

1. Course Description

This course serves as an overview of the philosophy of money. Students will leave the course with an understanding of the different theories of money and its function, as well as its connections with other fundamental concepts like interest, inflation, capital, contract, debt, trade and value. We will ask and try to answer such fundamental questions as: what is the function of money? Is money itself valuable, or just the things it can purchase? Would contemporary society be possible without money? Does money tend to lose its value over time? What is the morality of borrowing and lending money? Does money buy happiness? Do monetary exchange and trade crowd out other valuable forms of human cooperation? Do the government and central bank need to play a role in controlling and regulating the money used in society? Why are gold, silver and bitcoin valuable even though they are not legal money?

To help us in our understanding of these conceptual and philosophical questions, we will often turn to the history of thought about money, studying figures such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx. We will also look at historical and anthropological evidence concerning the emergence of money. Students should have some familiarity with the topics covered in the course as a prerequisite, such as previous coursework in philosophy, economics or another similar field.

2. Assignments

- A 3,000 word midterm paper 30%
- A 6,000 word term paper 60%
- Participation 10%

3. Textbooks

- *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* by David Graeber
- *The Price of Time* by Edward Chancellor
- *What Money Can't Buy* by Michael Sandel
- Electronic copies of other readings will be provided by the instructor.

4. Schedule of Readings

PART 1: BACKGROUND

Week 1: Money in Classical Economics

- Petty, *Verbum Sapienti*, Chapter 5
 - [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Verbum_Sapienti_\(1899\)/Chapters](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Verbum_Sapienti_(1899)/Chapters)
- Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chapter 5, sect. 45-50
 - https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm#CHAPTER_V
- Hume, *Of Money*
 - <https://davidhume.org/texts/pld/mo>
- Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book 1, chapters 1-5; Book 2, Chapter 2
 - <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/3300/pg3300-images.html#chap02>

Week 2: Anthropology of Money

- David Graeber, *Debt*, Chapters 1-6

Week 3: Money in the Ancient World

- Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1 (selections)
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 5, Part 5
- Graeber, *Debt*, Chapters 7-9

Week 4: Skepticism About Loans and Interest

- Graeber, *Debt*, Chapter 10
- Chancellor, *The Price of Time*, Chapter 2
- Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, Secunda Secundae*, Questions 77-78
- Ghazanfar, Shaikh M., and Abdul Azim Islahi. *The Economic Thought of ai-Ghazali* (selections)

Week 5: Money in Early Modern Europe

- Graeber, *Debt*, Chapter 11
- Chancellor, *The Price of Time*, Chapters 3-4
- Locke, *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest and Raising the Value of Money* (selections)
 - <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/locke/part1.htm>
- Hume, *Of the Balance of Trade*

PART 2: THE MAIN THEORIES OF MONEY

Week 6: Marx on Money and Commodities

- Marx, *Das Kapital*, Chapter 1 (parts 1 and 2), Chapters 2-5

Week 7: Metalism and Money as a Convention

- Menger, *The Origins of Money*
- Lewis, *Convention* (excerpts)
- Larue, *John Searle's Ontology of Money, and its Critics*
 - <https://philarchive.org/archive/LARJSO#:~:text=Money%2C%20for%20Searle%2C%20is%20created,certain%20object%20in%20certain%20contexts.>

Week 8: The Credit Theory of Money

- Innes, *The Credit Theory of Money*
 - https://cooperative-individualism.org/innes-a-mitchell_credit-theory-of-money-1914-dec-jan.pdf
- McLeay et al., *Money in the Modern Economy: An Introduction*
 - <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/quarterly-bulletin/2014/money-in-the-modern-economy-an-introduction.pdf>

Week 9: Chartalism and Neo-chartalism

- Knapp, *The State Theory of Money*, Chapters 1 and 2
 - <https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/knapp/StateTheoryMoney.pdf>
- Hockett and James, *Money from Nothing*, Chapters 1-4
- Some popular articles on Neo-chartalism/Modern Monetary Theory
 - <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2019/4/16/18251646/modern-monetary-theory-new-moment-explained>
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/06/business/economy/modern-monetary-theory-stephanie-kelton.html>

PART 3: APPLICATIONS

Week 10: Money and Consumerism

- Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* (excerpts)
- Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, Introduction, Chapter 1

Week 11: Commodification and Money

- Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*

Week 12: Commodification and Money (continued)

- Satz, *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale*, Chapter 1, 4
- Brennan and Jaworski, *Markets without Limits*, Chapters 1-6, 9-16

Week 13: Recent History and the Global Financial Crisis

- Friedman and Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States* (concluding chapter)
- Graeber, *Debt*, Chapter 12
- Chancellor, *The Price of Time*, Chapters 13-17; Conclusion; Postscript

Week 14: Cryptocurrency

- Nakamoto "Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System"
 - <https://bitcoin.org/bitcoin.pdf>
- Bailey et al., *Resistance Money*, selections TBD
- Passinsky, Cryptocurrency: Commodity or Credit?
 - <https://academic.oup.com/book/55774/chapter/434285688>