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 by 4:00 pm on Wednesday May 18th. 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 readings and assignments as the semester 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 before each class. 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

All the readings are 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 8, 10, 15, 17, & 22** States and Markets


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


**February 24 & March 1** The Rise and Fall of Fordism

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


March 3  

**Varieties of Capitalism**

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

Vivien Schmidt, “Putting the Political Back into Political Economy,” (pages 516-546) in *World Politics* [2009].


March 8, 10 & 15  

**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].

Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, “Winner-Take-All-Politics” (pages 152-204) in *Politics & Society* [2010].

Tony Blair *The Third Way*, Fabian Pamphlet (pages 1-20).


March 17, 22 & 24  

**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].

Wolfgang Streeck, Re-Forming Capitalism, chapters 2-6, pages 38-89).

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

April 5, 7, 12 & 14 State-Led Political Economies

Peter Hall, Governing the Economy, chapters 6 & 8 (pages 139-163 & 192-226).

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

T. J. Pempel, Regime Shift, chapter 2 (pages 42-80).


April 19, 21 & 26 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].

Claus Offe, Contradictions of the Welfare State, chapter 6 (pages 147-161).


April 28 & May 3 Post-National Post-Fordist Political Economy

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


May 5, 10 & 12 Learning From The Great Recession


David Harvey, The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism, chapter 1 (pages 1-39).


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

How To Do The Weekly Reading Comments Assignment

This assignment is not complicated, but it is easy to misunderstand. The purpose of these sets of comments is threefold. First, I want to know that you have read the assigned material ahead of class so that I can structure the class on the assumption that we have a shared starting point, and so that we can set about discussing the reading rather than having me simply lecture on it. The class is reading-driven because I am trying to expose you to a wide range of different viewpoints and approaches to the topic, and that requires that I do everything I can to encourage you to do the reading. Second, I need to know ahead of time if some part of the reading was consistently misunderstood so that I can concentrate on going over that material in class. It is often the case that one author or piece of reading is open to multiple interpretations, and if several students interpret it differently from me, we will need to discuss that. I may be expecting you to get something from the reading when you in fact take away something quite different. There may also be language and concepts that you don’t understand, so the written comments are an opportunity to let me know what you would like me to explain in class. Third, your reaction to the reading plays a central role in helping me decide how to organize class discussion. I am particularly interested in which readings resonated with you, and why, and which readings you found weak, irritating, ignorant, or whatever, and why. The critiques of the readings are the best place to start a class discussion – and it means I can call on you to explain your reaction.

What does this mean for the comments you write? It means that, at a minimum, I want the comments to demonstrate that you did the reading. That means a brief summary of the main themes and arguments presented in the reading. You can do this by writing a paragraph on each reading, or by drawing out some themes and using your comments to illustrate how each reading addressed those themes. You do not need to summarize and/or discuss every reading if you do not want to. I want a sense that you have done all the reading, but if you found some of the readings particularly insightful or heinous, then, by all means, focus on them in your comments. Do identify terms or concepts that you would like me to go over in class. Finally, along with your summary and questions, please offer comments, critiques and reactions to the readings. Again, you can do this for every reading, or just a few; you might organize your comments around a general critique of the readings for that week, or point to surprising similarities or differences.

The “product” should be written comments ranging from a couple of paragraphs to a couple of pages. They should be posted to Blackboard at the ‘Discussion Board’ tab by the deadline listed on the syllabus. Please write and post your comments before reading those of other students in the class. I want your reactions to the reading, not your reactions to the comments of other students. You are welcome to respond to student comments after posting your own.

Here is how I grade the comments. I DO NOT make comments on them. If you hand in comments that demonstrate that you have done the reading, or the great bulk of it, regardless of the quality of those comments, you get one point. If I receive no written comments, or your comments appear to be about reading for another class, you do not get a point. On rare occasions your comments may be so impressive that I give you two points. In the past this has been true for only about 10% of students each week, and it only happens for comments that go well beyond summary and questioning to offer insightful reaction and critique. You can check that I read and graded your comments by going to the Blackboard gradebook each week. I’m also happy to meet with you to give you some further feedback on your written comments.