

**PE 100 - Spring 2021**  
**Second Response Paper Assignment (20% of course grade)**

**Main instructions:**

1. Write a 1,400-2,000 word-long (~6-8 pages, double spaced) paper on **one of the three prompts shared below**.
2. Submit it on bCourses by 11:59 pm, Tuesday, April 13 (the assignment will accept either a Word doc or a pdf).
3. Include the word count, along with the following sentence, at the end of your essay: "I, **\*Your Name\***, understand that submitting work that isn't my own may result in failure of this midterm assignment and this course."

**Pointers on what we will look for as we grade (updated from last time):**

- We will look for evidence of close and substantial engagement with the texts.
- An excellent essay will be one that demonstrates mastery and understanding of the texts (along with their historical contexts), evidence of moving beyond the lecture powerpoints, a clear and well-substantiated argument, and clean organization.
- An excellent essay will also be nuanced and will compare/analyze the texts: where necessary, it will talk about/explain an author's conflicting ideas on a topic; it will discuss how the authors might respond to one another's positions, drawing out critical points of agreement and disagreement.
- We will look for your response to the prompt itself and we will look for demonstrations of your familiarity with the texts.

**Three prompts (choose ONLY ONE of these three):**

1. Please read [this recent article](#) from *The Guardian* on the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s recent push for governments to raise taxes on higher income earners and corporations to reduce wealth inequality:

Income and wealth inequality in many countries across the world--including the United States--has grown substantially over the past several decades, with the Covid 19 pandemic accelerating the trend, threatening the economic security of low- and middle-income wage earners. According to [Oxfam](#), billionaires now have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60 percent of the planet's population.

As the global middle class, not to mention the poor, struggles to meet basic needs in many countries, financial institutions like the IMF have

amplified calls on governments to implement progressive taxation reforms to redistribute some of the massive amounts of capital now concentrated in very few hands. They argue that such stark inequality threatens global and national security and that governments have an obligation to provide for the general welfare of their citizens.

***Drawing upon the theories of political economy that we encountered in Hegel, Marx, List, and Weber, consider how each of these authors would hypothetically interpret or frame the global phenomenon of wealth inequality and whether and to what extent they would agree with the IMF's position on the role of the nation-state to respond.***

2. During this past year of the pandemic, we have been exposed to the fault lines of our healthcare system, and yet, at the same time, scientists continue to make major advancements in biotechnology. New technologies like this [one](#) or this [one](#) being developed at Berkeley offer promises of more efficient ways of tracing the circulation of viruses and better biomedical surveillance.

***What light can political economy shed on this paradox of innovative thinking, on the one hand, and persistent problems of meeting people's needs, on the other? How do economic and political challenges get in the way of addressing people's needs? What is the role of the state? This paradox is not unlike those brought on by industrialization in the 19th century, which created the context for our most recent PE 100 thinkers. Hypothetically, how might Hegel, Marx, List and Weber each differently discuss and understand the challenge of bringing technological innovations/solutions to market and/or society?***

3. The humanitarian group [CARE recently reported](#) that as many as 890 million people worldwide, the majority of them in low and middle-income countries, suffer from chronic malnutrition. While [many of these very individuals work in food](#) production, 17% of the world's food ends up in the trash. Hunger and waste on this scale are not solely to be explained by droughts and bad harvests (crises of supply) but are arguably issues of political economy on a national and global scale. Drawing on the theories of political economy that we have encountered in Hegel, Marx, List, and Weber provide: 1) an account of how these thinkers would explain a problem such this; and 2) an account of what they think is required for a robust system of political economy that fulfills its fundamental purpose – the harnessing of society's productive forces such that each individual is supplied with the goods that they need both for their basic survival and the improvement of their lives.

### More writing pointers:

1. Use specific examples/evidence drawn from the readings to substantiate the points you are making in your essay.
2. When citing the course readings, use this simple in-text format: (Marx, *German Ideology*: 153; or, List: 99). No *Works Cited* or *Bibliography* required at the end.
3. Be prudent in your use of quotations. Where possible, paraphrase and cite as above. Keep any quotes you use short (no more than 1-2 sentences), applying them in a targeted manner to back-up your assertions. In other words, it is best to use quotes to emphasize your own logic, rather than to take a step for you in the logic of your essay.
4. Please do not handle your lecture/section notes as though they are an actual reading. After all, your notes are a version (your version) of what was shared during lecture and section. It is always safer to cite directly from the readings themselves. Save any references to your class notes for (i) those occasions when the lecture covered material not in the reading, and (ii) when you feel reasonably certain your lecture/section notes are reliable. Please use the following format for lecture/section note citing: (Class Notes, PE 100: 3/30/21).
5. You're free to discuss your prompt with classmates. **Your final written responses, however, should be written on your own and without input from others.** Nor should you borrow phrases or chunks of text from online sources and other motley sources not assigned for this course. Both these would count as plagiarism and we would tackle any instance of it with the seriousness that charge requires.