Course Description: Economic methodology course that covers historical and methodological issues in economics. Topics to be covered include: introduction to some classic methodological topics, interpreting the path of twentieth century economics, examining and assessing past, current and new approaches in economics.

Course Requirements: The course will principally be run as a seminar, where we discuss common readings. Caldwell will lecture and lead discussions on a few topics, student seminar leaders will lead the rest. The basic requirement is to have read and thought about the material, and be ready to discuss it. The syllabus should be considered provisional, and the order of topics may change. Your grade will be based on your performance on a writing assignment (70%), and on the quality of your classroom contribution as a discussion leader and as a participant in classroom discussions (30%).

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Introduce students to the field of and some classic debates in economic methodology.
2. Introduce students to alternative accounts of the development of economics in the twentieth century.
3. Understand arguments concerning various limitations of economics.
4. Understand some contemporary new developments within economics, both those that challenge and those that extend the discipline.

Text: There is just one text, my book:


However, there will be a lot more reading. Some of it will be from chapters in books; in other cases journal articles. Most of the articles are from journals that are available online at the library either by JSTOR or by journal search. I will also provide copies of all readings on Blackboard.
Course Outline:

1. Opening Lecture: The Methodology of Economics – An Overview
   a. Caldwell as Case Study: How I got into it, and where I went
   b. A bit on 20th century philosophy of science
   c. Where we are heading in this course

   Readings: Bruce Caldwell, “Positivism” and the introductory chapter to Hayek’s Challenge

2. Background on the history of economic thought


3. Background on some early methodological debates and socialism

   Readings: Hayek’s Challenge, Chapters 2, 3, and 5, plus pp. 97-99 of chapter 4.

4. Friedman’s Famous Essay – Content and Appraisal


5. Popper: Falsification, Situational Logic, Mark Blaug, Imre Lakatos, and Paris Hilton


6. McCloskey: Rhetoric of Economics

7. Interpreting the Recent History of our Discipline – Mirowski and Weintraub


8. Friedrich Hayek: In his Own Words


9. Friedrich Hayek: Caldwell’s Take

Readings: Hayek’s Challenge, chapters 10 & 11, 14 & 15 (the last 2 are most important)

10. Empirical Work in Economics


11. Theoretical Work in Economics


12. Economists and Policy

13. Possible Additional Areas and Readings


f. Public Choice - ??.
