

PO230 States and Markets: An Introduction to International Political Economy
Seminar Week 12. Classical Feminist Political Economy

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Lecture: What was the content? Does it matter to you?

Adam Smith has his say: “There are no public institutions for the education of women, and there is accordingly nothing useless, absurd, or fantastical in the common course of their education. They are taught what their parents or guardians judge it necessary or useful for them to learn, and they are taught nothing else. Every part of their education tends evidently to some useful purpose; either to improve the natural attractions of their person, or to form their mind to reserve, to modesty, to chastity, or to oeconomy; to render them likely to become mistresses of a family, and to behave properly when they have become such. In every part of her life a woman feels some conveniency or advantage from every part of her education. It seldom happens that a man, in any part of his life, derives any conveniency or advantage from some of the most laborious and troublesome parts of his education)”



WHAT IT WILL SOON COME TO.
Miss Simpson. "PRAY LET ME CARRY YOUR BAG, MR. SMITHEREEN!"

But was Jane Marcet a feminist? What kind of a feminist?

“For the most part, the bulk of Marcet's work is an exposition of Classical doctrines -- the wages fund, the Malthusian theory of population, the Ricardian theory of rent, the Smithian doctrine of productive and unproductive labour, a crude quantity theory of money, and the concepts of absolute and comparative advantage as applied to international trade. Moreover, she certainly held to the Classical view of society, with an essential harmony in the interests of the various social classes, and no tendency at all toward underemployment as anything more than a transient, disequilibrium phenomenon. Also interesting is what is omitted: there is no discussion of what one might call the economics of women's issues (e.g., female participation in the labour force, segregation of women workers, relative pay levels of male and female workers, or questions of household production and decision-making). Nevertheless, it is clear that Jane Marcet certainly believed that women were as capable of rational thinking and decision-making as men.” (In Bodkin 1999, 64-65)



“Martineau’s ideas remain quietly radical”. Discuss.

See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3P1K9jnmjKNNR4bTVDr4KnQy/harriet-martineau-the-quiet-radical>

In the below excerpt from the Rostek reading, how is the nation understood by Martineau? What implications does that have for conceptualising political economy? What kind of space does it open for women in national or international political economy?

FEMALE AUTHORITY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

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Harriet Martineau pursues a similarly ambivalent course when she indirectly explains why women writers may claim authority with regard to economic questions. The preface to her *Illustrations* contains an extended analogy in which the nation and the state – presumably here the domain of men – are compared to two realms of female activity: the family and the household. Martineau refers to “the nation” as “that larger family” (Martineau 1834a, vi) and regrets that England’s “national distresses” prevent her from “go[ing] on to say that civilized states are managed like civilized households, that Political Economy was nearly as well understood by governments as domestic economy is by the heads of families” (Martineau 1834a, viii). These analogies of the household thus provide the female author with a point of entry to the public discourse of political economy. As a woman, she may justly claim expertise in matters of family and household; but if managing these two domains is analogous to managing a state, why should she lack authority to judge on the latter issue?

Classical economists and race:

“In view of the fact that the Classical economists were on the side of racial equality in this altercation, one might have thought it a logical extension to come down on the side of gender equality as well. I have argued above that, logical or not, this was not the case for most of the masculine members of the Classical school.” (In Bodkin 1999, 69). **What do you make of this? Why do you think this was so?**

Further “Alfred Marshall once remarked that Harriet Martineau was really an economic journalist, who concentrated on only one simple point at a time, rather than a true economist.” (In Bodkin 1999, 69).

“Women earn the majority of undergraduate degrees across all subjects in the United States, but in 2016 only 35% of economic majors were women. This is the same percentage as the early 1980s.” **Why do you think this imbalance exists?**

Name female economists or political economists?

Next week presentation:

What are the similarities between Physics and Marginalist economics? (see Mirowski 1984)

Or

In what ways does Marginalism seem very different to the types of economic theory we have looked at so far?



Gertrude. "MY DEAR JESSIE, WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT BICYCLE SUIT FOR?"
Jessie. "WHY, TO WEAR, OF COURSE." Gertrude. "BUT YOU HAVEN'T GOT A BICYCLE!"
Jessie. "NO; BUT I'VE GOT A SEWING MACHINE!"