

SOSC 11500: Power, Identity, Resistance – II  
Winter 2023

Section 18  
Social Sciences Research Building 105  
MW 1:30–2:50 p.m.

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M 11:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m. and by appointment

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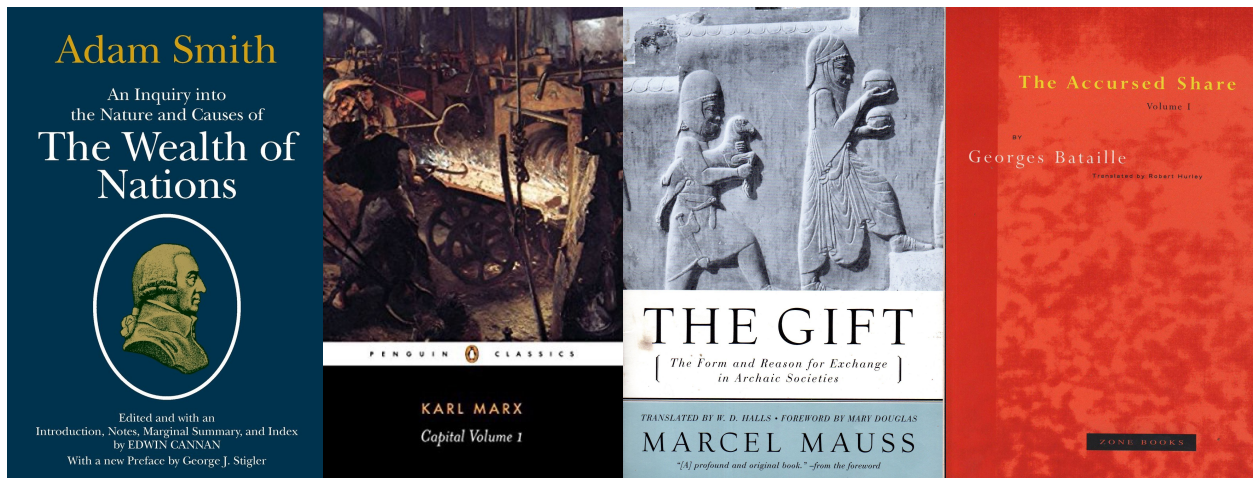
### Description

This seminar is the second quarter of a three-quarter sequence in the social sciences. This quarter of Power, Identity, Resistance examines major works of modern political economy. We consider how commercial society remade the division of labor, transformed class relations, and privileged productivity and growth. Commercial society, or what Marxists call capitalist bourgeois society, has had its fair share of critics. How did these critics respond to the problems of economic inequality and excess wealth? What alternative forms of exchange did they propose? We will read Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Marcel Mauss, and Georges Bataille—four thinkers concerned with the relationship between political power and economic life. This seminar will continue to develop your ability to think critically and communicate clearly.

### Readings

Four books are required for the course. They are available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore on the corner of 58th and Woodlawn.

Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations* (Chicago, 1976)  
Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One* (Penguin, 1990)  
Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (Norton, 1990)  
Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, Volume One* (Zone, 1989)



## **Requirements**

Participation: 20% of course grade

Informed participation is required in this discussion-intensive seminar. Students are expected to complete all reading assignments before class, attend all class meetings, and actively participate in class discussions. You need to bring a copy of the book and any notes you have made to class. Your overall grade will be reduced for more than two unexcused absences. As a courtesy to your fellow students and to keep yourself focused on class discussions, please turn off electronic equipment (phones, laptops, and so on) and keep them out of sight during class meetings.

Reflections: 40% of course grade

You will write four short reflections this quarter. These reflections are designed to evaluate the quality of your engagement with course readings and discussions. They are not meant to be comprehensive summaries but focused meditations on topics you find particularly important or germane. The most successful reflections examine specific passages and then explain how those passages reveal something important about the work as a whole. You must end your reflection with a question that emerges out of your analysis. Each reflection should be approximately 500 words, double spaced, Times New Roman 12-point type with 1-inch margins on all sides. Avoid title pages, footnotes and bibliographies, but have a proper title and parenthetically cite page numbers after quoted passages. You must attend class in order to hand in a reflection.

Papers: 40% of course grade

You will write two comparative papers: one comparing Adam Smith's political economy with Karl Marx's critique of commodity capitalism, the other comparing the alternative economies proposed by Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille. The first paper is due on Monday, February 13. The second paper is due on Wednesday, March 8. You will write a prospectus in preparation for each paper. Detailed instructions will be distributed during the quarter. I encourage you to meet with me about paper outlines, drafts, and revisions.

## **Academic Integrity**

As with all your courses at the University of Chicago, you are required to adhere to the University's policy on academic integrity. This policy is described in detail at: <https://college.uchicago.edu/student-services/academic-integrity-student-conduct>

## Schedule

This schedule may change. Students will be notified of changes in class. Assignments are marked with an asterisk.

### Part One Adam Smith

- W January 4      **Political Economy and the Chicago Smith**  
Syllabus
- M January 9      **Pins, Coats, and the Effects of the Division of Labor**  
Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, pp. 1–71, 275–278
- W January 11     **We are All Merchants Now: The Rise of Commercial Society**  
Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, pp. 401–445  
\* Reflection 1 due
- M January 16     No Class Meeting: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- W January 18     **Smith and Empire**  
Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, pp. 449–495, 66–158

### Part Two Karl Marx

- M January 23     **Commodity Capitalism**  
Marx, *Capital*, pp. 89–104, 125–187, 198–209
- W January 25     **Capital and Labor-Power**  
Marx, *Capital*, pp. 247–319  
\* Reflection 2 due
- M January 30     **Exploitation**  
Marx, *Capital*, pp. 320–332, 340–353, 375–416, 429–454
- W February 1     **The Struggle between Workers and Machines: Should We All be Neo-Luddites Now?**  
Marx, *Capital*, pp. 480–575, 636–639  
\* Smith-Marx Prospectus due
- M February 6     **Accumulate, Accumulate!**  
Marx, *Capital*, pp. 709–746, 762–802
- W February 8     **Marx and Empire**  
Marx, *Capital*, pp. 873–940

Part Three Marcel Mauss

- M February 13      **Open Session**  
\* First Paper due
- W February 15      **Potlatch, or the Conspicuous Distribution of Goods**  
Mauss, *The Gift*, pp. 1–46  
\* Reflection 3 due
- M February 20      **We are Not Yet All Economic Animals**  
Mauss, *The Gift*, pp. 47–83

Part Four Georges Bataille

- W February 22      **Rethinking Classical Political Economy: Economies of Excess**  
Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, pp. 9–41  
\* Reflection 4 due
- M February 27      **Societies of Nonproductive Expenditure**  
Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, pp. 45–110  
\* Mauss-Bataille Prospectus due
- W March 1          **A World in Motion Wants to be Changed**  
Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, pp. 115–190
- W March 8          \* Second Paper: Your second paper is due no later than 5:00 p.m.  
on Wednesday, March 8. Please e-mail your paper as an attached  
Microsoft Word document to [rlallen@uchicago.edu](mailto:rlallen@uchicago.edu)