

Fachbereich Sozialwissenschaften  
Institut für Soziologie, SOCIUM Forschungszentrum Ungleichheit und  
Sozialpolitik



Dr. Till Hilmar  
Mail: [till.hilmar@uni-bremen.de](mailto:till.hilmar@uni-bremen.de)  
UNICOM-Gebäude 9 (Raum 9.1160)  
Mary-Somerville-Straße 9  
28359 Bremen

## **Economies on life support: The Covid-19 pandemic from a moral economy perspective**

08-29-GS-12

**Wednesday, 12:00 - 14:00, UNICOM 7.4680 (SOCIUM - Mary-Somerville-Str. 7)**

Instructor: Dr. Till Hilmar, [till.hilmar@uni-bremen.de](mailto:till.hilmar@uni-bremen.de)

Office hours: Tuesday, 15.30-17.00, UNICOM 9 (9.1160), or via Zoom (please sign up via studIP).

### **Description**

This seminar is organized around a guiding question: How do societies around the world respond to the economic ramifications of the coronavirus shock? To interrogate the various facets of this problem, we draw on the concept of “moral economy”, a line of theory and empirical analysis elaborated in diverse disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, economic history, and social history that is concerned with how ordinary people invoke moral norms and social commitments to reason about fairness and justice in welfare societies and, by doing so, make specific claims on the state. We explore how the pandemic lays bare the structural inequalities of capitalist societies around globe and how moral economic thinking can provide the conceptual tools to study patterns of popular meaning-making and strategies of action in this context. The seminar fosters students' expertise and skills in research areas such as inequality and welfare states, economic sociology, the sociology of work, and social movement studies.

### **Credits and grading**

Credits in this course are attained via a “portfolio” model: Students are required to write a final paper and/or to give a brief presentation in class on a chosen date.

Students can choose to obtain 3 or 6 CP in this course.

3 CP: short presentation in class

6 CP: final paper (10-12 pages) and short presentation in class

Please choose a date for your presentation and enter it on StudIP -> via the “wiki” header by Wednesday, May 4th, at the latest.

### **Reading material and preparing a presentation**

The readings will be made available on StudIP. Each week, there is one primary text (required reading) and a number of recommended readings. The recommended readings serve as a useful input for students who prepare a presentation on that day (The presentation should not engage with the primary text, but use the recommendations as a point of departure to deepen the session's topic). I strongly encourage students to also read at least one or two of the recommended readings in preparation for each session. The course also features different media sources (such as scientific Podcasts) that serve as an excellent preparation. Students are invited to share their own reading and / or listening suggestions on topics of interest, amending the literature for this seminar on StudIP as we proceed through the semester.

## Seminar Schedule

Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>: **Introduction: Foundations in social and political theory**

Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup>: **What is “moral economy”?**

Edward Palmer Thompson (1971): The moral economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century, in: *Past & Present* 50, p. 76-95, 107-114, 132-136.

### Recommended:

Didier Fassin (2009): Moral Economies Revisited, in: *Annales. Histoire, Science Sociales* 64, p. 1237-1266, [https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E\\_ANNA\\_646\\_1237--moral-economies-revisited.htm](https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_ANNA_646_1237--moral-economies-revisited.htm)

Patrick Sachweh and Till Hilmar (2020): Moral Economy. Moral Forces in Economic Activity, in: Milan Zafirovski (ed.). *A Modern Guide to Economic Sociology*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, p. 166-185

Edward P. Thompson (1963): *The Making of the English Working Class*. Vintage. 9–13, 55–76

Podcast: “Casualties of History” on E.P. Thompson’s *Making of the English Working Class* (Jacobin Magazine, 2020), Preface: <https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/jacobin-radio/casualties-of-history-preface-zrQasbeRh2G/>

Podcast: “Casualties of History” on E.P. Thompson’s *Making of the English Working Class* (Jacobin Magazine, 2020), Chapter 9: The Weavers (after 24:45)

[https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/jacobin-radio/casualties-of-history-eager-8tO\\_lp7CLrq/](https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/jacobin-radio/casualties-of-history-eager-8tO_lp7CLrq/)

Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>: **Morality in social and economic relations**

David Graeber (2012): *Debt. The First 5000 Years*. Melvillehouse Publishing. Chapter 5: “A Brief Treatise on the Moral Grounds of Economic Relations”, 89-126.

### Recommended:

Karl Polanyi (2001) {1944}: *The Great Transformation. The political and economic origins of our time*. Beacon Press. “Societies and Economic Systems”, “The self-regulating market and the fictitious commodities: Land, Labor, and Money”, 45–58, 71–80

Gabriel Abend (2011): Thick Concepts and the Moral Brain, in: *European Journal of Sociology* 52(1), 143–172, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/43282175?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/43282175?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

Viviana Zelizer (1994): *The Social Meaning of Money*. Basic Books, 1–35, 71–99

Andrew Sayer (2005): *The Moral Significance of Class*. Cambridge University Press, 111–138

Steven Hitlin and Sarah K. Harkness (2017): *Unequal Foundations. Inequality, Morality, and Emotions across Cultures*. Oxford University Press, “The difficulty of studying morality across cultures”, 57–68.

Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>: **Justice ideologies in welfare societies and notions of the common good**

Patrick Sachweh (2012): The moral economy of inequality. Popular views on income differentiation, poverty and wealth, in: *Socio-Economic Review* 10, 419-445.

### Recommended:

Taylor Gooby et al. (2019) Moral economies of the welfare state. A qualitative comparative study, in *Acta Sociologica* 62(2), 119-134.

Stefan Liebig and Carsten Sauer (2016): Sociology of Justice, in: Clara Sabbagh and Manfred Schmidt (eds.). *Handbook of Social Justice Theory and Research*, New York: Springer, 37-59.

Thomas Clay Arnold (2001): Rethinking Moral Economy. *American Political Science Review* 95(1), 85–95.

Marion Fourcade and Kieran Healy (2007): Moral Views of Market Society. *Annual Review of Sociology* 33, 285–311

Albert O. Hirschman (1982): Rival Interpretations of Market Society: Civilizing, Destructive or Feeble? *Journal of Economic Literature* 20:1463–1484

Paul Almeida (2019): *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*, Berkeley: University of California Press, Chapters 1-3 (via SUUB Bremen).

### Wednesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>: **Pandemic Inequalities I**

Didier Fassin (2021): The Moral Economy of Life in the Pandemic, in: Didier Fassin and Marion Fourcade (eds), *Pandemic Exposures. Economy and Society in Times of the Coronavirus*, Hau Books, 155-176.

Arenas of inequality (recommended for short student group inputs), recommended resources:

<https://ourworldindata.org/>

<https://www.eui.eu/Research/Library/ResearchGuides/Economics/Crisis>

<https://guides.library.yale.edu/c.php?g=295812&p=7526965>

<https://data.unwomen.org/COVID19>

(Look specifically for data on: health inequality, age inequality, poverty and food insecurity, and gender inequality)

#### Recommended:

Maria Grasso et al. (2021): The Impact of the Coronavirus Crisis on European Societies. What have we learned and where do we go from here? Intro to the Covid-19 volume, in: *European Societies*, OnlineFirst.

Naila Kabeer et al. (2021): Feminist Economic Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic, in: *Feminist Economics*, 27: 1-29.

Lara Maestriperi (2021): The Covid-19 Pandemics. Why Intersectionality Matters, in: *Frontiers in Sociology*, Mar 2021, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2021.642662/full>

### Wednesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>: **Pandemic Inequalities II**

Vahé Nafilian et al. (2021): Ethnic differences in COVID-19 mortality during the first two waves of the Coronavirus Pandemic: a nationwide cohort study of 29 million adults in England, in: *European Journal of Epidemiology*, 36, 605-617.  
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10654-021-00765-1>

Arenas of inequality (recommended for short student group inputs), recommended resources:

<https://covidtracking.com/race>

<https://portal.census.gov/pulse/data/>

(Look specifically for data on: race inequality, small and large businesses)

#### Recommended:

Walter Johnson et al. (2020): Covid-19 and the Color Line, in *Boston Review* May 1st, 2020, <https://bostonreview.net/articles/colin-gordon-walter-johnson-jason-q-purnell-jamala-rogers-covid-19-and-color-line/>

MedienDienst Integration (2021): Are minorities more at risk from Covid-19? <https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/are-minorities-more-at-risk-from-covid-19.html>

Robert Fairlie (2020): Covid-19, Small Business Ownership, and Racial Inequality, NBER Reports December 2020, <https://www.nber.org/reporter/2020number4/covid-19-small-business-owners-and-racial-inequality>

### Wednesday, June 1<sup>st</sup>: **States responding to impending economic disaster**

Adam Tooze (2021): *Shutdown. How Covid shook the world's economy*. "Economy on Life Support" 132-154.

Lena Levinas (2021): Ad Hoc Generosity in Times of COVID, in: Didier Fassin and Marion Fourcade (eds), *Pandemic Exposures. Economy and Society in Times of the Coronavirus*, Hau Books, 59-82

#### Recommended:

Adam Tooze (2021): *Shutdown. How Covid shook the world's economy*. "Introduction" 1-24, "The Toolkit", 155-173.

Sarah Quinn (2021): Gifts, Grifts, and Gambles: The Social Logics of the Small Business administration relief Loan Programs, in: Didier Fassin and Marion Fourcade (eds.), *Pandemic Exposures. Economy and Society in Times of the Coronavirus*, Hau Books, 83-104.

Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>: **The meaning of policy responses: Narrative, strategies of crisis communication and perceptions of state action.**

Guest speaker: Dr. Johanna Kuhlmann, SOCIUM, University of Bremen

Johanna Kuhlmann and Sonja Blum (2021). Narrative Plots for Regulatory, Distributive and redistributive policies, in: *European Policy Analysis*, 7, 276,302.

Recommended:

Omar Ali, Tariq et al. (2021) The moral and political economy of the pandemic in Bangladesh: Weak states and strong societies during Covid-19, in *World Development*, OnlineFirst

Z.M Kirgil, A. Voyer (2022): "Do your part: Stay apart": Collective intentionality and collective (in)action in US governor's COVID-19 press conferences, in: *Poetics*, OnlineFirst.

**\*\* Second part of the seminar: Cases and specific areas of research \*\***

Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>: **Price hikes, taxation, and moral economic responses**

Melike Arslan (2022): Price Gouging During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Questions for Socio-Economic Research, SASE Blog, <https://sase.org/blog/price-gouging-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-questions-for-socio-economic-research/>

Recommended:

Daniel Driscoll (2021): Populism and Carbon Tax Justice. The Yellow Vest Movement in France, in: *Social Problems*, OnlineFirst.

<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2021/09/the-1970s-when-america-had-a-moral-panic-over-inflation.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/11/opinion/folk-economics-monetary-policy.html>

Wednesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>: **"Front line" work and the devaluation of caring economies**

Insa Koch (2021): Guardians of the Welfare State. Universal Credit, Welfare Control and the Moral Economy of Frontline Work in Austerity Britain, in: *Sociology* 55(2), 243-262.

Recommended:

Publications and podcasts of the project "carat - caring all together" at the University of Bremen, <https://www.uni-bremen.de/chancengleichheit/hochschul-und-geschlechterpolitik/carat-caring-all-together>

Nancy Fraser (2016): Contradictions of Capital and Care, in: *New Left Review* 100, 99-117.

Wednesday, June 29<sup>th</sup>: **Health care workers: "moral injury"**

Nancy Folbre, Leila Gautham, and Kristin Smith: Essential Workers and Care Penalties in the United States, in: *Feminist Economics* 27, 173-187.

Recommended:

Faisal Akram (2021): Moral injury and the Covid-19 Pandemic: A philosophical viewpoint, in: *Ethics, Medicine, and Public Health*, 18, 100661.

Moral Matters Podcast: "Introducing Moral Matters", 01.10.2020

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/introducing-moral-matters-l-episode-1/id1529907905?i=1000493362065>

NDR (in German): "Synapsen: Moralische Verletzungen", 08.10.2021 on moral injury, including a list of references and sources to be found here: <https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/info/Synapsen-Moralische-Verletzungen.podcastsynapsen206.html>

### Wednesday, July 6<sup>th</sup>: **Agricultural workers**

Susana Narotzky (2021): Agricultural Day Labor in Spain: The Logics of (Pandemic) Capitalism, in: Didier Fassin and Marion Fourcade (eds), *Pandemic Exposures. Economy and Society in Times of the Coronavirus*, Hau Books, 247-274.

#### Recommended:

Saima Hamid and Mohammad Yaseen Mir (2021): Global Agri-Food Sector. Challenges and Opportunities in Covid-19 Pandemic, in: *Frontiers in Sociology*, OnlineFirst.

Marisa Wilson (2021): COVID-19 and the modern plantation. Debunking the neoliberal moral economy, in: *Cultural Dynamics*, OnlineFirst.

IFAD Podcast series on rural people and the pandemic, [https://www.ifad.org/en/web/latest/-/podcast/coping-with-covid-19-building-farmers-resilience?p\\_l\\_back\\_url=%2Fen%2Fweb%2Flatest%2Fpodcasts](https://www.ifad.org/en/web/latest/-/podcast/coping-with-covid-19-building-farmers-resilience?p_l_back_url=%2Fen%2Fweb%2Flatest%2Fpodcasts)

### Wednesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>: **Small business community, freelancers, artists**

Milica Vukelic et al. (2021). A study of career shocks from the perspective of personal construct psychology. Small business owners in the jaws of the Covid-19 pandemic in Serbia, in: *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, OnlineFirst

#### Recommended:

Maksim Belitski et al. (2021): Economic Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Entrepreneurship and Small Businesses, in: *Small Business Economics*, OnlineFirst

"Culture in Crisis": Impacts of Covid-19 on the cultural sector in the UK and where to go from here, <https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVI/resources/culture-in-crisis-impacts-of-covid-19/>

"Struggles" Podcast on the British Hospitality Industry by the University of Sheffield:

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/news/all-articles/latest-news/podcast-hospitality-workers-pandemic>

### Wednesday, July 20<sup>th</sup>: **Conclusion**