

There is something profoundly wrong in our country when the top one tenth of one percent – not one percent, one tenth of one percent – owns almost as much wealth as the bottom 90%...

- **Bernie Sanders**, 2015 speech, heard in Scene on Radio, Season 7, Episode 1

...to the extent that the premise of capitalism is, we're going to get it lined up so that people pursuing their own profit do also create those other things that we need...when that relationship breaks down, it is incumbent on policy makers to figure out how to restore it.

- **Oren Cass**, Scene on Radio, Season 7, Episode 8

Capitalism has changed multiple times throughout America's history. During the New Deal, the federal government created new laws, programs, and regulations that changed the rules for businesses and workers. Decades later, the neoliberal turn shifted some of those rules and regulations, reshaping capitalism again.

Today, people across the political spectrum are advocating for economic change in America. **In this investigation, you'll examine ideas and proposals from two people seeking to make those changes through existing political institutions: Bernie Sanders** (mentioned in Episodes 1, 7, and 8) **and Oren Cass** (interviewed in Episodes 7 and 11).

Sanders and Cass come from different political traditions and disagree about many aspects of economics and policy. Sanders describes himself as a democratic socialist, while Cass advocates what he calls a new form of conservative economics aimed at "rebuilding American capitalism." Studying them together is not meant to suggest that their economic philosophies or goals are the same. Instead, they provide two contemporary examples of people seeking economic change through American government.

Part	Guiding Questions
Part 1 Understand the Visions	What do Sanders and Cass think should change about the American economy, and why?
Part 2 Examine the Proposals	How do Sanders and Cass propose using law and policy to pursue economic change?
Part 3 Consider Possibilities and Limitations	What do these ideas lead you to think or wonder about the possibilities and limitations of changing capitalism through law and policy?

Part 1 Understand the Visions

What do Sanders and Cass think should change about the American economy, and why?

Explore the sources below to learn about the economic visions of both Sanders and Cass.

Research Questions	Sources
Consider the following questions as you examine sources connected to each person; as you work, record notes and questions. 1. What concerns does Sanders or Cass raise about the way the American economy currently operates? 2. What does he seem to believe an economy should accomplish? For whom? 3. What does he believe should change? What, if anything, does he want to preserve? 4. What role does he believe government should play in shaping the economy? 5. What connections do you see to the Features of Capitalism, including the Legal Framework? After you've examined the sources and considered Sanders' and Cass' visions separately, think about them together. 1. What similarities do you notice in the concerns Sanders and Cass raise? 2. Where do you notice differences in their goals, values, or views of capitalism? 3. What questions do you have about how either person would put his ideas into practice?	Bernie Sanders • Source 1: Meet Bernie from Bernie Sanders • Source 2: "Remarks at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.," delivered by Bernie Sanders on November 19, 2015 ◦ A video of the speech is also available – 20:54-39:50 recommended Oren Cass (via American Compass) • Source 1: About Oren Cass from American Compass • Source 2: "The American Condition" from <i>Rebuilding American Capitalism: A Handbook for Conservative Policymakers</i> by American Compass • Source 3: "Conservative Economics" by American Compass Note: As noted in "About Oren Cass," Cass is the founder and chief economist of American Compass. Although Cass has played a central role in shaping this organization's work, the ideas and proposals published by American Compass are not necessarily Cass' alone.

Part 2 Examine the Proposals

How do Sanders and Cass propose using law and policy to pursue their visions?

To think about how Sanders' and Cass' economic visions might translate into policy, examine policy proposals from Sanders and from American Compass, the organization Cass founded.

Research Questions	Sources
Step One: Skim the Policy Agendas	
As you skim each agenda, look for proposals that surprise you, interest you, or challenge what you may have expected from Sanders or American Compass. 1. What kinds of economic problems or concerns does the agenda address? 2. What kinds of changes does it propose? 3. What connections do you notice between these proposals and the broader vision you explored in Part 1? 4. What proposals or approaches stand out to you? Why? After you've skimmed the proposals and considered them separately, think about them together. • Looking across the proposals, what patterns do you notice in how law and policy might be used to pursue economic change?	Bernie Sanders • Source: Issues from Bernie Sanders' Senate website ○ Recommended issues: Economy, Labor, Medicare for All, Prescription Drug Prices, Taxes, Trade, Wall Street Reform American Compass • Source: Issues & Proposals from American Compass ○ Recommended issues: Globalization, Financialization, Industry, Labor
Step Two: Investigate a Proposal from Each Agenda	
Choose one proposal from each agenda that interests you. (It may be useful to choose proposals that address related issues, such as Trade and Globalization or Wall Street Reform and Financialization.) Learn enough about each to understand what it would change and how it connects to the broader vision you explored in Part 1. 1. What would this proposal change?	

2. What problem is the proposal intended to address?
3. How would government use law, spending, taxes, regulations, or other tools of policy to bring about that change?
4. How might the proposal change parts of the **Legal Framework** that supports and regulates capitalism? How might it affect other [Features of Capitalism](#)?
5. How might the proposal change the roles, choices, or power of workers, businesses, investors, consumers, or government?
6. What is one question you still have about how the proposal might work or what effects it might have?

Part 3 Consider Possibilities and Limitations

What do these ideas lead you to think or wonder about the possibilities and limitations of changing capitalism through law and policy?

Reflection Questions

Reflect on everything you've learned in Parts 1 and 2.

1. What do the proposals you examined suggest about the different ways government today might shape how capitalism operates?
2. Think back to earlier shifts in American capitalism, including the New Deal and the neoliberal turn. What connections do you see between those shifts and the changes proposed here?
3. What questions remain about what these proposals might accomplish or what their effects might be?
4. Based on this investigation, what do you think or wonder about the possibilities and limitations of changing capitalism through law and policy?