I. Introduction and Overview

No readings.

II. Physiocracy and the Rise of Economic Thought

a. On the social history of France just prior to the Revolution you will find the following helpful:

George Lefebvre, The Coming of the French Revolution (R) (Vintage paperback), pp. 3-44.

*Alfred Cobban, The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution (Cambridge University Press paperback), pp. 25-68, see also


b. The best collection of Physiocratic writings available in English is in:

Ronald L. Meek, The Economics of Physiocracy. (R)

A good idea of the main elements in the Doctrine can be grasped by reading pp. 72-88 and 102-118 of this book.

A useful discussion of this material is:


c. Devote some thought to the relationship between the material in (a) and (b) above. For some general insights into the relationship between the economy and the development of economic thought, read:

Karl Polanyi, "The Anonymity of the Economy in Early Society," in George Dalton (ed.), Primitive, Archaic and Modern Economies (Anchor Doubleday paperback), pp. 81-95. (This is a selection from a longer essay on Aristotle which appears also in C. Arensberg, H. Pearson, and K. Polanyi (eds.), Trade and Market in the Early Empires) (R).
Then read:


Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value* (International) (R), "The General Character of the Phystiocratic System," "Forgotten".


III. Ricardian Economics

a. If you have not studied the economic history of the late-18th century and the early 19th century in England, you should look at some of the standard sources. A good quantitative base can be found in:


On the assumption that most of this is already under your belt, read:


*Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation* (R) (Beacon paperback), pp. 68-76.


The intellectual milieu of the period is described well in:


b. A critical element in the evolution of the body of English classical economics—one which distinguished the body of thought from the Phystiocratic school—was the development of a theory of profit. Read:

Ronald Meek, *Economics and Ideology* (R) (Chapman & Hall), pp. 18-33, "Adam Smith and the Classical Theory of Profit".

*Maurice Dobb, Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith* (R) (Chapter 2, pp. 38-64).

c. On the Ricardian theory:

David Ricardo, *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (R) (Preface—chapters 1, 2, 3, 6 (Everyman edition: pp. 1-45 and 52-77)).

On What Ricardo wrote:


*P. Sraffa with M. Dobb, The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo* (9 vols)


T. deQuincey, *Ricardo Made Easy: or What is the Radical Difference between Ricardo and Adam Smith*, (c1835) (R).

As supplement to Ricardo's own writings, a good modern treatment is:

*Mark Blaug, Ricardian Economics* (R) Chapters 2 & 3, pp. 6-63.


d. An interpretation of the relation between value theories and distribution theories, and of the classical school of political economy in light of these considerations, can be found in:


For a view critical of the position taken in Dobb's first essay, read:


e. On the social history of England during and after the heyday of Ricardian economics, read:


On the evolution of economic thought in the Richardian and post-Richardian period:

M. Dobb, *Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith* (R) Chapter 4, pp. 96-120.
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M. Blaug, Richardsonian Economics, Chapters 7 & 8, pp. 129-164 and pp. 221-229. (R)

*R. Meek, The Economics of Physiocracy (R)

"Physiocracy and the Early Theories of Underconsumption" and "Physiocracy and Classicism in Britain," pp. 313-333.


IV. Marx: Historical Materialism

a. Some aspects of the relation between Marxist theory and classical political economy are discussed in:

Maurice Dobb, Political Economy and Capitalism (R)

Chapter 3, "Physiocracy and the Early Theories of Underconsumption" and "Physiocracy and Classicism in Britain," pp. 49-56.


b. For an overview of Marx's approach, read either (or both, they are not really substitutes):

Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (R)


*R. Meek, Economics and Ideology (R)


Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Communist Manifesto "Bourgeois and Proletarians," pp. 43-51 in Selsam, et. al. (R)

V. Value and Exploitation

a. Classes and Class Conflict.

R. Bendix and S.M. Lipset, Class, Status, and Power (R)
Econ. 801 - 6 - Bowles and Gintis


b. Some modern treatments:


VII. The Emergence of the Neoclassical School

a. The Historical Setting. Read one of the following three:

Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin, Civil War in France -- The Paris Commune (R) (International Publishers) "Introduction" by Engels, pp. 9-22.


Jerry Brecher, Strike! (R) (Straight Arrow Books, San Francisco 1972) Chapter I.


b. An Overview of the School

J.A. Schumpeter, The Theory of Economic Development (1911) (R) Chapter I, pp. 3-55. Chapter 4, pp. 128-156.


von Wiser, "The Theory of Value: A Reply to Prof. Macvane" (1891-92) (R)


*W.S. Jevons, The Theory of Political Economy, Chapter 4, pp. 75-166.

Econ. 801 - 7 - Bowles and Gintis

c. Overall Interpretation


d. For a contemporary critique, see


VIII. Neoclassical Distribution Theories: Labor

a. We assume that you are quite familiar with the basic writings in this area. For some of the original formulations, see

K. Wicksell, Lectures on Political Economy, Vol. I (R) pp. 101-133 and 197-197, and/or

G. Stigler, Production and Distribution Theories, (R) Chapter on J.B. Clark, pp. 296-315.

Some of the ethical propositions often implicit in popular versions of the marginal productivity theory are explicitly in:


b. For two more modern extensions, see


For a Marxist critique of Becker, see


c. For various alternative views, see:

IX. Neoclassical Theories of Distribution: Capital

a. The basic writings of the Austrian School, as well as those of Fisher and J.B. Clark, are discussed in:
Mark Blaug, Economic Theory in Retrospect (R) pp.449-490 and 490-520.

If you have not read the basic literature in this field and would like to, begin with:
*E. Bohm-Bawerk, Positive Theory of Capital books 2, 3, and 4 (Chapter I, and parts 4 and 5 of chapter 2).

*Irving Fisher, Theory of Interest Chapters 4, 7, 10 and 11.


b. A Contemporary critique


c. An interpretation of the relationship between capital productivity, time preference, and the interest rate in the long run is offered in:

d. A modern attempt to reorient the study of capital theory around the rate of return rather than capital itself is:
*Robert Solow, Capital Theory and the Rate of Return, pp.16-36.

A simple modern survey of capital theory may be found in:
*Donal Dewey, Modern Capital Theory

e. The modern Cambridge controversy:


X. Property, Equity, and Value.

Basic readings on the development of property theory:
Richard Schlatter, Private Property: The History of an Idea
Chapter VI, The Seventeenth Century, pp.124-150.


Some modern formulations:
Milton Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom Chapter I.


XI. Utility, Welfare, and the Theory of the State

a. For an overview read:


*H. Myint, Theories of Welfare Economics


b. Original sources are:
*A. Marshall, Principles of Economics

*A. Pigou, The Economics of Welfare
Econ. 801 - 10 - Bowles and Gintis

*J. Hicks, Value and Capital (1938) Chapter 1, "Utility and Performance," pp. 11-25.
*K. Arrow, Social Choice and Individual Values
*P.A. Samuelson, Foundations of Economic Analysis

c. Critiques:
*J. de Graft, Theoretical Welfare Economics
*I.D.M. Little, A Critique of Welfare Economics

d. The Theory of the State
*P. Bachrach & M. Baratz, The Theory of Democratic Elitism
*S. Fine, Laissez-Faire and The Rise of the General Welfare State

XII. Keynes
J.M. Keynes, Essays in Persuasion (R)
Herbert Stein, The Fiscal Revolution in America (R) pp. 3-5, and 454-468.

XIII. Economics, Science and Ideology
For a stimulating view of the ways in which scientific thought has developed, read:
*Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Phoenix paperback) Chapter 1-5, pp. 1-51.
For a view of the evolution of economic thought, read:
J. Schumpeter, History of Economic Analysis (R) Chapter 4, Part 1, "Is History of Economics a History of Ideologies?" pp. 34-47.
M. Dobb, Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith (R) Chapter 1, pp. 1-37.