: specific object and method of economics as a social science; its relation with other disciplines (physics, psychology and evolutionary theory); values in economics (welfare, freedom, equality and neutrality); the role of understanding and possible limits of a quantitative approach to human behavior (purposefulness, freedom, creativity, innovation); prediction, unpredictability and the pretension of prediction; causation in econometrics and in economic theory (equilibrium); selfishness and utility maximization (cognitive and behaviorist interpretations); economic models and unrealistic assumptions (realism and instrumentalism); empirical basis of economics (observation and experiment); microeconomics and macroeconomics (reductionism and autonomy); pluralism in economics (mainstream economics and heterodox schools).

244 (Phil 244) Introduction to Philosophy of Mind (Camp)

LEC: MW 10-11 AM
REC: F 10-11 AM or 11-12 NOON

This course deals with several problems that lie at the interface among philosophy, logic, linguistics, psychology, and computer science.
299 Independent Study (C) Permission needed from Department.

Student arranges with a faculty member to pursue a program of reading and writing on a suitable topic.

301 Directed Honors Research (C) Permission needed from Department. Open only to senior majors in PPE.

Student arranges with a faculty member to do an honors thesis on a suitable topic.

475 Psychology and Public Policies (Baumard)

SEM: TR 1:30-3 PM

"It's the economy, stupid" was one of a phrase Bill Clinton's catchphrase during his 1992 presidential campaign, arguably because what matters more to people is the rate of unemployment. The goal of the course is to convince you that when it comes to public policy, psychology is as important as economics. Our departure point will be the study of human nature. We will examine in which ways humans differ from the classic homo economicus: their life is not just about money but also about social relationships, they are moved by incentives but also by moral considerations, they care more about their relative income (how much others make) than about their absolute income (how much they make), etc. We will see how these considerations can inform both the goals and the means of public policies.

475 Topics in Economics and Psychology: Fairness (Dana/Dillenberger)

SEM: R 1:30-4:30 PM

Do people exhibit true concern for the welfare of others, without the promise of personal gain? Is economics lacking because it treats people as purely self-motivated? Can insight from psychology help to fill the void? This seminar discusses the role of fairness, generosity, trust and reciprocity in economic transactions. The discussion relies heavily on experimental and empirical evidence. Based on the interests of participants, topics may include attitudes about wealth redistribution, the tradeoff between equality and efficiency, fairness as a constraint on profits, and writing trust-based contracts between parties.
475 Globalization and Corruption (Nichols)

SEM: W 2-5 PM

The word "globalization" is perhaps one of the most used and yet least well defined terms used in describing the state of the world today. The word "corruption," on the other hand, has only recently become acceptable in discussions about the world's circumstances. This seminar reviews the usage of each of these terms and attempts to gain an understanding of the phenomenon underlying each term. Students will read primary literature and empirical research; among other things students will design and explain a research project aimed at finding (or not finding) linkages between globalization and corruption. The goal of this seminar is to give each student a foundational understanding of "globalization" and "corruption" and to prepare students to more sharply analyze the phenomena encompassed by these terms.

475 Freedom: What is it, how to measure it, how it affects policy making (Bavetta/Navarra)
Prerequisite(s): ECON 001 and PHIL 008. Some notions of statistics and/or econometrics preferred.

SEM: W 2-5 PM

This course is about freedom, its measurement and its policy and political implications. There are four main objectives of the course. First, offering a systematic and coherent view of the competing theoretical and empirical measures of freedom existing in the literature. Second, tracking back the conceptual foundations of the above measures of freedom and making judgments about their relative solidity and the analytic connection that links each empirical measure to its theoretical presuppositions. Third, constructing a theoretical and empirical measure of freedom based upon personal autonomy and defending it by describing its analytically reliable foundations. Fourth, examining the effects that the alternative measures of freedom have on the functioning of the economy and the working of political systems.

475 Economic Experiments on Social Behavior (Jiang)

SEM: R 3-6 PM

Experimental economics, which uses real monetary incentives, has proven by now its methodological merits in gaining reliable and new insights on economic behavior. By incorporating theories of games and economic behavior as well as psychological insights in its experimental designs, it has also provided new insights for various other disciplines. Due to the vast and rapidly growing body of work in this field, a choice on topics has to be made. Thus, the topical focus for this course will not be on pure “market interactions”, but rather on the social dimensions of behavior, to cater for a more multidisciplinary audience. Moreover, to better acquaint the students with the tool of controlled economic experiments, actual experiments will be run in class from time to time and students are expected to design and conduct an experiment themselves for the term paper.
Why are some countries richer than others? Why did democracy and industrialization first appear in the West? Why Southern Italy remains so different than Northern Italy? Why is the welfare system less developed in the US than in Europe? Why has forest disappeared in Haiti while it still exists in Dominican Republic? Why are African states so corrupted? In this class, we will study the way people manage to cooperate together and organize efficient institutions. We will study a range of institutions such as associations, states and international organizations and try to understand why some work and other fail.