

Econ 101: Enlightenment, Fall 2024
Northwestern University, 2024 Fall, Tue/Thu 11:00 am - 12:20 pm; Annenberg G29
Prof. Scott Ogawa (sogawa@gmail.com)

Description

We will read Steven Pinker's *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* and use it to discuss the sources and ramifications of Progress, broadly defined. Focus will nevertheless be placed on *economic* progress, especially in recent centuries. We will also read parts of Jonathan Haidt's *The Righteous Mind* and use it to discuss political polarization and open discourse on college campuses. Additional readings, topics, and discussion will be based on student interests and input.

Expectations

Class attendance is required and active participation is expected. Throughout the quarter you will be given reading assignments. Please complete these before class, and come willing and able to contribute to a discussion. If you cannot meet any of these expectations then please send me an email in advance.

Readings, Quizzes, and Reflections

A typical class will start with a short reading quiz and chance for brief writing reflection. We will then discuss topics as they come up. By midnight prior to class: Every student is expected to do the reading and complete a short online assignment (generate reading-quiz questions and discussion questions).

Also, on some Tuesdays there will be a very short writing assignment due. This will be evaluated entirely on content and not on writing quality (i.e. typos are great!). The topic will be announced by the Thursday beforehand, and my genuine hope is that you all will help generate ideas for topics.

Final Paper

There will be a short (likely 3-5 pages) *optional* final paper due during finals week (**when our scheduled final exam time concludes [Dec 10] -- though submit earlier if possible**). It will be on a topic of your choosing. To get an A in the class you must submit a paper with an original and interesting idea that relates to any topic that comes up during the quarter.

Office Hours

There are no official office hours for this class but my door is always open: Just send me an email to set up a time to meet. Also, we will have at least two scheduled meetings during the quarter (one with regard to winter classes, and one with regard to potential final papers).

Reading

In addition to *Enlightenment Now* and *The Righteous Mind*, we may read individual chapters from the following books:

- *The Beginning of Infinity*, David Deutsch
- *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman
- Other articles and short readings that will be distributed.

Evaluation

- Class participation, including attendance (15%)
- Quizzes and (some) in-class writing assignments (60%)
- Short at-home writing assignments and/or informal in-class writing assignments (5%)
- Final paper (up to 20%)

This course follows the [Northwestern University Syllabus Standards](#). Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with this information.