John Locke has often been called America’s philosopher. That honor might more deservedly go to Adam Smith. Although Smith is rightly regarded as one of the founder’s of the modern science of economics, his breadth of vision was no less comprehensive than that of Locke or any other major philosopher. Smith’s philosophy deals more directly than Locke does with the operation of our most important institutions, and he arguably has more to teach us about the issues we face today.

A careful study of Smith’s major works is particularly appropriate at George Mason. At this school, some assume too easily that “law and economics” provides the best way to understand law and legal policy, while others are too quick to regard this approach as repulsive or overly abstract. Smith had to argue for the relevance of economics to law, and the depth of his analysis prevented him from falling into the simplistic assumptions that one encounters from time to time both among modern practitioners of law and economics and among their critics.

Each week, everyone will email me a short paper about the readings for the coming week. The first paper will be due on Wednesday, January 6 by 5:00 p.m.; in subsequent weeks, the paper will be due on Monday by 5:00 p.m. These required papers can be as short as a page or two and will not be graded, though well-done papers will count positively toward the 25% class participation component of the grade for the course. The principal purpose of the weekly papers is to help you get started in thinking about the readings for that week’s classes. They can be a summary of the reading assignment, or brief reflections on some puzzle or difficulty in the reading, or anything else that you find useful in preparing for class.

The seminar paper will constitute 75% of the grade for the course. Your paper may take on almost any topic related to the readings, but I encourage you to discuss your proposed topic with me before you get too far along with it.
We will use the following editions, which are the ones you must read and bring to class:


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**Reading Assignments**

**January 7**  

**Week of January 11**  

**Week of January 18**  

**Week of January 25**  
*Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Parts IV-VI, pp. 179-264

**Week of February 1**  

**Week of February 8**  
*Lectures on Jurisprudence* (1766 Report), pp. 397-485

**Week of February 15**  
*Lectures on Jurisprudence* (1766 Report), pp. 486-554

**Week of February 22**  
*Wealth of Nations*, Introduction and Book I, pp. 10-104

**Week of February 29**  
*Wealth of Nations*, Book I, pp. 105-95, 260-67

**Week of March 7**  
Spring Break

**Week of March 14**  
*Wealth of Nations*, Book II, pp. 276-375

**Week of March 21**  

**Week of March 28**  
*Wealth of Nations*, Book IV, pp. 556-662, 686-688

**Week of April 4**  
*Wealth of Nations*, Book V, pp. 689-731, 758-816
Week of April 11  Wealth of Nations, Book V, pp. 817-906
April 18  Wealth of Nations, Book V, pp. 907-47