

B 2011 - PY 3711 TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY (Sanbonmatsu)

The course will examine capitalism as a mode of civilizational development, exploring its intimate relation to the political, the social, and the ethical. Is capitalism, as the late economist Milton Friedman argued, the driving motor of democracy, the sine qua non for universal freedom and liberty, temperance in governance, and self-control in the individual? Or is capitalism, rather, the engine of misery, authoritarianism, war, alienation, and ecological destruction--as socialists and anarchists believe? At a time when social inequality between rich and poor is reaching an all-time high; when mass species extinction and resource depletion are accelerating; when global warming threatens to destabilize the international political, economic, and natural order; and as the worst financial and banking crisis since 1929 threatens the stability of the whole world capitalist system, such questions touch every one of our lives. With luck and pluck, students will come out of this course with a vivid understanding of the powerful social forces shaping our world.