

**Capitalism and its Critics**  
SSCI 306-TH  
Spring 2014

When: Thursdays 1:00-3:45PM  
Where: Bunting 480  
Professor: Firmin DeBrabander  
Office: Bunting 406  
Office Hours: Mondays 10-12; also by appointment

Course Description: Since the fall of the Communist regimes 20 years ago, it has been taken for granted in the West that the Capitalist economic system is the best possible economic system, indeed, the best by nature, and our destiny as a species. This was of course not always the preponderant view. For most of its history, Capitalism was not supreme, and its supremacy self-evident, but rather, it knew significant competition—and in many parts of the world, still does.

In light of the recent—and devastating—credit crisis that rocked the global economy in 2008, Capitalism's nature, and its self-evident supremacy, very much came into question. Perhaps, critics wondered, it's time to reconsider our embrace of bare-knuckled Capitalism in the West; perhaps it is time to consider subtler variations, compromises, hybrids—and evaluate the strengths and drawbacks of the Capitalist system anew. Perhaps it is time to admit what kind of Capitalist economy we have cobbled together—its essential problem might be that it is not in fact very 'Capitalist' at all! Imagine that.

In this course, we will look at some of the most prominent writings in the 'canon of Capitalism,' as well as important contemporary voices critiquing the nature and character of the Capitalist system, and how we have allowed it to develop today.

Required Texts (available at MICA bookstore):

Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, University of Chicago Press  
Friedrich Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, University of Chicago Press  
Tim Jackson, *Prosperity without Growth*, Earthscan Press  
Ludwig Von Mises, *Liberalism*, Liberty Fund Press  
David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital*, Oxford University Press

Requirements:

Your final grade in this class will be determined by 4 components: 1) a **Midterm essay** of 5-6 pages. Its due date is indicated on the course schedule, and I will provide topics for this; 2) a **Final research paper** of 10-14 pages due on the last day of class (or shortly thereafter). More information on this will be provided later. 3) You will take part in **Group Presentations**. A separate sheet on this follows. 4) Finally, since this is a discussion class, **participation** is a crucial part of your grade. You are expected to do the readings carefully and come to class prepared to analyze/ comment/ disparage/ debate. There will be periodic writing reflections at the beginning of class, with questions on the reading assignment. These written reflections are intended to do two things: get your intellectual juices running, and also indicate to me how you are doing with the reading assignments.

The breakdown of your final grade is as follows:

Midterm paper	25%
Final paper	35%
Presentation	20%
Class Participation	20%

Attendance Policy:

As we only meet 15 times this semester, it is crucially important that you attend all classes. For two or more unexcused absences, I will deduct a third of a letter grade from your final grade for each absence.

If you will be absent due to illness or family emergency, I can excuse you from class **if you provide written notice.**

Institutional Policies:

**Americans with Disabilities Act**

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Learning Resource Center at 410-225-2416, in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations.

**Health and Safety**

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to practice health and safety guidelines relevant to their individual activities, processes, and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan and attend EHS training. It is each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, faculty are to act in accordance with all safety compliance, state and federal, as employees of this college and are expected to act as examples of how to create art in a way to minimize risk, and reduce harm to themselves and the environment. Faculty must identify, within each art making process, and require personal protection equipment use, by each student for each class, when applicable. Students are required to purchase personal protection equipment appropriate to their major. Those students who do not have the proper personal protection equipment will not be permitted to attend class until safe measures and personal protection is in place.

**Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)**

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to follow health and safety guidelines relevant to their individual activities, processes, and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan and attend EHS training. It is each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, faculty are to act in accordance with all safety compliance, state and federal, as employees of this college and are expected to act as examples of how to create art in a way to minimize risk, and reduce harm to themselves and the environment. Faculty must identify and require appropriate personal protective equipment for each art making process, for each student, in all of their classes,

when applicable. Students are required to purchase personal protection equipment appropriate for their major. Those students who do not have the proper personal protection equipment will not be permitted to attend class until safe measures and personal protection are in place.

### **Plagiarism**

Each discipline within the arts has specific and appropriate means for students to cite or acknowledge sources and the ideas and material of others used in their own work. Students have the responsibility to become familiar with such processes and to carefully follow their use in developing original work.

### **Policy**

MICA will not tolerate plagiarism, which is defined as claiming authorship of, or using someone else's ideas or work without proper acknowledgment. Without proper attribution, a student may NOT replicate another's work, paraphrase another's ideas, or appropriate images in a manner that violates the specific rules against plagiarism in the student's department. In addition, students may not submit the same work for credit in more than one course without the explicit approval of the all of the instructors of the courses involved.

### **Consequences**

When an instructor has evidence that a student has plagiarized work submitted for course credit, the instructor will confront the student and impose penalties that may include failing the course. In the case of a serious violation or repeated infractions from the same student, the instructor will report the infractions to the department chair. Depending on the circumstances of the case, the department chair may then report the student to the Office of Academic Affairs, which may choose to impose further penalties, including suspension or expulsion.

### **Student Learning Outcomes for Theory Course**

Upon completion of a Theory course at MICA students will:

- Demonstrate conversancy with core principles, concepts, and arguments of theoretical discourses in a specific field of inquiry.
- Demonstrate the ability to interpret and analyze a body of theory, whether social, cultural, historical, literary, aesthetic, moral, or political in order to uncover underlying assumptions and consequences and to discover new applications and extensions, including applications and extensions in the fields of art.
- Demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate theories in the specific domain and critically assess competing theoretical explanations.
- Develop the ability to write effective essays demonstrating the above capacities.

1/23- Introduction (Adam Smith- excerpts from *Wealth of Nations*)

1/30- Rd. Von Mises's *Liberalism*, Introduction and Chapter 1

2/6- Von Mises's *Liberalism*, Chapter 2 (all), Chapter 4 (sections 1-2 only), and Chapter 5 (all)

2/13- Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* chs. 1-5

2/20- Rd. Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* chs. 6, 8-10 and 14

2/27- Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, chs. 2, 3, 5, 6 (to pg. 98) and ch. 7 (all)  
Presentation 1

3/6- Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom*, chs. 8 and 10-13  
Presentation 2

3/13- Midterm papers due  
Presentation 3

3/20- **Spring Break**

3/27- Harvey's *Enigma of Capital*, chs. 1 and 2  
Presentation 4

4/3- Harvey's *Enigma of Capital*, chs. 3 and 4  
Presentation 5

4/10- Jackson's *Prosperity without Growth*, ch. 1, 3-5  
Presentation 6

4/17- Jackson's *Prosperity without Growth*, chs. 6, 8-9  
Presentation 7

4/24- Jackson's *Prosperity without Growth*, chs. 10-11  
Presentation 8

5/1- Paper Conferences

5/8- Final Papers due; Course review, final discussion, evaluation