



## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Special Topics:

#### Economics and Social Justice

Phil. 49995/59995-001-16100  
TR 12:30-1:45  
Bowman 315  
Spring, 2025

### Dr. Frank Ryan

Office: 320-E Bowman  
Hours: M-R 3:30-4:45  
(and by appointment)  
Email: [fryan@kent.edu](mailto:fryan@kent.edu)  
Phone: 330-672-0274

**Course Design:** Philosophy examines human nature and our quest for happiness and the good. Economics prescribes optimal models for the accumulation and distribution of material resources. A philosophical overview of economic theory attempts to conceptualize the notion of social justice. Just as philosophy is traditionally divided between empirical material and rationally ideal world views, so too do the conflicting values of maximal individual liberty and the welfare of all polarize the history of economics. We'll examine the development of this debate over four centuries, highlighted by the disputes between capitalists and communists, free versus managed markets, and the promise and perils of the new global economy.

**Required Texts:** (1) Readings posted to Canvas  
(2) Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer.

**Grading:** Grades are calculated according to the standard scale:  
 $\geq 93 = A$ ;  $90-92 = A-$ ;  $88-89 = B+$ ;  $83-87 = B$ ;  $80-82 = B-$ ;  $78-79 = C+$ ;  
 $73-77 = C$ ;  $70-72 = C-$ ;  $68-69 = D+$ ;  $60-67 = D$ ;  $\leq 59 = F$

30% is determined by two multiple choice Unit Tests (15 pts. ea.) taken online in class.

20% is determined by a *cumulative* multiple choice Final Exam taken online in class.

15% is determined by verbal answers to three sets of unit essay questions (5 pts. ea.).

You are strongly encouraged to participate in the discussion. If you are unable to do so, however, you may earn credit for this assignment by providing written answers to all questions before the class exercise.

5% is determined by a two page paper abstract.

25% is determined by a 5-7 page term paper in either an argument-criticism or topic-thesis format. You may revise and resubmit your first draft once for a higher grade.

5% is an attendance grade scaled to the number of unexcused absences:

0-1 A; 2 B; 3-4 C; 5-6 D; 7+ F.

Note: Students who ask questions and contribute regularly to class discussions will have 1-2 extra credit points added to their course grade.

**Attendance Policy:** I am generally happy to excuse an absence **when informed in advance or on the same day.** An email post is ideal. After the fact, written documentation in conformance with university policy is required for an excused absence.

**Classroom Etiquette:** Please restrict electronic devices to class-related uses only. Avoid tardiness, as this tends to disrupt the continuity of lectures and discussions.

**Attendance Policy:** Although attendance is not graded in a graduate-level course, your conscientious attendance is both expected and necessary for success in an advanced course. Please let your instructor know of any circumstances arise problematic to this expectation.

**Grievance Policy:** The Philosophy Department Grievance Procedure for handling grievances is in conformity with the Student Academic Complaint Policy and Procedures set down as University Policy 3342-4-16 in the *University Policy Register*. For information concerning the details of the grievance procedure, please see the Departmental Chairperson.

**Registration and Withdrawal Requirements:** Please review the registration and withdrawal deadlines for this semester. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students not officially registered should not attend class and will not receive credit or a grade for the course.

**Student Accessibility Policy:** University Policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit [www.kent.edu/sas](http://www.kent.edu/sas) for more information on registration procedures).

**Cheating and Plagiarism:** University policy 3-01.8 deals with the proCem of academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. None of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. If you have any questions, please read the policy at [http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/policydetails.cfm?custome1\\_datapageid\\_1976529=2037779](http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/policydetails.cfm?custome1_datapageid_1976529=2037779)

**Special Note:** The application or assistance of AI (artificial intelligence) in generating work is strictly prohibited. Submissions found to be in violation of this policy will receive no credit, and violators are subject to additional sanctions, including an “F” course grade and referral to academic discipline.

Date Topic/Author

Reading/Assignments

C: On Canvas Site

P: Piketty, *Capital*

1/14 Syllabus Review & Introduction: Fundamentals of Philosophy and Economics

## **I. THE 18TH CENTURY: OF PROPERTY AND CAPITAL**

1/16 Empiricism: John Locke: Property

C: Second Treatise of Government

V: of Property, pp.1-8 pp.2-12

1/21 Adam Smith: The Division of Labor & Money I

C: The Wealth of Nations. Book I,

1/23 Adam Smith: The Division of Labor & Money II	Ch. II, IV, pp.2-11
1/28 Adam Smith: Price & the Marketplace	C: Book I, Ch. II, IV, pp.11-27
	C: Book I, Ch. V, VII, pp.27-34
	Instructions for Paper Assignment
1/30 Adam Smith: A Nation's Opulence	C: Book III, Ch. IV, pp.35-46

## II. THE 19TH CENTURY: SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

2/4 Philosophical Innovations: Ricardo, Malthus, Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx	C: From Smith to Marx PowerPoint
2/6 Karl Marx's Critique of Hegel	C: Marx's Critique of Hegel 1-10
2/11 Karl Marx: The Wages of Labor	C: Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts.I: pp.1-10
2/13 Karl Marx: Capital & Estranged Labor	C: Econ & Phil Ms.I: pp.10-25
2/18 Karl Marx: Property and Communism	C: Econ.& Phil Ms III: pp.26-35
2/20 Unit I Essay Questions	

## III. 20TH CENTURY ECONOMICS: PLANNED OR FREE MARKETS?

2/25 J.M. Keynes: A Braver New World	C: "Economic Possibilities," pp.1-9 Watch: The Commanding Heights, . Pt.1: The Battle of Ideas (YouTube)
2/27 J.M. Keynes: A Critique of Classical Economics	C: Theory of Employment: Ch.2 pp.9-19
3/4 J.M. Keynes: The Principle of Effective Demand	C: Theory of Employment: Ch.3 pp.20-25 <b>Paper Abstract Due</b>
3/6 Friedrich Hayek: Planning and Power	C: Road to Serfdom, pp.1-10 Watch: The Commanding Heights, Part 2: The Agony of Reform
3/10-3/16 <i>Spring Recess/No Class</i>	
3/18 Friedrich Hayek: Vigilance or Tyranny	C: Road to Serfdom, pp.10-26
3/11 John Dewey: The New Individualism	C: Individualism Old & New, pp.71-94
3/20 John Rawls: Justice as Fairness	C: Justice as Fairness PowerPoint

## IV. THE 21ST CENTURY: CAPITAL AND EQUITY

3/25 Piketty: Introduction	P: pp.1-15 Watch: The Commanding Heights, Part 3: New Rules of the Game
3/27 Piketty: The Capital-Income Ratio I	P: Ch.5, pp.164-170;
4/1 Piketty: The Capital-Income Ratio II	P: Ch.6, 199-215
4/3 Piketty: The Capital-Income Ratio III	P: Ch.6, pp.199-215
4/8 Piketty: The Structure of Inequality	P: Ch.7, pp.244-260
4/10 Piketty: A 21st Century Social State	P: Ch.13, pp.471-492

Introduction to Philosophy  
Syllabus  
Page 4

Paper: First Draft Due

4/15 Piketty: A Global Tax on Capital

4/17 Parekh & Wilcox: Feminist Global Economics I

4/22 Parekh & Wilcox: Feminist Global Economics II

4/29 Unit II Study Questions

5/1 Student Presentations Paper: Final Draft Due

P: Ch.15, pp.515-539

C: "Feminist Perspectives," pp.1-7

C: "Feminist Perspectives," pp.7-18

FINAL EXAM: 12:45-3 pm. Monday May 5, Paper Return and "Substantive Discussion"