

Spring 2013 POLS G8640  
TH. 2:10-4:00

## COMMERCE AND CIVIC VIRTUE

Prof. Turkuler Isiksel  
Department of Political Science  
Columbia University

Email: [nti2002@columbia.edu](mailto:nti2002@columbia.edu)

Office hours: Monday, 2-4 pm at 731 IAB or by appointment

This graduate colloquium in political theory will examine 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophies of commerce, civic virtue, and freedom. The course is centered on primary texts, including the works of Bernard Mandeville, Adam Smith, David Hume, Montesquieu, Adam Ferguson, and Immanuel Kant. Of particular interests will be these thinkers' respective treatments of the moral and behavioral foundations of market society, the relationship between wealth and political equality, and the effects of commerce and luxury on social mores and personal morals. We will also examine arguments about the salutary consequences of economic exchange, both domestic and international. The selected reading highlights the gradual dismantlement of the classical republican aversion to wealth accumulation, and the rehabilitation of avarice into an integrative (even edifying) social force.

As the discussions will presume some background knowledge of earlier and later thinkers, basic familiarity with the classics of political philosophy is required.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to give two 15-minute class presentations during the course of the semester, accompanied by 2-3 page discussion papers that will be circulated to the group prior to that week's seminar. Presentations and discussion papers, together with the student's seminar participation over the course of the term, will count for 25% of the final grade.

Over the course of the semester, students are expected to write a 20-page term paper focusing on a particular problem addressed by one of the major thinkers covered in the class. Papers are expected to engage with relevant arguments raised in key secondary literature, with guidance from the instructor. Students should begin researching their papers early so as to acquaint themselves with the relevant literature.

A 3-page paper outline (identifying a clear question and well-articulated thesis) is due on Monday, March 25<sup>th</sup>. Term papers are due on Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>. The term paper will count for 75% of the final grade.

**BOOKS FOR PURCHASE AT BOOK CULTURE (536 W 112<sup>th</sup> St)**

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Schneewind, (Hackett)

David Hume, *Essays: Moral Political, and Literary* (any edition)

Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. Reiss (Cambridge)

Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, ed. E.J. Hundert (Hackett)

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. Anne M. Cohler et al. (Cambridge)

Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings* (Oxford World's Classics)

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, intro. Robert Reich (unabridged) (Modern Library)

Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (any edition)

**SCHEDULE OF SEMINARS**

- Jan 24** Introduction to 18<sup>th</sup> century revaluations: frugality, luxury, virtue, and corruption  
Voltaire, “Le Mondain” and “La Défense du mondain” [1736-1738]  
Jean-François Melon, “A Political Essay upon Commerce” [1734]
- Jan 31** Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Origin of Inequality,” [1755] “Discourse on Political Economy,” [1755] trans. Cress, in *Basic Political Writings* (Hackett)
- Feb 7** Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws* [1748], Parts I & II (skip Book 6).
- Feb 14** Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Part IV (Books 20-22). Skim Part III.  
William Robertson, “A View of the Progress of Society in Europe” [1766], excerpt.

- Feb 21** Pierre Nicole, “Of Charity and Self-Love” [1674]  
Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees, Vol.I* [1723] (entire)
- Feb 28** David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* [1751]  
(entire)
- Mar 7** David Hume, select essays [1741-1752]: “Of the First Principles of Government,” “Of the Origin of Government,” “Of Commerce,” “Of the Balance of Trade,” “Of the Jealousy of Trade,” “Of Refinement in the Arts.” (With guest instructor Prof. Carl Wennerlind.)
- Mar 14** Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* [1767], Part I (1-4 only), Part III (4-6 only), Parts IV-VI (entire) (Online text)
- Mar 21** Spring break, no class
- Mar 28** Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], Part I (entire), Part II (sections i-ii), Part IV (entire), Part VI (section i only), Part VII (entire)
- Apr 4** Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* [1776], Book I (ch.s 1-8, 10), Book II (Intro, ch. 2 (first 15 pages only), 3), Book III (entire)
- Apr. 4** Dinner & a movie: *Wall St* (1987), dir. Oliver Stone
- Apr 11** Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book IV (ch.s 1-3), Book V (ch.1)
- Apr. 18** Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, selections.
- Apr. 25** Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,” [1784]; “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” [1796] trans. Nisbet
- May 2** Commerce & republicanism in the New World:  
Tom Paine, *Rights of Man*, Part the Second [1792], Preface, Intro, ch.s 1-5 (up to “N.B. The expence of collection...”); *Federalist Papers* no.s 6, 7, 8, 11, 12