Economics 111
The History of Neoclassical Economic Ideas
Winter 1990
Philip Mirowski

The following required texts should be available at the Tufts Bookstore:
Philip Mirowski, More Heat Than Light
Mary Douglas, How Institutions Think
Leon Walras, Elements of Pure Economics
W.S. Jevons, Theory of Political Economy
E.R. Weintraub, General Equilibrium Analysis
P. Mirowski, ed., The Reconstruction of Economic Theory

The following books are also available:
P. Harman, Energy, Force and Matter
Marjorie Turner, Joan Robinson and the Americans

The ideal student in this course would have previously had EC06 and EC09; but since the intersection of these sets is nearly empty, I would at least hope that all students would have some previous familiarity with neoclassical microeconomics.

The requirements in this class will be an in-class midterm and a take-home final exam, to be explained in class. The readings marked with an 'O' can be found on reserve in Wessell.

I. What Could Be Interesting About the History of Orthodox Economics?

A) The Standard Training of Economists

B) How Economists Think: the Durkheim/Mauss/Douglas thesis
Mary Douglas, How Institutions Think, entire book
Mirowski, Introduction, Reconstruction
Mirowski, More Heat, chaps. 1-3
J. Schumpeter, History of Economic Analysis, chaps 3, 4

II. Some Brief Background in Classical/ Marxian Value Theory

A) Value as Embodied Substance
Mirowski, More Heat, chap.4
B) The Reaction: the Denial of Value
@Samuel Bailey, Critical Dissertation on Value, chaps 1&6
@William Thornton, On Labour, Book II, chap. 1

III. The Origins of Neoclassical Economics: An Irresistable Field of Force

A) The Physics of Field Theory
Mirowski, More Heat, chap. 2 (again)
Harman, Energy, Force and Matter (read this book if you have absolutely no background in physics)

B) The Early Precursors: Bentham, Canard, Cournot, Gossen
Mirowski, More Heat, chap. 5. pp. 202-217
@Cournot, Researches into the Mathematical Principles of the Theory of Wealth, pp. 1-17, 44-66, 90-116
@H. Gossen, Laws of Human Relations, pp. 3-56

C) The First Generation of Neoclassical Economic Theory
Mirowski, More Heat, chap. 5.
Jevons, Theory of Political Economy
Walras, Elements of Pure Economics
@Walras, "Economics and Mechanics" translated with commentary by Mirowski & Cook, in W. Samuels, ed., Economics as Discourse
@Irving Fisher, Mathematical Invesigtgations in the Theory of Value and Price, pp. 11-26, 85-89, 101-119

D) How Do the Austrians Fit In?
Mirowski, More Heat, pp. 259-261
@Streissler, "To What Extent Was the Austrian School Marginalist?" in Coats et al, The Marginalist Revolution, pp. 160-175

IV. Some Problems in Social Physics

A) The Eight Different Neoclassical Theories of Production
Mirowski, More Heat, chap. 6
@Vilfredo Pareto, Manual of Political Economy, pp. 118-162

B) There are no such things as "engineering production functions"
@Hollis Chenery, "Process and Production Functions From Engineering Data" in W. Leontief, ed., Studies in the Structure of the American Economy

C) Marshall’s Role in co-opting "Supply & Demand"
Mirowski, More Heat, pp. 262-265, 298-303
@Alfred Marshall, Principles 8th ed., pp. 124-137, 323-380, 455-476, 781-784, 838-858
D) Problems of thinking about time
R. Bausor, "Time and Equilibrium" in Mirowski, ed., The Reconstruction of Economic Theory

V. The Second Neoclassical Revolution

A) The Rise to Dominance of Walrasian General Equilibrium
Weintraub, General Equilibrium Analysis, chaps. 1-6
Mirowski, More Heat, chap. 7 & 8
@Mirowski, "The How, the When and the Why of Mathematics in Economics"

B) The Role of Mathematics in Economic Discourse
Mirowski, "Mathematical Formalism and Economic Explanation", in Reconstruction of Economic Theory, pp. 179-240
@Paul Samuelson, "Economic Theory and Mathematics"
Weintraub, General Equilibrium Analysis, chap.11

C) Problems in Neoclassical Empiricism
@Claude Menard, "Three Forms of Resistance to Statistics"
History of Political Economy, 1980, pp.524-554

D) The Meaning of the Firm and of Property Rights
Ellerman, "Property and Appropriation Theory" in The Reconstruction of Economic Theory

E) The Cambridge Capital Controversies
M. Turner, Joan Robinson and the Americans
@Jan Kregel, The Theory of Capital

F) The Missing Dynamics
@Mirowski, "The Rise and Fall of the Equilibrium Concept", Recherches Economiques de Louvain
@Roy Weintraub, draft chapters of forthcoming book