The objective of the course is to equip students with critical tools to analyze the transformation of the political economy and the welfare state in contemporary societies. Many myths dominate the public debate and are often ‘naturally’ internalized in our classrooms. For example, is market economy a natural consequence of economic development? Does market economy really support the economic development of every country in the planet? Is market economy neutral or does it contribute to shape up dynamics of power and domination across gender and class? The course is at the same time theoretical and practical. It offers critical tools to understand the crisis of modern capitalism (through the study of Marx, Polanyi and Thompson) and the transformation of the welfare state, but also how to approach contemporary issues, such as the potential of basic income to transform social protection and the regulation of platform workers and automation. The final part of the course discusses the complex relationship between political economy transformations and societal change. Mixing social science and fiction, we metaphorically employ Saramago’s dystopian image of an entire nation where citizens go blind to describe how a long-term political economy shift is contributing to make a large share of the population ‘invisible’. A Rising Invisible Majority for ‘mainstream’ political parties, a Rising Invisible Majority unable to recognize its interest for redistribution and political change.

Summary

The course is divided in three parts. The first part *Capital, Labour & Class: Political economy foundations to understand contemporary world*, will focus on the study of Marx, Polanyi and Thompson. These three thinkers merged insights from sociology, economics, political economy and history to unveil the underpinnings of market economy and its inherent power structure. Marx interrogated the notion of value to understand what is hidden beyond the dynamic of prices, and how capitalism uses a veil to exploit workers. Polanyi provided an historical account of how the expansion of market capitalism ‘automatically’ engenders societal reactions. This notion will help us to link the transformation of political economy to social and political contemporary evolutions. Thompson’s monumental reflection on *The
Making of the English Working Class is the basis to discuss the utility of critical class analysis. This first part of the course will provide an analytical framework to understand the relationship between capital, labour and class. Every critical analysis of political economy is embedded within these three notions.

The second part of the course, The Political Economy of the Welfare State: Past & present, applies the theoretical tools discussed in the previous sessions to understand welfare state transformations. We will discuss what is the welfare state for and how it expanded over time across different countries. Then we will study contemporary welfare state change, approaching three controversial topics: the advent of a Schumpeterian logic (which replaced the Keynesian approach), the position of the welfare state as a moderator/accelerator of gender and class/income inequalities, and how the 2008 financial crisis has reduced the fiscal capacity to implement new policies to deal with growing social risks.

The third part of the course, Bringing Society back into Contemporary Political Economy, will put together the theoretical and empirical foundations acquired during the course to understand how epochal political economy shifts are contributing to transform the composition of society, with a marked increase of poverty, unemployment and precarization. We will observe how these transformations have entailed a reduced capacity to political participation of several segments of society. Are these segments becoming a majority? The last lecture provides an avenue of debate on issues related to the political economy of contemporary societies: are our societies able to regulate platform work in the age of automation? What are the social forces in the battlefield?

Five presentations from students and the connected debates will complement this program:
(2) Kicking away the ladder. Discussing about development and free trade (Lecture 11).
(3) Feminism seduced. Discussing about the relation between capitalism and feminism (Lecture 13).
(4) Why a dangerous idea won the west? Discussing about austerity in the aftermath of the 2008 great financial crisis (Lecture 15).
(5) Platform work and basic income. Discussing about social action and regulation in the Age of Automation (Lecture 17).

To sum up, the course will approach among others the following questions:
- Did the relationship between capital and labour fundamentally change over the last four decades?
- Can political economy help us to understand new (and old) political trends?
- Why the welfare state expanded?
- How the 2008 financial crisis impact on our capacity to reduce inequality and social risks?
- Where gender and class intersect? And what can the welfare state do to reduce gender and income inequalities?
- Was Marx right? Why everybody interested in political economy constantly discuss about Polanyi?
- What is basic income? Shall we introduce it?
- Does talking about class still make sense in the 21st century?
- Are societies becoming more unequal because of technology and automation?
- Is critical theory useful to understand present societal developments?

**Organization of the Course**

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<td>8/07</td>
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<td>12/07</td>
<td>When History Meets Class: Back to the Future with EP Thompson</td>
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<td>13/07</td>
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<td>15/07</td>
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<td>Recap</td>
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Requirements for course validation

1. Presentation of readings and debate (40% of grade). During the first class students will be divided in five groups. Each group will be responsible to present a book or a series of readings and introduce the discussion (during lectures 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17). The time allocated for the exercise is two hours (including presentation and discussion). Each group will be assessed on: (1) the capacity to clearly illustrate the content of each assigned reading, (2) the capacity to introduce the debate, (3) the ability to stimulate a lively discussion with the rest of the class. The readings and debates are listed in the reading list.

2. Summary and critique of weekly readings (50% of grade): Each student will summarize and critique the readings for one selected week (students can pick up any week). The paper is worth 50% of the grade. The page limit is 3 1.5-spaced pages (use 12-point Times New Roman font).

   Summary Step back and think about the key ideas and central arguments of the readings. Describe what you have learned from the set of readings assigned for that week first (in a paragraph), and then highlight the unique contributions of each one or each subset of readings, respectively. Focus on the big picture instead of each and every detail. Limit the summary portion of the assignment to about 2 pages. Grades for this assignment will depend primarily on the organization and accuracy of the summary, accounting for about 2/3 of grade.

   Critique Think critically about the ideas, methods, and evidence presented in the readings, the style of their writing, and whether it is interesting and enlightening. Is the thinking logical and reasonable? Why or why not? What are the strengths of the arguments? Are the methods used appropriate? Is the evidence robust and supportive of the arguments? Where do you see flaws, weaknesses, or aspects that are not convincing? What would be a better way to think about the issue or topic? What is lacking or overlooked? What might be some innovative and well-reasoned ideas about the issue or topic at hand? Evaluate the readings either as a whole or critique just one or one subset of the readings. Not every reading should be expected to cover everything, which is why multiple readings are assigned to address various facets of a topic. If you choose to critique the reading as a whole, compare and contrast the authors’ ideas and arguments. How are they similar or different? How can they learn from each other?

   Do not answer all of the questions listed above. These are designed to help you think about how to critique the readings thoughtfully and constructively. Focus on 1-3 of these questions. This part of the paper should not exceed 1 page and account for about 1/3 of grade.

   The assignment should be submitted via Moodle by the specified due date. Late submissions will result in the deduction of 1 point for each day, including weekends. Every page beyond the page limit will result in a deduction of 1 point.

3. Class attendance and participation (10% of grade): Each student is expected to participate fully in class discussions.
TEXTBOOKS

These texts provide general and introductory material for the course.


READINGS FOR EACH SESSION

The readings for each session are presented under the rubric essential readings. For those students who want to go beyond there is also an additional list of readings for each class.

**Part I: Capital, Labour & Class: Political economy foundations to understand contemporary world**

- **Sessions 2 & 3, Marx and the Theory of Value**

  **Essential Readings**

  **To go Beyond**
  Marx, Capital (I)

  Reading Capital, David Harvey’s Video Lectures: [http://davidharvey.org/reading-capital/](http://davidharvey.org/reading-capital/)

- **Session 4, Polanyi, The Great Transformation and the Nature of Trade**

  **Essential Readings**
To go Beyond

- Session 5, When History Meets Class: Back to the Future with EP Thompson

**Essential Readings**

To go Beyond

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**Part II: The Political Economy of the Welfare State: Past & Present**

- Session 6, What is the Welfare State For?

**Essential Readings**

To go Beyond

- Session 7, Explaining the exceptional development of the Modern Welfare States: An unprecedented mediation between capital and labour

**Essential Readings**

To go beyond
• Session 8, The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism

To go beyond

• Session 9, Debate 1: Understanding class in the 21st century. Still a useful concept?


• Session 10, Keynes vs. Schumpeter. The Transformation of Modern Welfare States

Essential Readings

To go Beyond

• Session 11, Debate 2: Kicking away the ladder. Discussing about development and free trade


• Session 12, Class, Gender & Welfare State Change

Essential Readings
To go beyond

- Session 13, Debate 3: Feminism seduced. Discussing about the relation between capitalism and feminism
Reading: Eisenstein, H. 2015. Feminism seduced: How global elites use women’s labor and ideas to exploit the world. London: Routledge. [The edition provided is the first one published in 2009]

- Session 14, Welfare State and the Financial Crisis
Essential Readings

To go Beyond

- Session 15, Debate 4: Why a dangerous idea won the west? Discussing about austerity in the aftermath of the 2008 great financial crisis

Part III: Bringing Society back into Contemporary Political Economy

- Session 16, Bringing the Voice of the Invisibles back into International Political Economy
Essential Readings
To go Beyond


- Session 17, Debate 3: Platform work and basic income. Discussing about social action and regulation in the Age of Automation

Readings:

To go Beyond

Professor Biography

Emanuele Ferragina is Associate Professor of Sociology at Sciences Po. He grew up in Catanzaro, deep south of Italy. Prior to Sciences Po, he was Departmental Lecturer at University of Oxford where he also received his PhD. His main research interest is the political economy of the welfare state. Besides academia, he has established (with a group of Italian researchers) the think tank Fonderia Oxford, which has the objective of raising public awareness about important societal issues, such as the rigidity of the Italian labour market, the lack of social cohesion in the Mezzogiorno, and the Italian brain drain. He also regularly writes for Il FattoQuotidiano about equality, labour market issues, party politics, the welfare state, and lower league football.