

**Lifelong Learning Collaborative**  
**Fall, 2025**  
**Corporations and the Neoliberal Paradigm**  
**Introduction and Syllabus**

*“There is an urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life.”*

*Pope Francis paragraph 189 of his 2015 encyclical Laudato Si’ (On Care for Our Common Home.)*

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This course is 20 hours of class time spent in ten Thursday morning sessions starting on September 11<sup>th</sup> and ending on November 6<sup>th</sup> following the usual LLC format of a short 10 – 20 minute presentation by a class member followed by a class discussion.

We will consider why Pope Francis wrote, in 2015, of an urgent need for politics and economics to reevaluate their current roles in the service of a greater good. I hope the course will help us understand the causes of this urgent need to reevaluate our politics and economics. In the last few classes, we will examine and sketch out hesitant proposals from the Right and Left for what such a re-evaluation might look like, although a vision of any completed solution is impossible today.

Every age in history has a dominant idea, a paradigm so deeply inserted into the culture of that age it is taken for granted. This paradigm is all but invisible to those living then. People go about their daily lives with no thought for why things are the way they are, and how they might be different. Such paradigms are always controlled by a privileged minority with a vested interest in preserving the paradigm.

The dominant paradigm of our times, the unspoken influence on almost every action taken and every decision made, is the neoliberal political-economic model. In the last 45 years this model has come to dominate our economics, politics, legislation and law and through these agents almost every other feature of our society. The agent of the neoliberal paradigm is the limited liability corporation with its insistence on the supremacy of shareholder value over all other human values. The privileged minority in this case is those with majority ownership of corporations, those who are a tiny fraction of our population but control almost all the wealth produced by our economy.

The course includes the history of the corporation, the origins of post WW II economic theories and their distortion into this singular insistence on shareholder value, the

transfer of costs from corporation to the public, the distortion of the legitimate roles of taxation and regulation, the flow of corporate money into elections and the executive, legislative and judicial branches of our government, and how the same flow of money into old and new media has changed even what we think about, and how we feel about what we think about, and how we feel about ourselves.

In later classes we will move on to consideration of the ideas of economists and politicians who believe, as Pope Francis did, the current way of organizing our politics and economics is unsustainable.

**Accessing The Readings:** All the material for this course is in a Dropbox Folder accessible at:

[https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/8rgqo8g7qvjsx2cgcf84d/AHgAjAE8u8\\_Xpza8xmWNvIk?rlkey=3tyrxmhyoqvc mugklo596vz5l&st=d3xrxl40&dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/8rgqo8g7qvjsx2cgcf84d/AHgAjAE8u8_Xpza8xmWNvIk?rlkey=3tyrxmhyoqvc mugklo596vz5l&st=d3xrxl40&dl=0)

or use this QR code on your phone to access and download the materials:



This Dropbox folder is titled **LLC Corporations and the Neoliberal Paradigm Course Materials**. Two folders are inside it.

The first is **Class Documents – Syllabus, Schedule and Readings**. This includes a **Syllabus**, an **introduction** to the class - an overview of what we will cover and why - and some pointers on how to use the **Readings**.

The second is folder is the library of **Readings By Date and Class**.

**Readings:** The readings for each class are divided into two groups. The first folder is **Class Readings** and is usually some short articles and maybe a case study or two. These are for everyone to read so they can participate in discussions in class.

The second is **Background** and is to help the presenter for that class prepare a short presentation of the day's topic. Everyone is encouraged to at least peek at this additional material. And for sure, there's no penalty for the presenter or anyone else to bring in other material of his or her choosing so please bring to the class anything you come across that might throw more light on the topic that day.

The readings and class discussion will help us understand the paradigm box we are in and, over time, help us to glimpse different worlds outside that box. In other words, I hope the class will imagine, based on the facts at our disposal now, what's wrong, what a new paradigm might look like, and how to replace the old one.

There's no expectation to all read the Readings, but please do dip into them so we can enjoy informed discussions in class.

**Documentary Films:** The 'Documentaries to Watch' folder lists five relevant documentary films I have watched. I particularly recommend *Wealth Of The Wicked* (money in politics), *Bad Faith (Christian Right)* and *Don't Look Away* (social media harms). All five are listed, along with where to stream them, in this "Documentaries To Watch" folder.

If you have a chance to watch one or more these before the course begins, please do so. They show in detail how today's world was planned 40 years ago and how big money has executed this plan perfectly. These films detail not only how our current situation arose but also how it's affecting ordinary people in some very unpleasant ways.

**Schedule:** The topics for each class are listed in the Class Schedule in this folder. There's a space for the presenter's name beside each class. Three people including me have already volunteered to present a class. I hope everyone else will sign up to present at least one class. Let me know which topic interests you and I will update this schedule as we go along.

**Invitation:** I have invited Senator Sheldon Whitehouse to come and speak to our class. He has spoken and written extensively about the malevolent impact of money in politics. To his credit, he is repeatedly targeted by the editorial page of the Wall Street Journal for doing so. I am waiting to hear back from the scheduler his office. If he can come our class schedule may change a bit. I've left one class TBD to accommodate any changes we need to make.

I hope you will enjoy this class. There's no question the topic is an uncomfortable one

and the effort to understand the full scope of the paradigm we're living in is non-trivial. I think the effort we will make together to better understand our times is worthwhile. After all, the class is an exercise in diagnosis, and a correct diagnosis is the first step on the journey to a solution.

I look forward to our first meeting on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

~~~Jim.