

Markets and Morality (ECON 895 – 023; ECON 496-023)

Tuesday, 1:30 pm – 4:15 pm
D100 Buchanan Hall

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Course Description & Objectives

This seminar will explore key writings on the relationship between markets and morals. The course will, thus, also focus on a number of the critical debates that have occupied political economists and moral philosophers over the years about the moral underpinnings of market societies, the moral nature of market activities, and the moral status of market outcomes. The goal of the class is to prepare students to understand and engage in the scholarly debates around these issues.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course you will,

- Understand the scholarly debates around the relationship between markets and morality.
- Be able to synthesize existing ideas and contribute to discussions about the moral underpinnings of market societies, the moral nature of market activities, and the moral status of market outcomes.
- *Graduate Students:* Be able to reference and recount multiple perspectives on how morality impacts market activity and how markets impact morality. Also, be able to engage those perspectives in research papers.
- *Undergraduate Students:* Be able to apply their understanding of the relationship between markets and morality in conversations about how morality impacts market activity and how markets impact morality.

Course Readings & Required Books

You are expected to do all of the required readings prior to the class where they will be discussed.

Required Books:

- Hayek, F.A. *Law, Legislation and Liberty: A new statement of the liberal principles of justice and political economy.* Routledge, 2013.
- Mandeville, Bernard. *The Fable of the Bees: Or Private Vices, Public Benefits.* Penguin Classics, 1989.
- Marx, Karl. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.* Prometheus Books, 1988.
- McCloskey, Deirdre N. *The Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce.* University of Chicago Press, 2007.

- McCloskey, Deirdre N. *The Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World*. University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat. *The Complete Works of M. de Montesquieu*. T. Evans, 1777, 4 vols. Vol. 2. Available online <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/montesquieu-complete-works-vol-2-the-spirit-of-laws>.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Rousseau: The Basic Political Writings, 2nd Edition*. Hackett Publishing Company, 2012.
- Sandel, Michael J. *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013.
- Satz, Debra. *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Edited by D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie. Liberty Fund, Inc., 1982.
- Smith, Adam. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, Volume I*. Edited by R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner. Liberty Fund, Inc., 1982.
- Smith, Adam. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, Volume II*. Edited by R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner. Liberty Fund, Inc., 1982.
- Wicksteed, Philip H. *The Commonsense of Political Economy, including a Study of the Human Basis of Economic Law*. Macmillan, 1910. Available online <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/wicksteed-the-commonsense-of-political-economy>.
- Zelizer, Viviana A. *Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy*. Princeton University Press, 2010.

During the course, I will refer to a number of additional readings that are not required but that should be read by anyone hoping to do scholarly research within this field.

Course Grading

Undergraduate Students: Grades for this class will be based on reaction memos (40%) and class participation (60%).

Graduate Students: Grades for this class will be based on reaction memos (15%), class participation (60%), and a research paper (25%).

The reaction memos should be no less than one page and no more than two pages and contain your thoughts on any aspect of that week's readings. These can focus on something as broad as the central themes advanced in that week's readings, or something as narrow as a particular sentence or footnote. The memos are due at 11:59 pm on the day before the class meets and should be emailed to vstorr@gmu.edu. Obviously, no memos are expected on the week's that there are no readings assigned.

Class participation involves frequently contributing to our weekly in-class discussions. There will be no lectures in this class. The success of the class depends entirely on class participation, which constitutes the majority of your grade. As such, it will be impossible to receive a high mark in this class without actively participating in class discussions.

Graduate Students: The research paper should explore the morality or immorality of markets. You will be expected to turn in the abstract and outline for the research paper on or before October 9th, 2018. The final draft, which should be 15 to 20 pages, is due December 18th, 2018.

Course Outline and Readings Schedule

1. Studying markets and morality (August 28th)

2. Doux commerce or commerce odieux? (September 4th)

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, pages 1-22.

Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pages 45-47, 69-92.

Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, pages 53-92.

3. "How selfish soever man may be supposed" (September 11th)

Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pages 9–23, 34–43, 50–93, 109–134, 156–161, 179–193.

4. "It is not by the benevolence of the butcher" (September 18th)

Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, pages 10–36, 82–104, 124–126 (par. 25-29), 455-459 (par. 7-15), 624-627 (par. 77-81), 689–731.

5. "Labor's realization is its objectification" (September 25th)

Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Writings*, pages 19-52, 69-84, 115-140.

6. The non-tuism of economic relations (October 2nd)

Wicksteed, *The Common Sense of Political Economy*, pages 158-211.

Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, pages 197-290.

7. Buying and selling our values (October 16th)

Zelizer, *Economic Lives*, pages 1-60, 136-149, 165-236, 440-457.

8. Market values can crowd out our moral values (October 23rd)

Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*, pages 3-130.

9. The problem with noxious markets (October 30th)

Satz, *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale*, pages 3-112, 207-210.

10. "Markets and the bourgeois life are not always bad for the human spirit" (November 6th)

McCloskey, *Bourgeois Virtues*, pages 1-87, 407-415, 497-508.

McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity*, pages 1-85.

11. Critics and defenders of markets may have more in common than you think (November 27th)

Storr and Choi, *The Moral Case for the Market*, chapters 1-3.

12. Can markets really be defended on moral grounds? (November 27th)

Storr and Choi, *The Moral Case for the Market*, chapters 4-7.

Note that class will not meet October 9th, November 13th, or November 20th.