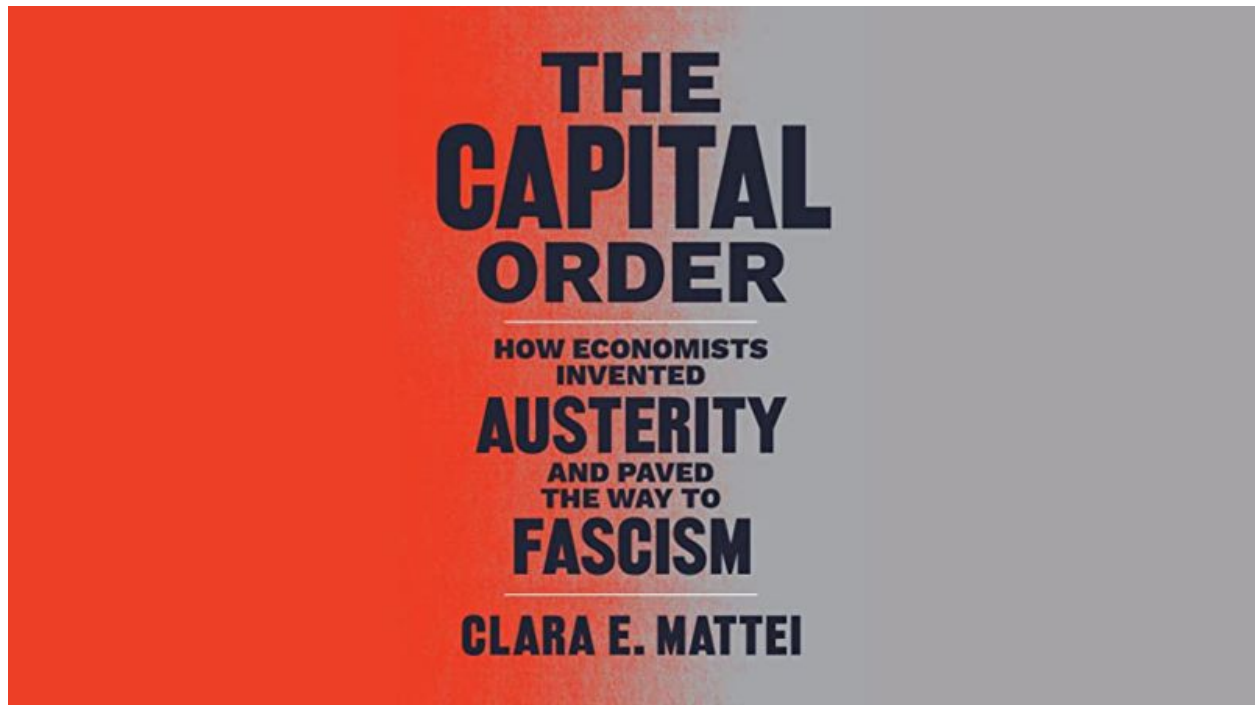


Concept Document and Calendar: Capital Order Reading Group

“Such a frontal attack on labor—one that would slash social resources and wages and especially kill visions of an alternative society—required a sturdy justification. The authority of the experts provided a channel to build consensus for a truth that, even if hard and painful, was ‘universal’ and ‘objective,’ and thus had to be swallowed. For these technocrats, austerity’s rationality was synonymous with rationality itself, because they held that the capitalist order was the only order possible.”

-Clara Mattei: *The Capital Order*



Summary: The Capital Order Reading Group is a reading group starting in February 2024, with the purpose of reading and discussing the eponymous book, *The Capital Order*, by Clara Mattei. Based in the DC area, the Reading Group hopes to examine how economic technocrats harnessed capitalist and liberal economic ideology to reassert class power in Britain and Italy immediately following WWI with an eye toward understanding austerity ideology and economic arguments in our own time and recent past. The group will meet in person on Tuesday nights, with 2 optional in-person social events around the DMV. No experience or knowledge level is required to join. Members are encouraged to find a copy of *The Capital Order* by Clara Mattei. The group will use a Notes document during and before meetings to gather members' thoughts and questions before and during each meeting.

Origin: The idea for the group came from three factors: 1) Strong interest in the topic; and 2) a high concentration of workers in the economic field in the DMV region. 3) The surge in austerity politics and “rationality” in economic policy discourse. The group intends to meet interest in the topic by reading Mattei’s history of another period in which such austerity politics came to the fore a century ago.

Details: The group welcomes members from outside of the organization. The group will primarily consist of reading and then meeting in person to discuss *The Capital Order*. Those group discussions may be interspersed with occasional guest presentations from authors or experts. We intend to reach out to Clara Mattei and other economists to see if they would like to speak to us.

Structure: The group will have 3 coordinators that take responsibility for administrative elements of the group. The group will pass facilitation duties and other conversational responsibilities between members meeting-by-meeting unless the group determines otherwise.

Timeline and Location: The group is intended to start readings and discussion in early February 2024. The group will meet every week, with meetings held all or mostly in person and with one or two dedicated group social meet ups. The reading group may hold some meetings outside of the reading structure if prompted by anyone.

[Discussion doc](#)

Draft Calendar -all times at 6:30 pm unless modified

Meeting #1 (Tues. Feb 4): Introductions and overview of Reading Group format

- Optional Listening: “[How Austerity Spawns Fascism](#),” *Behind the News*, Interview with Clara Mattei hosted by Doug Henwood on Jacobin Radio

Meeting #2 (Tues. Feb. 11): Capital Order social get-together, Sonny’s Pizza (3120 Georgia Ave. NW, Washington, DC)

Meeting #3 (Tues. Feb 18): Getting Started: The Great War

- Reading: Introduction & Chapter 1 (pp. 1-52), *The Capital Order*

Meeting #4 (Tues. Feb. 25): The Suspension of Capitalist Economics and the High Watermark of Labor Power

- Reading: Chapters 2-4 (pp. 53-126)

Meeting #5 (Tues. March 4): What is Austerity, who thought about it, and how was it implemented in Britain?

- Reading: “The Meaning of Austerity”-Chapter 5-6 (pp. 127-204)

Meeting #6 (Tues. March 11): Capital Order social get-together, Sonny’s Pizza (3120 Georgia Ave. NW, Washington, DC)

Meeting #7 (Tues. March 18): Austerity in Italy and from Britain’s Perspective

- Reading: Chapters 7 & 8 (pp. 205-270)

Meeting #8 (Tues. March 25): Austerity Forever

- Reading: Chapters 9 & 10, “Afterword” (pp. 271-312)

Other possible readings:

- Review of book on PW: <https://www.phenomenalworld.org/reviews/austerity-logic/>
- Review of book on Catalyst: <https://catalyst-journal.com/2023/11/capital-order-clara-mattei-book-review>
- Econ-y PW article on austerity: <https://www.phenomenalworld.org/analysis/the-long-run/>
- More recent article by Mattei on austerity: <https://jacobin.com/2024/10/austerity-class-government-spending>

Dream speakers

- Clara Mattei
- Mark Paul
- Yannis Varoufakis
- Marshall Steinbaum
- Richard Wolffe