

Proposal for Connections: Social and Cultural
Contact: Alex Lebedinsky, Economics Department
alex.lebedinsky@wku.edu, 745-3150

1. *What course does the department plan to offer in Connections? Which subcategory are you proposing for this course? (Social and Cultural, Local to Global, Systems)*

ECON 375: Moral Issues of Capitalism
Subcategory: Social and Cultural

2. *How will this course meet the specific learning objectives of the appropriate subcategory? Please address **all** of the learning outcomes listed for the appropriate subcategory.*

This course is designed to give students insight into the moral foundations of capitalism and the implications and consequences of government intervention in markets. The course covers a broad spectrum of issues that are relevant today including immigration, free trade, poverty, healthcare, discrimination, locally grown food, sustainability and global warming.

Learning Objective 1: Analyze the development of self in relation to others and society.

The course tackles the issues of morality and ethics and what it means to be a moral person in a society. The course opens with the discussion of a “social utility function”, how we can say that something is “good” for a society, how individual welfare enters into calculation of the welfare of the whole society, and how various definitions of what a “society” is can place lower value on some individuals and higher value on others. The entire course is dedicated to examination of how and why we can consider actions of individuals and organizations (business, non-profit and government) to be moral or immoral.

Learning Objective 2: Examine diverse values that form civically engaged and informed members of society.

Diverse values are represented through diversity of issues discussed: immigration, inequality, poverty, discrimination, corporate responsibility, pollution, pension reform and national debt. These issues affect different parts of our society in different ways. They also have a different effect on current and future generations. By developing an understanding of moral issues surrounding these problems, students will form a solid foundation based on which they can judge proposed solutions to these problems.

Learning Objective 3: Evaluate solutions to real-world social and cultural problems.

Topics covered in class are current, relevant and important topics, and are much debated by policy makers. The main purpose of the course is to set up a framework through which one can judge morality of solutions of these problems. This course is designed to make students think.

3. *In addition to meeting the posted learning outcomes, how does this course contribute uniquely to the Connections category (i.e., why should this course be in Colonnade)? Discuss in detail.*

The course discusses real world-issues. The course takes the questions “What is moral? Why do we think it is moral?” -- questions that are typically left to the realm of philosophy -- and brings them into everyday life. Thus, the course makes a connection between decisions we make as individuals and as a society and a question of morality. Therefore, this course is very much in the spirit of the intention of the Connections courses in the Colonnade program whose goal is to “direct students to apply and integrate discipline-specific knowledge and skills to the significant issues challenging our individual and shared responsibility as global citizens.”

Following the spirit of the Connections courses, where “students will learn to analyze and evaluate cultural contexts, examine issues on both a local and global scale”, the course provides a framework for evaluating proposed and exiting policies that affect both small groups within societies and the entire global community.

4. *Please identify any prerequisites for this course. NOTE: Any prerequisites MUST be Colonnade Foundations or Explorations courses.*

Prerequisite: ECON 150 or ECON 202 or ECON 203

ECON 150 and ECON 202 are approved courses in the Explorations category of the Colonnade program.

5. *Syllabus statement of learning outcomes for the course. NOTE: In multi-section courses, the same statement of learning outcomes must appear on every section's syllabus.*

Ideas matter. The implementations of ideas have consequences. This course is designed to give students insight into the moral foundations of capitalism and the implications and consequences of government intervention in markets. Students will learn

- a. Students will learn how “Social welfare” is defined and how much what we perceive to be “moral” depends on how we define “social welfare”.
 - b. Students will examine a variety of real-world problems faced by individuals and society, solutions to these problems offered by individuals and government, and moral implications these solutions have on individuals and societies.
 - c. Above all, this course is designed to make students think.
6. *Give a brief description of how the department will assess the course beyond student grades for these learning objectives.*

Students are required to write 10 papers critically examining specific issues in the course. They are assessed using the following rubric:

Does the student explain how their view of society impacts their preferred policy response to moral issues in capitalism? (Learning Objective 1)

Does the student agree with or critically challenge the opinions of authors of assigned readings? (Learning Objective 2)

Does the paper critically examine the moral implications of a given policy choice? (Learning Objective 3)

7. *Please discuss how this course will provide a summative learning experience for students in the development of skills in argumentation and use of evidence.*

All exams are essay exams where students must illustrate their knowledge of the material and show that they can critically interact with what they have learned in order to advocate public policies that improve society.

8. *How many sections of this course will your department offer each semester?*

One section every other semester. Frequency of offering might increase depending on demand for the course.

9. *Please attach sample syllabus for the course.*
Attached below.

Moral Issues of Capitalism Fall 2013

Economics 375
MWF 11:30-12:25
Grise Hall 440
Office Hours:
MWF 8:30 - 11:15
TR 9:30 – 12:30 Or by appointment

Brian Strow
Grise Hall 427
office x7082
brian.strow@wku.edu

Required Reading:

“OA” Other articles – These articles are available in blackboard and categorized in folders according to the class periods for which they will need to be read.

Course Description

Ideas matter. The implementations of ideas have consequences. This course is designed to give students insight into the moral foundations of capitalism and the implications and consequences of government intervention in markets.

Above all, this course is designed to make you think. I promise that thinking won't hurt too much. You may even find that you enjoy it. It is a reading and discussion oriented course so you must come prepared each day having read the material.

In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course just contact the Office for Student Disability Services in **DUC A-200** of the Student Success Center in Downing University Center. The OFSDS telephone number is (270)745-5004 V/TDD. Please **DO NOT** request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

Grading

- | | |
|------------------------|------|
| - 3 Exams | 60 % |
| - 10 Reading Summaries | 40 % |

Reading Summaries

Reading summaries are summaries of the reading for that day to be turned in at the beginning of class. Pick any ten days when we have a reading assignment and write a 2-3 page summary of what you learned from the text. Include your own opinion of what you read. Do you agree with what you read, why or why not?

If you miss a class day, you owe me an extra reading summary!

Topic	Reading
Aug 26 Morals vs. ethics; or, If a sucker is born every day, is it ok to lick him?	OA 1
Aug 28 Social utility functions; or, “I like talking about you usually, but occasionally, I want to talk about me”	OA 2
Aug 30 Alternate definitions of society; or, People with the last name of Mulligan don’t count	OA 3
Sep 4 What is capitalism?; or, Free enterprise by any other name may not swell as sweet	OA4
Sep 6 The meaning of prices; or, Are prices just, or just prices? OA 5	OA5
Sep 9 Private property; or, If this land is your land, how can it be my land?	OA6
Sep 11 Pierre Desrochers: What is moral about eating locally grown food?	
Sep 13 What is Collectivism?; or, there’s no I in People’s Republic, ok, there is one, but it is at the very end.	OA7
Sep 16 Corporate Social Responsibility; or, Do you want an order of social justice with your fries and shake?	OA8
Sep 18 Comparative economic growth records; or, The proof is in the pudding (if you can afford pudding)	OA9
Sep 20 Is capitalism moral, amoral, or immoral?; or, Can you love your neighbor as yourself, but hate yourself?	OA10
Sep 23 Capitalism and the Seven Deadly Sin; or, What profit is to a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?	OA 11
Sep 25 Illegal contracts; or, Bootleggers and Baptists unite – you have nothing to lose but your brains	OA12
Sep 27 Exam 1	
Sep 30 Inequality over time and space; or, Why current income is so one dimensional in a multi-dimensional world	OA13
Oct 2 Poverty and Morality; or, What happens if you insulate people from the consequences of their actions?	OA14
Oct 7 Poverty and Welfare; or, When does a safety net become a web?	OA15
Oct 9 Discrimination; or Markets don’t discriminate, people do	OA16
Oct 11 Housing; or, Fannie and Freddie: the two little pigs whose houses were blown down	OA17
Oct 14 Healthcare; or, Why does the price of free stuff keep increasing?	OA18
Oct 16 Capitalism and the elderly; or, “Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I’m 64?”	OA19
Oct 18 Education; or, Who is supposed to benefit from school?	OA20
Oct 21 Pollution; or, The Cuyahoga River wouldn’t have caught on fire if someone had owned it	OA21
Oct 23 Recycling; or, Landfills could simplify mining	OA22
Oct 25 Sustainability; or, Who’s going to speak for the trees?	OA23
Oct 28 Global warming; or, Will capitalism pave paradise, put up a parking lot, and kill us with CO2? OA	OA24
Oct 30 Regulations; or, Are animal spirits best contained in government run zoos?	OA25
Nov 1 Exam 2	
Nov 4 Monopolies; or, The devil made me buy it – and pay too much for it	OA26
Nov 6 Nationalization of industry; or, Are monopolies better if they are run by bureaucrats?	OA27
Nov 8 Industrial Policy; or, Who decides what to produce and how to produce it?	OA28
Nov 11 Rent Seeking; or, Give the cause a dollar, feed it for a day. Teach it how to lobby, feed it for a lifetime	OA29
Nov 13 Capitalism and business cycles; or, Keynes doesn’t think riding cycles strengthens your quads	OA30
Nov 15 National debt; or, I’ll gladly have my kids pay tomorrow for a hamburger I consumer today	OA31
Nov 18 Unfunded public pensions; or, Even nanny’s like to raid the cookie jar	OA32
Nov 20 Europe’s fiscal crisis; or, A failure of capitalism or a moral failure?	OA33
Nov 22 Monetary policy; or, Time to invest in helicopter manufacturers	OA34
Nov 25 Capitalism and labor; or, Laborers search for jobs and organized labor tries to stop them.	OA35
Dec 2 Immigration; or, Should Lady Liberty give potential newcomers the finger?	OA36
Dec 4 Free trade, fair trade, or no trade; or, Unlike energy, wealth can be created or destroyed	OA37
Dec 6 International aid; or, Give a man a fish, kill the local fishing industry	OA38
Dec 9 Final Exam 10:30-12:30 Monday)	