

How the World Works - an Introduction

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The simple fact is one can actually get along quite well without knowing how the world works just in the same way that one can get along quite well without actually knowing how gravity works. Even if one doesn't know anything about gravity, one can live a perfectly fine life just as tens of billions of humans have done before us.

Ignorance of the basic principles of how the world operates is not a serious handicap any more than ignorance of the principles of physics is. Then, why bother learning a few basic principles of how the world works? We will learn to appreciate, and take delight in, how magical our world actually is, and why it is the way it is.

There are no prerequisites for attending this course other than the desire to better comprehend how the world works, and of course the ability to read, write and do arithmetic.

## **Course Content**

I am offering this course for the first time, although I have taught most of the several parts in various formal classroom settings. I have never offered an online course. It will be a learning experience for me.

The core motivation for the course is to provide an introduction to how the world works. Introductions are important but can never be comprehensive. In this introduction, we will focus on a few essential principles that will provide the foundation on which one can build a more comprehensive view of the world.

The focus will be mainly economic but not exclusively so. The basic principles of economics are easy to understand but they have to be learned because most of them are counter-intuitive. Our untutored intuition about how the world works is mostly wrong. This course aims to make us less wrong about the world.

## **Course Timing and Structure**

This is a 10-week course which will meet once a week for an hour, starting Friday January 15th. The course requires about three hours of homework per week, for a total time commitment of four hours per week. Homework time will be devoted to reading and/or watching content on the web.

Each hour of online contact will start at 9 PM IST (10:30 AM EST Time) on Fridays over Zoom. The first half of the contact hour will be devoted to review of the homework material, and the second half will be discussions, questions and answers. To get the most out of this course, participation is important.

## **Course Outline**

This is a tentative outline and deviations are likely to occur.

1. The state of the world: Were the good ol' days good? — Why — Is the world wonderful today? Why — How will it be in the future?
2. What is wealth: How is it created — Technology — The relationship between science, engineering and technology — The acceleration of technology
3. Wealth of Nations: Why are some countries rich — Inequality — The distribution of wealth — Markets — Exchange — What is economics?
4. Economic principles: Demand and Supply — Prices — Profits — Public and private goods — Free markets — Production and consumption — Competition — Entrepreneur
5. Economic principles II — Spontaneous order — Specialization — Division of labor knowledge and labor
6. Resources: Natural resources — Will humanity run out of resources — Population — Climate change — Limits to growth
7. Government: What governments do — What governments should do — Politics — Can the government make us rich — Social engineering
8. Freedom: Civic freedom — Political freedom — Economic freedom — Culture
9. Topics: Capitalism, Socialism, Communism — Poverty — Education — Public choice theory
10. Summing up and topics for further study.

At the end of the course, participants would be requested to write a course evaluation which would be useful for improving the course.

## **Course Registration**

To register for the course, email [atanu@atanudey.com](mailto:atanu@atanudey.com) with the following information: Your name, your time zone, and whether you have a college degree or not. I will reply with information on how to join the zoom classes.

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