

EC318 Philosophy of Economics

Seminar Leader: Stephan Müller

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1pm-2pm or by appointment

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the philosophy of economics through close reading of an anthology of original and influential texts. It examines how economists and philosophers have understood the nature, aims, and methods of economics from its classical origins to contemporary debates. The course is organized around five thematic blocks: (1) classical discussions of explanation, laws, and economic reasoning; (2) positivist and Popperian approaches to scientific method and their influence on economics; (3) ideology, values, and the foundations of normative and welfare economics; (4) major branches and schools of economics and the methodological problems they raise; and (5) new directions in economic methodology, including experimentation, behavioral economics, and interdisciplinary approaches.

Requirements

Microeconomics

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the Bard College Berlin Accessibility page. Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

Assessment will be based on attendance, preparation for classes, regular and active participation, professionalism (see below), presentations of papers, and final examination (90 minutes).

Grade Breakdown

Seminar preparation, professionalism and participation 20%

Presentations 30%

Final examination 50%

Schedule

The required main text for this course is:

- *The Philosophy of Economics: An Anthology*, Edited by Daniel M. Hausman, Cambridge University Press, 2007

Additional readings for this course are:

- Hausman, D. M. and M. S. McPherson (2006). *Economic Analysis, Moral Philosophy, and Public Policy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Third Edition.
- Reiss, J. (2013). *Philosophy of Economics: A Contemporary Introduction*. Routledge.

Tuesday and Thursday, 15:45-17:15

	Topic	Readings
Weeks 1-2	Introduction	Introduction
Weeks 3-5	Classical discussions	Part I
Weeks 6-7	Positivists and Popperian views	Part II
Weeks 8-9	Ideology and normative economics	Part III
Weeks 10-11	Branches and schools of economics and their methodological problems	Part IV
Weeks 12-13	New directions in economic methodology	Part V

The Spring semester runs from Monday, January 26 and runs until Friday, May 15, with the spring break planned from Monday, March 30, - Monday, April 6, 2026.

Normal course sessions end on Friday, May 8.

Completion week is from Monday, May 11 through Friday, May 15.

Make-up classes and final exams can take place in completion week.

Students are required to be on campus during completion week.

Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading:

<https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/search/>

Classes missed due to federal holidays will not be rescheduled. Classes missed due to conferences or due to illness (of the professor) are rescheduled.