**Progress and Poverty – a fundamentals course**

Fall 2018

6:30 to 8:00 pm – Wednesday nights (not necessarily every Wednesday night; see schedule)

Begins on September 19 – ends on November 14, 2018

Course presentation / paper encouraged

Classroom – Henry George School of Social Science

149 E 38th Street

New York, NY 10011

**Instructors**

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**Required text**

**George**, Henry. 2017 (image of 1898 memorial issue; original publication in 1879). ***Progress and Poverty****: An inquiry into the cause of industrial depressions of the increase of want with increase of wealth…The Remedy*; Project Gutenberg, released August 9; 1898 publisher: Doubleday and McClure, NYC. Unabridged. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/55308/55308-0.txt>

**Supplemental text:**

**George**, Henry. 1883. ***Social Problems***, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, New York (1996).

<http://schalkenbach.org/library/henry-george/social-problems/spcont.html>

**Progress and Poverty– Fall 2018**

**Multiple Instructors**

# **Course Syllabus**

**Course Overview**

The introduction to this 1898 memorial edition (issued one year after his passing) had the following to say about Progress and Poverty. I insert this here to underscore that the instructors will not “talk around” the words Henry George used, but rather use his actual words to define ideas, words, and relationships he created and / or (to which) he gave new meanings.

*The inquiry now rises to a wider field, and recommences from another starting point. For not only do the hopes which have been raised* (by Progress and Poverty) *come into collision with the widespread idea that social progress is possible only by slow race improvement, but the conclusions we have arrived at assert certain laws which, if they are really natural laws, must be manifest in universal history. As a final test, it therefore becomes necessary to work out the* ***law of human progress****, for certain great facts which force themselves on our attention, as soon as we begin to consider this subject, seem utterly inconsistent with what is now the current theory. This inquiry shows that differences in civilization are not due to differences in individuals, but rather to differences in social organization; that progress, always kindled by association, always passes into retrogression as inequality is developed; and that even now, in modern civilization, the causes which have destroyed all previous civilizations are beginning to manifest themselves, and that mere political democracy is running its course toward anarchy and despotism. But it also identifies the* ***law of social life*** *with the great moral law of justice, and, proving previous conclusions, shows how retrogression may be prevented and a grander advance begun.*

Consider this: 140 years ago, a social movement began by George, whose remedy to many social wrongs was to end the evil theft of socialized ground rent by landowners (yes, we all know they collect it) instead of distributing that rent (to further those services that caused the ground rents to rise in the first place) for the benefit of those who created it (us; from the poor, working class, and capitalist). This was NOT a socialism against capitalist bad guys, but a progressive move to single out the rentier interests masquerading as capitalists. Seven score later, after lots of hand waving and people trying to hide this theft with a faulty “science” of economics, we still face the same problems. What do we really know about this book that aroused the passions of so many, working people, diplomats, and intellectuals? Maybe George did not err, but rather, he got too close to succeeding on establishing his remedy, so his ideas had to be silenced?

**Teaching Methodology**

The course consists of a combination of lectures, discussion, assignments, and a course presentation or paper. As there is no assignment of grades, students may take away a simple analysis of the issues addressed or a more profound analysis that perplexes even those honored as favored intellectuals.

**Learning Objectives**

Students who complete this course should be able to explain these ideas:

1. The relation between wages and interest is determined by the average power of increase that attaches to capital from its use in reproductive mode. As rent arises, interest will fall as wages fall, or will be determined by the margin of cultivation (page 203);
2. Capital is but a form of labor … (page 203)
3. Wages not drawn from capital (page 50)
4. Profits mistaken for interest (page 195)
5. Functions of capital (page 80)
6. Infrastructure services as necessary social adjustments (pages 139, 190, 194)

**Student’s Course Presentation / Paper**

Each student is encouraged to present and / or write a five-page paper on any of the five learning objectives listed above, or other issues in the Progress and Poverty text or Social Problems text. Also, a 5 to 10 minute presentation on the last day of class.

##### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

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| **Week No.** | **TOPICS, Reading assignments, HOMEWORK** |
| 1  9/19/18 | Course overview. ***All reading assignments from Progress and Poverty***. Introductory (The Problem); Book VII, Chapter 5 (Of Property in Land in U.S.); Book I, Chapters 1, 2 (Insufficiency of current doctrine / meaning of terms).  *Readings for Week 2:* Book I, Chapters 3, 4, 5 (Labor produced by labor / maintenance of laborers / functions of capital); pages 50-88 (39 pg total) |
| 2  9/26/18  (skip a week) | Discuss reading assignment, listed above.  ***Student selects the topic for course paper.***  *Readings for Week 3:* Book II, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 (Malthusian theory / Fact inferences / Analogy inferences / Disproof of Malthus); pages 91-150 (60 pg total) |
| 3\*  10/10/18  (skip a week) | Discuss reading assignment, listed above.  *Readings for Week 4:* Book III, Chapters 1, 2, 3 (Law of distribution-necessary relation of law of rent / Interest and cause of interest); pages 153-188 (35 pg total) |
| 4\*\*  10/24/18 | Discuss reading assignment, listed above.  *Readings for Week 5:* Book III, Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (Spurious capital-profits mistaken for interest / Law of interest / Law of wages / Correlation-co-ordination of laws / Statics of the problem); pages 189-224 (39 pg total) |
| 5  10/31/18  (skip a week) | Discuss reading assignment, listed above.  *Readings for Week 6:* Book IV, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 (Dynamics of problem / Population increase on distribution of wealth / Arts improvement on distribution of wealth / Expectation raised by material progress); pages 227-260 (33 pg total) |
| 6\*\*\*  11/14/18 | Discuss reading assignment, listed above.  Student presentations at end of class; 5 – 10 minutes each. |

\* Steve Sklar

\*\* Instructor: Allen Smith

\*\*\* Instructor Steven Taft