1000-F26;Philosophy of Money

✎ Rediger

Spring Semester 2026

[(https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS_COURSE_REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddc
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Course Content

Money plays an essential role in our lives. Many of our everyday activities are driven by money whether we are occupied with earning, spending, saving or repaying them. The way we perceive and engage with the world is often molded by the money. We tend to measure, appraise, valuate and balance, not only things, but also our relation to nature, time, other people, even ourselves, in terms money. Indeed, money makes the world go around. Yet, we rarely ever ask ourselves the question: What is money? Where do they come from?

This course aims to reflect on such obvious, but nevertheless often neglected questions. Drawing on resources from history, sociology and particularly philosophy, we will investigate how money is related to themes like religion, politics, morality, nature, and care. Focusing on key concepts such as debt, gift, trust, power, and commodity, the course will discuss classical philosophical texts by Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Locke, Smith, Marx, and Nietzsche, and relate them to present-day issues concerning student-debt, care-economy and eco-capitalism.

Learning objectives:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Provide an account of key concepts that are relevant to the philosophy of money, and to reflect on the manner in which these concepts can guide and inform our contemporary way of thinking about socio-economic issues.
- Reflect independently and critically on the claims and arguments in the syllabus texts that we have explored.

Course Instructor:

Bjarke Stigel, Ph.D., University of Copenhagen. Email: bmh@sk.ku.dk

Class Meetings:

Thursday 10:15-12:30 (first class: January 22, 2026).

Room: 7C.1.17

Map link: **https://teol.ku.dk/kontakt/findvej/ (https://teol.ku.dk/kontakt/findvej/)**

Language of instruction and discussion:

English. (Final papers, however, may also be written in Danish).

Credit:

15 ECTS credits

Streaming:

If you wish to participate by live streaming, please contact the course responsible, as the requirements for the final paper are different.

Zoom link: **https://ucph-ku.zoom.us/j/63945322111?pwd=e6AYcg9kn1KEXKZvt9eGHw8ovzlCU0.1 (https://ucph-ku.zoom.us/j/63945322111?pwd=e6AYcg9kn1KEXKZvt9eGHw8ovzlCU0.1)**

Expectations of the students:

The students are expected to have prepared themselves carefully for each class, that is, to have done the required reading and to think about issues, problems, and questions to be discussed in class. Moreover, the students are expected to engage in the discussions as well as the group work, and to make use of both the course material when discussing the issues in question.

According to UCPH policy, all students must be present a minimum of 75% of the time to receive a grade. (For DIS students: the DIS Director of Teaching and Learning, and the Director of Student Affairs, will be notified if you are absent four times or more).

Requirements for DIS-students:

For undergraduate students (bachelor students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). The syllabus volume and content are determined by the teacher, and two papers are to be submitted to the teacher of each 4-5 pages, as well as a final major assignment, which has a size of 19,200-24,000 characters.

Requirements for KU-students (both Danish students and Exchange students):

For undergraduate students (bachelor students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). A final major assignment, which has a size of 24.000-28.800 characters. The assignments is assessed by the teacher and a grade is given in accordance with the 7-point grading scale. If participation takes place via streaming for more than 25% of the sessions, the following is required to pass the course: A final assignment assignment that has a scope of 36,000-48,000 characters.

For graduate students (kandidat/master students):

Active attendance (at least attendance in 75% of the sessions documented by protocol). A final paper of 36.000-48-000 characters. The assignment is assessed by the teacher, and a grade is given in accordance with the 7-point grading scale. If participation takes place via streaming for more than 25% of the sessions, the following is required to pass the course: An assignment of 60,000-72,000 characters.

Course Evaluation for DIS students:

(https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS_COURSE_REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddc wrap=1) Final paper: 45% (submission date: May 14, 23:59 via Absalon)

First short paper: 20% **(https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS_COURSE_REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddc wrap=1)**

Second short paper: 20%

Attendance and participation: 15%

Course Evaluation for KU-students (both Danish students and Exchange students):

Final paper: 100% (submission date: May 28, 11:59 via Digital Eksamen)

GAI (Generativ Artificial Intelligence) Policy:

UCPH permits the use of GAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence) in written assignments. You are required to follow the UCPH rules for the use of GAI and include an GAI declaration with the final paper. You can find the GAI rules, the template for the GAI declaration, and guidelines for completing the template **here (https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/90457/pages/gai-rules-and-declaration)** . If you do not include an GAI declaration with the final paper, you will fail the class.

Plagiarism Policy:

In accordance with UCPH rules for academic ethics, there will be a no tolerance policy towards cheating and plagiarism. The submission of any paper which is not your own work will result in an automatic fail and may have severe consequences for your future studies.

Recording Policy:

Recording of the classes is prohibited without the consent of all parties (i.e. all students and teacher) involved.

Readings:

Completion of reading assignments as scheduled is required and is a prerequisite for participating in class discussions.

Course texts:

(https://absalon.instructure.com/courses/%24CANVAS_COURSE_REFERENCE%24/file_ref/gc091475ddc wrap=1)

These books should be purchased (For KU students):

See Absalon

Primary texts on Absalon (under Moduls):

See Absalon

Background material (optional and additional reading)

See Absalon

Literature:

Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, Fathers of the English Dominican Province, trans. 5 vols. Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981.

Aristotle, *Politics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, J. Barnes (ed.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. [Politics available online]

Benjamin, Walter, "Capitalism as Religion," in Vol. 1 of Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, ed. by M. Bullock and M. W. Jennings, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Bjerg, Ole: *Making Money. The Philosophy Of Crisis of Capitalism*, London: Verso, 2014.

Derrida, Jacques: *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; First Edition, 2017.

Dostoyevsky, *The Gambler*, London: Penguin Classics, 2011.

Federici, Silvia: *Patriarchy of the Wage. Notes on Marx, Gender, and Feminism*, Oakland: PM Press, 2021.

Graeber, David: *Debt. The First 5,000 Years*, New York: Melvillehouse, 2011.

Ingham, Geoffrey: *The Nature of Money*, Cambridge: Polity, 2004.

Ingham, Geoffrey: *Money* (What is Political Economy?), Cambridge: Polity, 2020.

Lazzarato, Maurizio: "The American University: A Model of the Debt Society," in *Governing by Debt*, trans. Joshua David Jordan, South Pasadena: Semiotexte, 2015, pp. 61-90.

Locke, John, "Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest and the Raising the Value of Money," in E. W. Fuller (ed.), A Source Book on Early Monetary Thought, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020.

Marx, Karl, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1, London: Penguin Classics, 1992.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1st edition, 2009.

Plato, *Greater Hippias*, Loeb Classical Library (access via KB: **https://www-loebclassics-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/view/LCL167/1926/volume.xml (https://www-loebclassics-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/view/LCL167/1926/volume.xml)**)

Platon, *Sophist*, Cambridge translation (access via KB: **https://www-cambridge-org.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/core/books/plato-theaetetus-and-sophist/29753275E41753380BF90ECC1727374A (https://www-cambridge-org.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/core/books/plato-theaetetus-and-sophist/29753275E41753380BF90ECC1727374A)**)

Simmel, Georg, *Philosophy of Money*, London: Routledge 2011.

Sloterdijk, Peter, *In the World Interior of Capital*, Cambridge: Polity, 2005.

Smith, Adam, 1776*, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell.

Spinoza, *Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Weber, Max, *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Routledge; 1st edition, 2001

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Books and journals for your study from Copenhagen University Library (http://kub.kb.dk/c.php?g=514341&p=3514066&preview=8882aa68f366075fe92c490f6da2733c)

SESSION 1: Introduction: What is Money? A Philosophical Question

Required reading

Bjerg Intro Making Money.pdf

Reading Questions

Optional reading

seaford intro.pdf

Power Point

PM Session 1. FS 2026.pptx

SESSION 2: Philosophy, Money, and the Greeks

Required reading

Plato Sophist (pp. 99-113).pdf

Plato Hippias Major.pdf

Aristotle Politics Book 1, 1-12.pdf

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book 5.pdf

Reading Questions

Optional reading

Robinson Definition of Sophist.pdf

Aristotle on Money.pdf

Power Point

PM Session 2 - FS26.pptx

SESSION 3: Money and religion (faith, trust, fidelity)

Required reading

Goodchild Theology of Money.pdf

Valéry Freedom of the Mind (pp. 186-198).pdf

Valéry Politics of the Mind (pp. 105-109).pdf

Reading Questions

Optional reading

Goodchild Reflections on money, trust and the pursuit of self-interest - LSE Business Review.pdf

Supplementary readings

Power Point

PM Session 3 FS 2026.pptx

SESSION 4: History of Money: National Museum (Excursion)

Required reading

- Grierson, Philip "The Origins of Money".pdf
- Reading Questions

Optional reading

- Ingham The nature of money.pdf

Power Point

SESSION 5: Promise, Value and Debt - Part 1

Required reading

- Nietzsche On the Genealogy of Morality.pdf
- Graeber Debt.pdf
- Reading Questions

Optional reading

Graeber On Nietzsche.pdf

Georg Simmel, Philosophy of Money

Power Point

PM Session 4 FS 2026.pptx

SESSION 6: Promise, Value and Debt - Part 2

Required reading

Lazaratto American Univerity. A Model of the Debt of Society.pdf

Goodchild Debt and Credit.pdf

Reading Questions-7

Optional reading

Nozick, Entitlement Theory, Anarcy, State and Utopia.pdf

Goodchild On the Origins of Modern Debt and Value.pdf

Wortham Deconstruction and Monetary criticism.pdf

Power Point

PM Session 6 FS 2026.pptx

SESSION 7: Gift and Exchange

Mauss The Gift (1-23).pdf

Gift, Gift Mauss.pdf

Reading Questions

Optional reading

Benveniste Gift and Exchange.pdf

Mary Douglas "No free gifts" (ix-xxiii).pdf

Power Point

PM Session 7 FS 2026.pptx

Session 8: Money, capitalism and power

Required reading

Smith, On the Origins of Money.pdf

Marx The Power of Money.pdf

Lazzarato Money and Power.pdf

Reading Questions

Optional reading

Benjamin Capitalism as Religion.pdf

øversveen (2021) Capitalism and alienation.pdf

Wendling Alienation.pdf

Schmitt, Marx's Concept of Alienation.pdf

Petrovic Marx's Theory of Alienation (1963).pdf

Christ Concept of alienation in the early works of Marx.pdf

Foucault Lectures on the Will to Know.pdf

Power Point

PM Session 8 FS 2026.pptx

SESSION 9: money and nature (ecology)

Required reading

- Bjerg Balance of Nature.pdf
- Reading Questions

Optional reading

- Bjerg Need to Grow.pdf
- Drupp et al. Environmental Economics.pdf

Power Point

- PM Session 9 FS 2026.pptx

SESSION 10: Money, Care and Feminist Economy

Required reading

- Silvia Federici Construction of Domestic Work.pdf
- Silvia Federici Gender and Reproduction.pdf
- Cuillerai, Money, Women, and Philosophy.pdf
- Reading Questions

Optional reading

- Irigaray Women on the Market.pdf
- Harcourt and Bauhardt Conversations on care.pdf

Power Point

- PM Session 10 FS 2026.pptx

SESSION 11: Beyond Money? Love

Required reading

- (pp. 175-191))Kierkegaard Our Duty to Remain in Love's Debt to One Another.pdf
- Kierkegaard Mercifulness.pdf
- Reading Questions

Optional reading

- Burggraeve Levinas on Money.pdf

Power Point

- PM Session 11 FS 2026.pptx

Final paper

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