**Pepperdine University, Spring 2008**
**GSGS592 – Christianity and Economics**
**T 6:00 – 8:50, AC215**

Instructors: Professor Andrew Yuengert (pronounced Yĕng ert)
Office Hours: AC217B, M 1-2, T 9-10, W 11-12, Th 1-2
Phone: 506-4380
Email: andrew.yuengert@pepperdine.edu

Professor Kenneth Elzinga
Visiting Professor of Economics, from the University of Virginia
Office Hours: AC230A, T 1-5
Phone: 506-4989
Email: ken.elzinga@pepperdine.edu

Course Description and Goals

This is a seminar on Christianity and economics. We shall study what the Christian faith teaches about economic activity. We also shall study what the discipline of economics teaches about Christianity. An elementary understanding of both Christianity and economics will be assumed, and a keen desire to explore the intersection of Christianity and economics is a prerequisite to enrolling in this seminar.

Topics covered include the Old and New Testament discussions of wealth, the Christian perspective on market versus non-market allocation of resources, Christian approaches to the environment, and Catholic Social Thought. The course will draw from the work of scholars who have written about economics from a Christian perspective and scholars who have written about Christianity from the perspective of economic analysis.

The class is a seminar, but it will include some lectures (one expected guest lecture) and student presentations.

Course Goals:
(1) understand the content and implications of the Biblical teachings on economic matters;
(2) be familiar with various perspectives on Christianity and economics;
(3) be able to integrate Christianity and economics to better understand particular policy issues.

Course Objectives:
(1) demonstrate a familiarity with Old and New Testament teaching on income and wealth;
(2) make the connection between Christianity and economics in particular analytical settings;
(3) knowledgeably lead a class discussion on a course topic area;
(4) understand one topic area sufficiently to complete a research paper on the subject.

Relationship to the Christian Mission of the University

Faith and reason complement each other. In this course, we shall integrate the Christian witness about economic matters with the economic approach to the economy. This is a course for both the mind and the heart.

Prerequisites: REL101 and REL102; ECON200, BA/ECON210, or BA/ECON211.

Required Texts

Bible, Revised Standard Version or New International Version preferred.

Blomberg, Craig L. *Neither Poverty nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Material Possessions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

Claar, Victor, and Robin Klay. *Economics in Christian Perspective: Theory, Policy, and Life Choices* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

Blank, Rebecca M., and William McGurn. *Is the Market Moral? A Dialogue on Religion, Economics and Justice* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

Other Readings: will be provided in reprint form.

Structure of the Course

1. Seminars do not function optimally if some students free ride. Therefore, each student is to be prepared for each class period. Please inform one of us if, for some reason, you cannot be prepared for class on a particular day.

2. The seminar will be taught like a graduate course: no midterm, just a final exam. Instead of diverting your attention to a midterm, you are encouraged to devote this time to the research paper. Grades will be based on the following:

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| Final Exam: | 40% |
| Research Project: | 40% |
| Class Participation: | 20% |

3. Each student will take a leadership role in the class discussion of one of the readings.

4. Papers can be of variable length, but at least 10-15 pages. A provisional list of suggested topics follows the Course Outline. There will be 15 minute presentations of student research in the last two class meetings.

5. We expect you to do your own work and not copy that of others and claim it as your own. Please read the university's policies and procedures about cheating and plagiarism at http://seaver.pepperdine.edu/academicintegrity/policies/.

6. Disability Services: The Disability Services Office (DSO) offers a variety of services and accommodations to students with disabilities based on appropriate documentation, nature of disability, and academic need. In order to initiate services, students should meet with the Director of the DSO at the beginning of the semester to discuss reasonable accommodation. If a student does not request accommodation or provide documentation, the faculty member is under

no obligation to provide accommodations. You may contact the Director of the DSO at extension 6500.

**Course Outline (tentative):**

T 1/8 Introduction: Genesis and Leviticus
Readings: Blomberg, ch.1
Genesis 1-3
Leviticus 19, 25-26

T 1/15 The Wisdom and the Prophetic Books of the Bible
Readings: Blomberg, ch. 2
Proverbs 15-22, 31
Amos

T 1/22 The Teachings of Jesus
Readings: Blomberg, ch. 4
Matthew 5-7
Mark 4:1-20; 10:17-31; 12:13-17; 12:41-44
Luke 4:1-13; 12:16-21; 16:1-13; 16:19-31

T 1/29 Early Christianity and Contemporary Applications
Readings: Blomberg, chs. 5, 8
The Letter of James
Acts 1-2

T 2/5 Applying Christian Thinking to Economic Issues: Institutions in Bible Times
Guest Lecture: Edd Noell, Westmont College
Readings: Edd Noell, "Exchange and Property Rights in the Light of Biblical Values"
Edd Noell, "A 'Marketless World'? An Examination of Wealth and Exchange in the Gospels and First-Century Palestine"

T 2/12 Introduction to Christian Thinking about Economic Issues
Readings: Claar and Klay, chs. 1-4

T 2/19 Economics of Religion
Readings: Larry Iannaccone, "Introduction to the Economics of Religion," *Journal of Economic Literature* (blackboard)
Robert Nelson, "Chicago versus the Ten Commandments," *Economics as Religion*, pp. 166-193 (readings packet)
Rachel McCleary and Robert Barro, "Religion and Economy," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (readings packet)
Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, "Religious Choice and Competition," *American Sociological Review* (blackboard)

T 2/26 Christianity and Non-Market Approaches to the Economy
Readings: Ron Sider, "Structural Evil and World Hunger," *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (readings packet)
Clive Beed, "Jesus and Competition," *Faith and Economics* (blackboard)
Gustavo Gutierrez, "Liberation and Development," *A Theology of Liberation* (readings packet)

T 3/4 Christianity and Market Approaches to the Economy
Readings: Michael Novak, "A Theology of Democratic Capitalism," *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (readings packet)
Jennifer Roback Morse, "The Modern State as an Occasion of Sin," *ACE Bulletin* (readings packet)
Robert Sirico, "The Culture of Virtue, the Culture of the Market," *Markets, Capitalism, and Culture* (readings packet)

T 3/11 Spring Break!

T 3/18 The Catholic Social Tradition
Readings: John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (website: http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs_jp02ca.htm)
Andrew Yuengert, "Free Markets and the Culture of Consumption," *Catholic Social Teaching and the Market Economy* (readings packet)

T 3/25 Three Protestant Perspectives
Readings: James Halteman, "An Anabaptist Approach to Economic Systems," *ACE Bulletin* (readings packet)
Roland Hoksbergen, "A Reformed Approach to Economics: The Kuyperian Tradition," *ACE Bulletin* (readings packet)
John Anderson and George Langelett, "Economics and the Evangelical Mind," *ACE Bulletin* (blackboard)

T 4/1 Christians and the Economics of the Environment
Readings: Claar and Klay, ch. 5
Christopher Barrett and John Bergstrom, "The Economics of God's Creation," *Faith and Economics* (readings packet)

T 4/8 Paper Presentations, Final Thoughts
Readings: Blank and McGurn, pp. 11-90

T 4/15 Paper Presentations, Final Thoughts
Readings: Blank and McGurn, pp. 91-144

T 4/22 Final Exam, 7:30-10:00 PM

**Suggested Research Topics: A Partial List**

Primary Course Perspective:

- Christianity and global trade
- Christianity and economic growth: is more better?
- Christianity and the tithe
- Christianity and "vice industries": e.g., gambling, drugs, pornography
- Christianity and personal charity
- Christianity and the distribution (or redistribution) of income
- Christianity and Third World debt relief
- Christianity and international immigration
- Christianity and the economic concept of rational man
- Christianity and a "preferential option for the poor"
- Christianity and economic well-being
- Christianity and lending and borrowing
- Christianity and profit maximization
- Christianity and the "just wage" or "living wage"
- Christianity and taxation
- Christianity and the entrepreneur
- Christianity and the modern corporation
- Teachings of the Apostle Paul on economics
- Christian teachings of _____(student choice of a post-Biblical prominent Christian, such as Calvin or Novak) or Christian teachings of _____(student choice of some Christian institution or organization such as Church of Christ or Acton Institute) on economics

Ancillary Course Perspective:

- Economics and the local church: size, output
- Economics and the Roman Catholic Church
- Economics and the Protestant Reformation
- Catholicism, Protestantism and Economic Performance