Gendering Political Economy
WAGS 311
Amherst College
Spring 2012
Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 PM - 3:20 PM in WEBS 220
Course website:
https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/courses/1112S/WAGS/WAGS-311-1112S

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This course will explore the interface between feminist theory and political economy from both directions. It will ask how the social construction of gender has shaped the discourse of economics, with a strong emphasis on its intellectual history in Britain, the U.S., and France. It will also explore a variety of ways that economic theory can help explain the evolution of gender inequality, with particular attention to insights of recent behavioral and experimental economics research. No formal background in economics is necessary, but participants must have a high level of intellectual curiosity about social science in general, and economics in particular. They should also be prepared to tackle some technical topics including utility maximization, game theory, statistical analysis, and experimental methodologies. Course pedagogy will emphasize active learning, requiring consistent class participation, a number of small written assignments and oral presentations, and a final research paper.

My lectures in this class will never exceed thirty minutes. I expect students to come to class prepared for discussion and will call upon everyone to participate. I rely on a seating chart to learn student’s names and also use it to take attendance.

Classes will often include free-writing exercises where I ask students to take ten minutes to write down their ideas about a particular subject. Some of these are specified in advance on the syllabus. Others will emerge spontaneously from discussion. These exercises will be graded on a pass/fail basis.

Every student will be required to make several ten-minute presentations on a supplemental reading or topic. The number will depend on the number of students enrolled. You will need to sign up for this presentation in advance. You are not limited to the supplemental readings or topics that are listed—feel free to suggest alternatives, but please clear them with me in advance.

Grading and evaluation. 20% of your grade will be based on your class presentation, 30% on three short writing assignments (about 5 pages each), and 50% on your research paper (see description below). The short writing assignments will be discussed and determined by the class, because they depend in part on class size. One or two of them may be based on class
presentations on supplemental readings. One or two of them may be similar to take-home exams—that is, essays written in response to a specific question.

Your research paper should address an issue related to the theme of the course in 15-20 double-spaced pages, including a reference list. The topic and outline for this paper must be approved by the instructor no later than April 18. The final paper is due by 5PM on May 11.

The supplemental readings and topic lists are intended to help promote class discussion but also to give you ideas for your research paper.

**Required Books Available at Food for Thought Books in Amherst:**


**PLEASE COMPLETE THE REQUIRED READING BY THE FIRST CLASS MEETING OF THE WEEK (NORMALLY MONDAY)**

**Week 1: Overview of the Political Economy of Gender**

January 23: Introductions, logistics, and overview. Is economics a science? What does “science” mean?

January 25: Economics, Science, and Rhetoric
Performance of Gordon Gekko’s famous monologue from Oliver Stone’s film *Wall Street*.

**Required Reading:**


**Supplemental Readings:**

Week 2: Invisible Hearts

January 30. Gender and self interest, and how they connect. Are women more altruistic than men? Or altruistic in different ways? (We will return to this question later in the course).

February 1. The Prisoner’s Dilemma and other games.


Supplemental Reading:


Week 3: Defining Virtues and Moral Sentiments

February 6: Introduction to early political theory and political economy.

Performance and in-class discussion of Bernard de Mandeville, *The Grumbling Hive*

February 8: Adam Smith meets the Marquis de Sade.

**Required readings:**

Chapters 1-7 (pp.1-110), *Greed, Lust and Gender*


**Supplemental reading/topics:**

Adam Smith, excerpt from *The Moral Sentiments* (Part 1, Section 1, Chapters 1-2), at McMaster University Archive, http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ugcm/3ll3/smith/moral.1

Adam Smith, excerpt from *The Wealth of Nations* (Book 1, Chapters 1-2) at McMaster University Archive, http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ugcm/3ll3/smith/wealth/wealbk01
Feel free to take a look at some of De Sade’s writings to discuss them, but be mindful that you and/or those you discuss them with may find them disturbing.

Week 4. Population, Production, and Reproduction

February 13: Lecture and discussion with a focus on Malthus.

February 15: Lecture and discussion with focus on Ricardo.

Required readings:

Chapters 8-10, (pp.111-157), *Greed, Lust, and Gender*


Supplemental readings/topics

Poor Law Commissioners Report of 1834, section concerning Settlement and Bastardy http://www.econlib.org/LIBRARY/YPDBooks/Reports/rptPLC.html


How did debate over the Poor Law in Britain resemble welfare reform in the U.S. in 1996?

Week 5. The Early Socialist Feminists

February 20: Lecture and discussion with a focus on Mill and Taylor.

February 22. Lecture and discussion with a focus on Thompson and Wheeler.

Required readings

Chapters 11-12 (pp. 158-189), *Greed, Lust and Gender*

Anna Wheeler and William Thompson, excerpt from *Appeal of One-Half the Human Race* at http://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/histcourse/suffrage/document/appealoa.htm

Supplemental readings/topics:

Browse website on utopian socialism at http://www.marxists.org/subject/utopian/index.htm
Or, choose a piece of utopian feminist science fiction such as Sherri Tepper’s *Gate to Women’s Country*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland*, or Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*.

**Week 6. The Early Liberal Feminists**

February 27: Lecture and discussion with focus on Mill and Taylor

February 29: Lecture and discussion with focus on Stanton and Anthony
   In class exercise—how does 21st century feminism compare with that of the 19th century?

**Required readings:**

Chapters 13-14 (pp. 190-217), *Greed, Lust and Gender*


**Supplemental readings/viewing:**


Harriet Martineau, “The Political Non-Existence of Women” (the second section of *Society in America*); the entire document is available at: [http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/fem/martineau.htm](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/fem/martineau.htm)

How does 19th century feminism differ from what we think of as feminism today?

**Week 7. Marxists and Marshallians**

March 5: Marx, Engels, and Bebel

March 7: Jevons, Marshall, and fellow-travellers

**Required Readings:**

Chapter 15-18 (p. 222-286), *Greed, Lust and Gender*

**Supplemental Readings:**

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*  
[http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/)

August Bebel, *Woman and Socialism*, available at  
Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics*

**Week 8. Modern Economics and Gender Inequality**

March 12: Human capital and discrimination models.

March 14: Political economy and gender

**Required readings:**

Nancy Folbre, Chapters 18-20, *Greed, Lust and Gender*


**Supplemental readings:**


**WEEK OF MARCH 19—SPRING BREAK.**

**Week 9. Household Bargaining Models**

March 26. Overview of bargaining approaches

March 28. Nash bargaining and other models

**Required reading:**


**Supplemental reading:**

**Week 10. Gender Norms and Caring Preferences**
April 2. Norms, preferences and values

April 4. Why caring preferences are costly.

**Required Reading:**


**Supplemental Reading:**


**Week 11. Measurement and Valuation of Non-Market Work**


April 11. Valuation of non-market work, and implications thereof.

**Required reading:**


**Supplemental reading:**


**Supplemental reading:**


**Week 12. Gender, Property-Rights and Collective Bargaining**

April 16. Property rights, efficient contracts, and collective bargaining

April 18. Principal-agent models

**Required reading:**


**Supplemental Reading:**


**Week 13. Possible Origins of Patriarchal and Patriarchal/Capitalist Systems**

April 23. Evolutionary models and group selection.
April 25. Did patriarchal systems confer evolutionary advantages? How are they linked to class-based systems?

**Required reading:**


**Supplemental reading:**


**Week 14. Spillovers and Catch-Up**

May 2. Last class will be devoted to quick paper summaries and class evaluation.