# Money, Markets, and Morals

**Course Instructor**: Jordan Kokot

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**Instructor Office:** Rabb 311

**Office Hours**: M/W/T 12:15 – 1:15 PM

**TF : TBD**

**TF Office :** TBD

**TF Office Hours** : TBD

**Course Dates**: Aug. 31 – Dec. 9

**Course Location:** Olin-Sang 212

**Course Time:** M/W/TH 1:20 – 2:10

## Course Description

What should be the role of money and markets in our society? Are there some things that money should not be able to buy? Should people be permitted to buy sex, votes, babies, citizenship, or college admission? What about buying and selling the right to pollute, procreate, immigrate, discriminate, or to hunt endangered species? Should we use markets to govern health care, education, privacy, or criminal law? How do economic incentives change our moral calculus on both personal and political levels?

The course will consider what moral limits, if any, the law should impose on market exchanges. It will also explore the moral nature of markets themselves while drawing attention to critical ethical assumptions at the intersection of money, race, gender, and technology. Drawing upon classical philosophical works and contemporary moral and political controversies, we will attempt to determine what goods and social practices should not be up for sale.

## Writing Intensive Course Statement

This is a writing intensive course. As such, it incorporates multiple assignments designed to assist students with developing the necessary skills for writing effectively within the humanities, specifically, philosophy. Students will engage different forms of writing — short reflective responses, annotated bibliographies, extended abstracts, close readings, and research papers — and will have opportunities to workshop, revise, and receive feedback on their work throughout the semester. One of the aims of the course is to investigate writing as a mode of learning.

## Course Outline

This course is designed to introduce you to the moral questions generated by the intersection of markets with public and social life. A core aim of this class is to problematize the often-tacit assumption that market logics and market morality [should] dominate both private and public decision making. Likewise, the class will draw attention to the hidden market-oriented assumptions in daily life, and the way that money subtly reconfigures many of our core values.

This course will focus on three core questions. In our first unit (**Market Logics & Market Morality**)we will attempt to articulate the specific “logics” involved in market-oriented normativity (morality) by exploring supply and demand, price gouging, ticket scalping, and other related practical questions. We will also introduce our first major moral framework: utilitarianism.

In our second unit (**Consent, Bodies, & Dignity**), we will wrestle with topics of consent, autonomy, and dignity, primarily through a discussion of our bodies and how they are monetized. In this unit, we will take on organ markets, “hard jobs” (e.g., military service, sex work, etc.), commercial surrogacy, death pools, and clerk insurance. We will also introduce our second major moral framework, Kant’s deontology.

In our third and final unit (**Economics, Politics, & the Social World**), we will broaden our conversation into the domain of the large scale social and political consequences of market oriented normativity. In addition to discussing Aristotle and Virtue, we will also discuss citizenship, employment discrimination, environmental protection/climate change, and how certain technosocial issues relate to the market logics of surveillance capitalism.

Along the way, we will work to develop standards of good argumentation and dialogue, practice careful reading, and try our hands at philosophical writing. Our goal is to develop a small community of curious and supportive minds who can help each other grow as learners, writers, and thinkers. In leaving this class, you should feel better prepared to engage with your peers about some of the most difficult questions, not just of our time, but of all times.

In addition to the assigned readings, your learning will be scaffolded by a series of short exercises and assignments designed to help you develop careful reading skills, ask powerful questions, and practice moral and philosophical reasoning. These exercises will be assigned on a roughly daily basis. You will also be asked at to “take point” for one of our discussions this semester on a topic and article of your choosing. You will be responsible for leading your classmates through a guided discussion, which may involve some additional reading and preparation. Finally, your main assignment for the semester will be to develop a research project of your own on one of the topics of the class. Starting in unit two, you will be asked to submit a series of preparatory documents (including an annotated bibliography and a research proposal) in preparation to either write a mid-length (~10-12 page) paper. These projects may be collaborative, though the final product will be your responsibility.

This class is only an introduction. Every topic we touch on in this course is the subject of its own dedicated field of inquiry with an expansive existing literature! It is my hope that this class will be a doorway for further and deeper thinking for all of you.

## Course Objectives

You will develop your abilities to:

* craft responsible, considered, and well-structured arguments
* express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas.
* gain competence in the landscape of academic ethics, broadly construed
* grow as a thinker, learner, reader, and communicator.

## Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

This course is a seminar. Though there will be ocasional lectures, there will also be regular class discussions. I firmly believe that learning about philosophy involves both a change in the way we think and a strong conversational component. We learn from each other, not in isolation.

## Books and Other Course Materials

All course materials will be available through the class Perusall site. You should refer to the reading schedule, which will be updated periodically, for weekly readings and assignments.

All readings and videos will be made available on the class Perusall site. However, if you prefer physical copies, we will be significant portions of Michael Sandel’s *What Money Can’t Buy*, and *The Tyranny of Merit*, as well as Zoshana Zuboff’s *Surveillance Capitalism* (available on Amazon).

**Additional Resources:** Finding reliable information about philosophy online can be tricky. I highly recommend the following sites:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/>

## Assignments and Grading Criteria

To make the most out of this class for you and your classmates, you will do a good deal of reading and writing, and you will engage in a variety of class activities. Specific course requirements are to:

* Regularly attend and participate in classroom discussions and activities
* “Take Point” for one discussion this semester with a peer on the topic of your choosing.
* Participate Reading Check-ins, Discussion Questions, Moral Dilemmas, and Perusall annotations (roughly 1-2 per week).
* Complete a final term paper, including a research proposal as a midterm. I am open to creative final proposals as well.

## Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and Participation 10%

Weekly Exercises/Assignments 30%

Midterm Research Proposal 20%

Final Project 40%

## Participation and Attendance

Since this course involves a regular discussion component, your attendance and active participation are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates’ learning. Whenever possible, absences should be discussed with me or your TF prior to class time and makeup work may be assigned. That said, you are allowed three absences, no questions asked. Unexcused absences beyond three will incur a 10% penalty on your participation grade.

In order to participate appropriately, you will be expected to prepare for class by reading all of the assigned texts and thinking critically about their content. There should never be a situation where don’t have at least something important to say about a text in class.

Participation means regular verbal engagement with the course material, in lecture, section, or in office hours. For most of you, this will mean paying attention in class and contributing to the conversation on a semi-regular basis. I know that this can be a hurdle for some students, but it is important that you try to develop public speaking skills as well as you are able. You may supplement class participation with regular office visits. Bare attendance will earn you a D in this category. Attendance and participation are worth 15% of your grade.

## Office Hours

Please refer to the top of this document for my office hours and location. Your TF will also be available for office hours. Also note that office hour participation counts towards your general participation grade and can be a great way to supplement your participation if you find speaking in class challenging.

## Assignments and Exercises

Apart from reading check-ins, assignments will be submitted and returned through Latte. Unless otherwise noted, the assumed submission time is at the BEGINNING of the class period on the day that the assignment is due. There will roughly eight reflection assignments over the course of the semester, of which you will be able to skip one. Most assignments (apart from the exams) will be graded on a four-point scale (check, check plus, check minus, zero).

Reading check-ins will take place DURING CLASS and will be completed either on Perusall or on paper handed into your TF. These are graded on “good faith completion,” and are either pass fail.

## Late and Missed Assignments

Unless you make other arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments will be penalized by one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to participate fully in the class.

## Technology Policy

Computers, tablets, and similar devices will be generally permitted in this class. There will be a “zero tolerance” policy for anyone who abuses this privilege. If you are caught misusing technology in this class (checking social media, for example), you will no longer be able to use your device at all in the classroom. For your own sake and for the sake of your classmates, please use your technology responsibly.

## Academic Integrity

In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in the university’s Academic Conduct Code. All students are subject to the code, which can be read online:

<https://www.brandeis.edu/student-rights-community-standards/academic-integrity/index.html>

## Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns

This course aims to be an inclusive learning community that supports students of all gender expressions and identities. While class rosters are provided to instructors with students’ legal names, please let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name than the one listed on the university roster. You are also invited to tell me and your TF early in the semester which set of pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs, etc.) you feel best fits your identity. My pronouns are he/him/his. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

## Student Accessibility Support

I assume that all of us learn in different ways. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for accommodations that will satisfy both your learning needs and the requirements of the course.  Whether or not you have a documented accessibility need, Brandeis provides many support services that are available to all students. Here is their website: <https://www.brandeis.edu/academic-services/accessibility/index.html>

The Accessibility Support Office is responsible for assisting all students. If you have a disability that changes your learning condition your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical, emotional, or mental), you are encouraged to register with this office. The Accessibility Support Office will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, or what constitutes a disability, I invite you to speak with me or to the Accessibility Support Office.

## Student Mental and Emotional Health

I recognize that being a college student can be an extraordinarily difficult and transformational experience, even in the best of times. Unfortunately, even before the COVID crisis, many students around the world were suffering from increased mental and emotional stresses, a pronounced sense of isolation and loneliness, and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and other serious mental health concerns. This situation has only been made worse in the last several years by the pandemic.

While there are limits on what I can do to help, I want aid in your learning in any way possible. Please reach out to me if you are struggling with course material, workload, or other internal or external pressures that are making it difficult to participate fully in this course. Communication is key—so long as you stay in touch with me, we can almost always work something out to help you thrive in this course and beyond.

You don’t need to wait for a crisis to seek counseling. If you would like someone to talk to, please reach out to Brandeis Counseling Center here: <https://www.brandeis.edu/counseling/> Therapy can be helpful for just about everyone! If you do find yourself or one of your peers in crisis, their emergency consultation number is 781-736-3730 and their crisis number is 781-736-3333.