



**Distinguished Visiting Scholars Program
Graduate Seminar on**

**Insights for Austrian Economics and Classical Liberalism:
A Neo-Aristotelian-Thomistic Approach**

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Introduction

This mini course will explore some basic issues concerning the foundations of economics, the nature of human good, and the justification for the basic, negative natural rights to life, liberty, and property. The connection between a particular version of neo-Aristotelian-Thomistic thought (as advanced by Rasmussen and Den Uyl) and the approach to “Austrian” economics and classical liberalism taken by Murry N. Rothbard will be given special attention.

Session 1 – October 26, 2020 – The Agent-Relative and Individualized Character of Human Good

Can the existence of what is authentically valuable and good for a human being be compatible with the Austrian claim that values are subjective?

Readings

- Den Uyl, D. J. & Rasmussen, D. B. (2016). *The Perfectionist Turn: From Metanorms to Metaethics* (chapters 1 and 6, pp. 33-64; 201-245). Great Britain: Edinburgh University Press. [TPT]
- Rothbard, M. N. (1982). *The Ethics of Liberty* (chapter 26C, pp. 206-214). Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press. [EL]
- Rothbard, M. N. (unpublished). On Mises's Ethical Relativism. [excerpt]. Available at: <https://mises.org/library/misess-ethical-relativism>. [MER]



Session 2 – November 2, 2020 – The Justification of Individual Rights to Life, Liberty, and Property

Can Austrian Economics accept a moralized notion of Liberty?

Readings

- Den Uyl, D. J. & Rasmussen, D. B. (2020). *The Realist Turn: Repositioning Liberalism* (chapters 2-4, pp. 19-129). Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. [TRT]
- Den Uyl, D. J. & Rasmussen, D. B. (2005). *Norms of Liberty: A Perfectionist Basis for Non-Perfectionist Politics* (chapters 4, 5, 11 and 12, pp. 76-107; 265-339). University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press. [NOL]
- Den Uyl, D. J. & Rasmussen, D. B. (2016). *The Perfectionist Turn: From Metanorms to Metaethics* (chapter 2, pp. 89-94). Great Britain: Edinburgh University Press. [TPT]
- Rothbard, M. N. (1982). *Ethics of Liberty* (chapters 1-5 and 26C, pp. 3-28; 206-214). Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press. [EL]

Session 3 – November 9, 2020 – The Entrepreneurial Character of Practical Wisdom

Can an account of practical wisdom deal with the individuality, diversity, and dynamism of human life?

Readings

- Den Uyl, D. J. & Rasmussen, D. B. (2016). *The Perfectionist Turn: From Metanorms to Metaethics* (chapter 8, pp. 284-319). Great Britain: Edinburgh University Press. [TPT]
- Rothbard, M. N. (2009). *Man, Economy, and State: A Treatise on Economic Principles* (chapter 8, pp. 509-556). Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute. [MES]

Session 4 – November 16, 2020 – The Epistemological Status of the So-Called Action Axiom and the Teleological Character of Human Conduct

Is this axiom an *a priori* or *a posteriori*, analytic or synthetic, necessary or contingent truth? What supports the claim that human conduct is purposeful? Why is this discussion important for Austrian economics?

Reading

- Rasmussen, D. B. (2020). Rothbard's Account of the Axiom of Human Action: A Neo-Aristotelian-Thomistic Defense. In D'Amico, D. and Martin, A. (Eds.) Philosophy, Politics, and Austrian Economics [Special Issue]. *Advances in Austrian Economics*, 25: 103-120. [RAA]
- Rothbard, M. N. (1957). In Defense of 'Extreme Apriorism'. *Southern Economic Journal*, 23: 315-20. [DEA]
- Den Uyl, D. J. & Rasmussen, D. B. (2020). *The Realist Turn: Repositioning Liberalism* (chapter 7, pp. 187-237). Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. [TRT]