Politics 216:
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ADVANCED CAPITALISM

Chris Howell
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Class: King 243, Tuesday & Thursday 11.00am-12.15pm.
Office: Rice 226
Office phone: 775-8649; e-mail: chris.howell@oberlin.edu
Office hours: Mondays 10.30-noon & Thursdays 1.45-3.00pm, or by appointment. Whenever possible, please sign up for office hours online at: http://tiny.cc/Ywoje

Introduction

Political economy is, broadly speaking, the study of the relationship between the state and the market. It is concerned with the ways in which politics affects the structure and performance of the economy, and the economy affects the structures, institutions and practices of politics. Defined in such a way, a course in the political economy of advanced capitalism is ambitious because practically every aspect of the politics of the industrialized world is deeply influenced by the state of the economy. That is why the primary concern of governments, after national security, is the "management" of their economies, and national security itself is heavily constrained by the economy. Political economy, in short, concerns the capacity of states to carry out their political programs, and hence the degree to which political choice matters in capitalist democracies.

This course will look selectively at a set of important topics in political economy. A central argument of the course is that there is no one “ideal” model of how a market economy should operate. Actually existing political economies diverge in countless ways from the models found in economic textbooks, and there is no clear relationship between market conformity and economic success. Thus, the study of political economy must be comparative; that is to say, it must examine the range of concrete forms of political economy among capitalist societies. As a result, almost half of the course will be taken up with the study of a range of types of contemporary political economy, each illustrated by particular countries. These types are laissez-faire political economies (Britain and the United States), organized or coordinated political economies (Sweden and Germany), and state-led political economies (France and Japan – though Japan is a hybrid of this and the previous type).

The course, both as part of its study of varieties of capitalism, and as discrete topics, will focus upon a number of important themes such as poverty and welfare state, the political economy of gender, economic integration and globalization. In the latter part of the course there will be heavy emphasis upon recent and evolving trends in political economy in order to give some sense of the political-economic landscape facing advanced capitalist societies early in the 21st century.
Requirements

It would be useful if students have taken an introduction to West European politics or have some prior knowledge of the basic political structures and processes in these societies, but that is not required. The main obligation of students is to do the assigned reading (of which there is a great deal, about 175 pages a week), come to class, and be prepared to participate in class discussions. Whenever possible this class will be conducted like a seminar. Occasionally students will make oral presentations about some of the readings.

Each student must write comments (anywhere from a paragraph or two to a page or two) on the readings each week. The purpose of the comments is to identify the main issues, questions and criticisms so that we can incorporate them into class discussion. The written comments must be posted to the “Discussion” section of Blackboard by 5.00am (in the morning!) before class. I will let you know in the “Announcements” section of Blackboard, on which days comments are due. A description of what I expect from these comments is available on the Blackboard web site for this class (at the “Assignments” tab). It should be read carefully. These comments, plus class participation, will be worth one third of the grade.

There will be a take home mid-term exam, in the form of essay questions, worth one-third of the grade, due just before spring break. For the final third of the grade you have a choice between doing a short research paper on a topic of your choosing (which can be done individually or collectively), or writing an essay on a set question (which can only be done individually). In either case, the paper or essay is due at 4:00 pm on Wednesday May 19th. If you decide to do the research paper, you must meet with me to discuss your topic by April 16th. These are all requirements and late work will be penalized in the interest of equity.

Finally, there will inevitably be some changes to the course as the semester progresses – changes in the readings, additional details of assignments, questions for the weekly comments, and so on – which are not included on this syllabus. I will provide regular updates in the “Announcements” section of the Blackboard web site for this course. Always check the Blackboard site at least once a week. In the unlikely event that you miss a class, you should always check the web site in case I have announced something of importance.

Course readings

One book, Peter Hall, Governing the Economy: The Politics of State Intervention in Britain and France, has been ordered at the Oberlin Bookstore and you are strongly advised to buy it because we will read it almost in its entirety.

All the other readings will be available electronically, and can be found at the “Course Readings” tab on Blackboard. You can then read (and print, if you wish) this material. The readings are organized alphabetically rather than in the order in which you read them. Check page numbers carefully, so that you read the correct section of each reading at the correct time. In many cases I have had some sections of a book scanned in that you do not need to read, or that you read at different points in the semester, so do be aware of page numbers.
CLASS SCHEDULE:

February 9, 11, 16, 18 & 23  States and Markets


Robert Kuttner, *Everything for Sale*, chapters 1, 2 and part of 9 (pages 11-67 & 328-342).


February 25 & March 2  The Rise and Fall of Fordism

David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, chapters 7 & 8 (pages 121-140).


Anthony Messina, *The Logics and Politics of Post-WWII Migration to Western Europe*,
chapter 2 (pages 19-53).

March 4 & 9  
**Varieties of Capitalism**


Peter Hall and David Soskice, *Varieties of Capitalism*, chapter 1 (pages 1-68).


March 11, 16 & 18  
**Laissez-Faire Political Economies**


Desmond King and Stewart Wood, “The Political Economy of Neoliberalism” (pages 371-397) in Kitschelt, Lange, Marks and Stephens, eds., *Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism* [1999].


Tony Blair *The Third Way*, Fabian Pamphlet (pages 1-20). **NOT** “Europe/Third Way.”


March 23 & 25, April 6 & 8  
**State-Led Political Economies**

Peter Hall, *Governing the Economy*, chapters 6-8 (pages 139-226).

Pepper Culpepper, Peter Hall and Bruno Palier, eds., *Changing France: The Politics that Markets Make*, Introduction (pages 1-26).


**April 13, 15 & 20 Organized Political Economies**


John Stephens, *The Transition From Capitalism To Socialism*, part of chapter 5 and all of chapter 6 (pages 129-140, and 177-194).


Jane Jenson and Rianne Mahon, "Representing Solidarity: Class, Gender and the Crisis of Social-Democratic Sweden" (pages 76-100) in *New Left Review* [September-October 1993].

Herbert Kitschelt and Wolfgang Streeck, “From Stability to Stagnation: Germany at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century” (pages 1-34) in *West European Politics* [2003].


Christopher Allen, “Institutions Challenged: German unification” (pages 139-156) in Lowell Turner, ed., *Negotiating the New Germany*.

**April 22, 27 & 29 Poverty and Welfare**

William Wilson, *When Work Disappears*, chapters 1, 2, 5 & 6 (pages 3-50 & 111-161).


Mike Davis, "Who Killed LA? Part Two: The Verdict is Given" (pages 29-54), in *New Left Review* [May-June 1993].


May 4, 6, 11 & 13 Towards a Post-National, Post-Industrial, Post-Fordist, Post-Crisis and Post-Modern Political Economy?

David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity, chapter 9 (pages 141-172).


European Union reading TBA


Peter Evans, “Is an Alternative to Globalization Possible?” (Pages 271-305) in Politics & Society [2008].

APSA Taskforce on Inequality and American Democracy Report, American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality (pages 1-24).