PPE Fall Courses 2013

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

LEC: TR 12 NOON - 1:30 PM

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 (Meaninch)

LEC: MW 10-11 AM
REC: F 11-12 NOON or 12-1 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.

PPE 073 (PHIL 073) Ethics and the Environment (Parke)

SEM: MW 2-3:30 PM

In this class, we will examine many of the ethical issues involved in being a member of a
political system. As such, we will look philosophically at the obligations and responsibilities that
individuals have as citizens, as legislators, and as judges. Some of the questions that we will
discuss include; Do citizens have an obligation to obey the law? When is civil disobedience
justified? How ought a citizen vote? What, if any, are the ethical requirements of democratic
citizennry besides voting? If they conflict, should a legislator vote their own judgment or the
judgment of those they represent? How should a legislator balance achievement of goals with
ethical restrictions on methods? Are citizens morally responsible for the decisions of those they
elect? How ought judges interpret the laws? How much discretion ought judges have in a
democratic society? While we will be focused on addressing these specific questions, we will
also survey many of the main theories of moral philosophy and political philosophy whenever they are relevant. Readings will include both historical and contemporary writing, and we will examine a number of case studies related to the issues. Those who take the class are expected to participate in class discussions, and will be asked to write both quick responses and a longer final project.

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.

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).

202 (PSCI 236) Public Policy Process (Levendusky)
LEC: MW 11-12 NOON
REC: W 2-3 PM
REC: R 12-1 PM, 1-2 PM, or
REC: F 11-12 NOON, 12-1 PM, 1-2 PM

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.

225 (Phil 226) Philosophy of Biology Fulfills the Natural Science and Math Sector Requirement for the College of Arts and Sciences (Weisberg)
LEC: TR 12-1:30PM
REC: F 12-1 PM or 1-2 PM

Is there a science of psychology distinct from physiology? If there is, what is its subject matter? What is the relationship between scientific psychology and traditional philosophical investigation of the mental? Examination of these questions is followed by analysis of some concepts employed in cognitive psychology and cognitive science, particularly in the fields of perception and cognition.

233 Philosophy of Economics (Lindemans)
LEC: TR 3-4:30 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).

277 (PHIL 277) Justice, Law, and Morality (Freeman)

LEC: TR 11-12 NOON
REC: F 11-12 NOON, 12 Noon-1 PM or 1-2 PM

In this course we will focus on the philosophical background to questions regarding the exercise of legitimate political power and individuals’ rights under the U.S. Constitution, including 1st Amendment freedoms of religion, expression, and association, the 14th Amendment guarantee of due process and the right of privacy and abortion, the Equal Protection clause and its bearing on affirmative action and equal political rights, and the Takings and Contract clauses and their bearing on rights of private property and economic freedom. We will also discuss competing conceptions of democracy and their implications for the purported authority of courts to reverse democratically enacted decisions by a majority. In addition to Supreme Court decisions concerning these and other issues, we will read works by J.S. Mill, John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, T.M. Scanlon, Martha Nussbaum, Cass Sunstein, and other contemporary theorists.

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.

421 (Phil 421) Philosophy of Biology (Weisberg)
Prerequisite(s): Either two philosophy courses or BIOL 101/102 (or equivalent).

LEC: TR 12-1:30 PM
REC: F 12-1 PM or 1-2 PM

This course consists of a detailed examination of evolutionary theory and its philosophical foundations. The course begins with a consideration of Darwin's formulation of evolutionary theory and the main influences on Darwin. We will then consider two contemporary presentations of the theory Richard Dawkins' and Richard Lewontin's. The remainder of the course will deal with a number of foundational issues and may include discussions of adaptation, what constitutes a species, evolutionary progress, the concept of fitness, the units of selection, the alleged reduction of classical genetics to molecular genetics, and the possibility of grounding ethics in evolutionary theory. The evolution of altruism will also be discussed, time permitting.

475 Economic Experiments on Social Behavior (Jiang)

SEM: R 3-6PM

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.

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 Public Policy and Applications (Sontuoso)

SEM: T 1:30-4:30 PM

This course applies Public Choice theory to the analysis of contemporary policy issues. The course will address both domestic and international political decision-making elements: while maintaining an interdisciplinary nature, it aims at providing an accessible introduction to the analytical tools of economics as applied to the study of current issues in political science. Each class will begin with a - mostly informal - survey of some positive theoretical framework(s), including the foundations of the rational choice theory, approaches to the aggregation of preferences, strategic behavior, voting methods, accounts of cooperation, collective action, public goods, and institutions. The second part of each class will then critically apply theoretical knowledge to relevant contemporary policy issues, including current debates on governmental decision-making processes in the US and EU, lobbying in democracies, international security, state capacity and implementation, greenhouse gas reduction, democracy and civil society, etc..

475 Obedience (Royzman)

SEM: R 4:30-7:30 PM

Though almost half a century old, Milgram’s 1961-1962 studies of “destructive obedience” continue to puzzle, fascinate, and alarm. In this seminar, we will take an in-depth look at these famous studies (along with the more recent replications) and explore their various psychological, historical, and philosophical ramifications. This course has a number of intellectual goals that go beyond simply rarifying one’s understanding of a particular content area (important and generative as it may be). One such a goal is to enable you to think critically (though not disparagingly) about other people’s research and theoretical claims that ensue from it, all with the hope that you can then apply the selfsame critical acumen to your own future work. Second, this course will offer a hospitable environment for developing (and exchanging) creative ideas of your own. Your work on your individual reaction papers and on the term paper in particular will be a key element in achieving this goal.