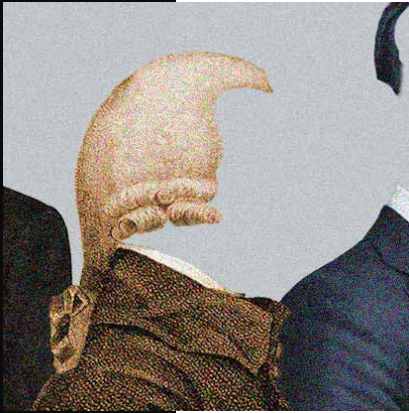




Listening Guide

Episode 4: Invisible Hand Guy?

Economic change happens in a cultural context. We take a look at capitalism's development from the 1380s through the 1770s, in the shift from the medieval period to the so-called modern era. We trace the tectonic shifts in the Western mind that made capitalism thinkable — in part through a look at two Enlightenment thinkers: Baruch Spinoza and Adam Smith. (The real Smith, not the one often held up as the patron saint of unfettered capitalism.)

Features of Capitalism

Accumulation and Investment of Capital

Profit Motive

Free Market Economy

Legal Framework

Before You Listen

- According to John and Ellen, we can't understand the shift from feudalism to capitalism without understanding broader changes that happened during the shift from the medieval period to the modern era: the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Protestant Reformation.

What do you already know about these intellectual and cultural movements? What questions or possible connections come to mind when you consider the rise of capitalism?

While You Listen

This listening guide divides the podcast into sections. You can listen to all sections or a subset; recommended sections are noted below.

Section	Questions to Consider				
Section 1 Capitalism Picks Up Steam 0:00-7:11 Recommended	• Early in the episode, John says that “material changes move history.” In Britain, the invention of the steam engine and the widespread mining of coal transformed production and encouraged greater investments in factories. The technology of the Industrial Revolution helped capitalism pick up steam. But John and Ellen also claim that <i>ideas</i> revved capitalism – that “tectonic shifts in the Western mind a few hundred years ago...made capitalism thinkable.” What does this mean in your own words?				
Section 2 From Medieval to Modern: The Renaissance 7:12-20:10 Recommended	• Make a t-chart like the one below. As you listen to this section, take notes about the medieval period and modern era to remind yourself of the differences between the two. <table><tr><th>Medieval Period</th><th>Modern Era</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Medieval Period	Modern Era		
Medieval Period	Modern Era				

SCENE **•ON** RADIO
Season 7: Capitalism

Episode by John Biewen, with co-host Ellen McGirt.

Interviews with Kate Rigby, Glory Liu, Steven Nadler, and Wendy Carlin.

Visit sceneonradio.org/capitalism-educator-resources to access transcripts, the Features of Capitalism explainer, and other resources.

	• The Catholic church was central to feudal life. How and why did the Black Death begin to change people's relationship with the church? • How did the "image of mankind" change from the medieval period to the Renaissance? • The Scientific Revolution also occurred during the Renaissance. According to John's conversation with scholar Kate Rigby: ▪ How did the Scientific Revolution change the way humans saw themselves in relation to nature? ▪ How did ideas from the Scientific Revolution help justify money-making ventures?
Section 3 The Enlightenment and Capitalism 20:11-24:43 Recommended	• Why does scholar Glory Liu caution against describing capitalism as a product of the Enlightenment? • What different connections does Liu identify between Enlightenment ideas and the development of capitalism? • Why does she think it is important to consider the Enlightenment's "dark side" as well as the ideas it is often celebrated for?
Section 4 Baruch Spinoza 24:44-33:45	• Professor Steven Nadler describes Spinoza as "radical" – a thinker whose ideas were quite different from his European contemporaries. ▪ How did Spinoza see humankind's relationship with the natural world? ▪ What type of society did Spinoza believe to be best for humans, and why? • According to Nadler, how might Spinoza have responded to the wealth inequality found in many of today's capitalist economies? Why? • Spinoza's ideas were not popular during his lifetime, and they didn't influence the development of capitalism. Why might John and Ellen have chosen to include him in this episode?
Section 5 Adam Smith 33:46-46:00	• Today, Adam Smith is widely considered the "Father of Economics" – and some people even call him the "Father of Capitalism." Based on his writings, what might Smith have thought about the following statements? ▪ Above all else, humans are self-interested. ▪ Markets should be free of all government interference. ▪ Actions people take to increase their profits are good for society more broadly. • Why does Liu suggest it is important to look at Smith's words in the context that they were written, versus how they tend to be remembered today?
Section 6 Unpacking the Episode 46:01-57:56 Recommended	• Near the end of the episode, John and Ellen discuss two influential ideas about the economy today: ▪ A nation's prosperity can be measured by its gross domestic product (GDP), or the total value of goods and services bought and sold. ▪ The purpose of a business that produces and sells goods is to earn a profit. How are these ideas connected to ways of thinking that emerged during the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment?

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The capitalist corporation (or firm) also got its start during the Modern Era.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What are some of the characteristics of these corporations?▪ How did corporations make it easier to pool and invest capital?▪ What relationship does Wendy Carlin see between corporations, the profit motive, and economic growth?• According to John and Ellen, what role do government and the rule of law play in the existence and success of corporations? Why do you think they emphasize this point? |
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After You Listen

- What is one moment or quote from the episode that stands out to you? It might be something that surprised you, challenged or confirmed your thinking, or prompted a new understanding.
- Read the following entries in the **Features of Capitalism explainer**: **Profit Motive** and **Legal Framework**. How does this episode deepen your understanding of the role these features play in a capitalist system?
- In this episode, John and Ellen argue that several developments helped shape capitalism: new technologies like the steam engine, ideas that emerged during the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment, and legal institutions that established corporations and strengthened property rights.

Based on this episode, why is it difficult to explain capitalism's development by pointing to a single cause? Use examples from the episode to support your thinking.