Economics and Religion: Intersections, Tensions, and Alternatives

International Summer Academy for Pluralist Economics
August 2020

Prof. Dr. Joerg Rieger, Distinguished Professor of Theology, Cal Turner Chair in Wesleyan Studies, Director of the Wendland-Cook Program in Religion and Justice, Graduate Department of Religion and Divinity School, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, USA
j.rieger@vanderbilt.edu
www.joergrieger.com
www.religionandjustice.org

Purpose

Religion and economics have been deeply intertwined throughout history, even though the connections have often been overlooked in modern thought. While the modern definition of religion introduces a strict separation of religion, politics, and economics, repeated economic disasters challenge us to reexamine the connections. Using the example of Christianity, this course will discuss how the structures of dominant economic systems influence religion, exploring what contributions religion might make to economics in turn, and whether relating religion and economics might be able to foster alternative economic and religious expressions.

Outcomes and Goals

- Knowledge of religious engagement of economics, as exemplified by Christian traditions.
- Knowledge of a number of dominant and alternative modes of religion and economics.
- Ability to recognize and analyze intersections between religion and economics.
- Ability to engage alternatives both in religion and economics in critical and constructive fashion.
Sessions and readings

Session 1, August 11
Introduction to the Course and Introductions of Participants

Session 2, August 12
Christian Responses to Capitalism
(Please pick three of the texts below and be prepared to give a brief response in class about what you found most interesting.)

Session 3, August 13
Joerg Rieger, No Rising Tide, chapters 3-4.

Session 4, August 14
Joerg Rieger, No Rising Tide, chapter 5 and conclusion.

Students who are taking this course for credit are required to produce a final paper of 2,500 3,000 words, dealing with a choice of topics addressed in this course. This paper should contain both critical and constructive elements. Critical engagement includes an evaluation of arguments and a set of questions; constructive engagement is an invitation to think in terms of the implications of the material for your own academic study.