



COURSE DESCRIPTION

2016 Winter Session (2016-2017 Academic Year)

ENGL 491C-003: Literature and Theories of Debt, Gift, and Commons -
Jeffrey Severs

Senior Honors Seminar - Theory

Term 1

T, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

This course will ask questions about value in times of neoliberalism and financial crisis, exploring the intersection of economics, literature, and language. The course will in all likelihood be divided into four main units: 1) Money, finance, neoliberal capitalism; 2) Debt; 3) The gift; 4) The commons. Major sources for our theory/history/essay readings: selections from Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*; Leigh Clare La Berge and Alison Shonkwiler, eds., *Reading Capitalist Realism*; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; David Graeber, *Debt*; Margaret Atwood, *Payback*; Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*; Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*; Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: Counterfeit Money*; Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Studies*; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*; Jonathan Lethem, "The Ecstasy of Influence"; ASAP journal's special issue on Art and the Commons (2016); and possibly materials relating to Occupy, Strike Debt, and Rolling Jubilee. Fiction will likely include some (perhaps not all) of the following: Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis*; Zadie Smith, *NW*; Chang-rae Lee, *On Such a Full Sea*; David Foster Wallace, a few selected short stories. Students will write an explication of a major theory text, lead discussion with group members, make regular substantial contributions to a discussion forum or blog, and construct a final research essay (about 12 pages). All details about the course here are subject to revision.