

**Juniper Chapman: English**

**Mentor: Marvin Lansverk, Doug Young -- English, Agricultural Economics**

***From the Father of Economics to Freakonomics: A Literary Study of Economic Texts and their Socioeconomic Contexts***

This project entails a study of the evolution and trajectory of the economic theory and discourse community through time. Specifically, I study the intersection of literature and economics in the works of Adam Smith (*The Wealth of Nations*, 1776) and Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner (*Freakonomics*, 2005). These two authors provide a fascinating opportunity to examine two economic texts that were best-selling phenomena in their days - two very different days. An examination of the various literary and socioeconomic factors that created the opportunity for these texts to not only thrive in popularity, but to become defining factors of the study of economics as a whole, gives us insights on the course of the study, criticism, and development of economics over the last two hundred years. Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* is considered, by most neoclassical economists, to be the foundation of the organized study of the science of economics. Far later in time, apparently very different in scope and aim, but almost equally well-known, came Levitt, Dubner, and *Freakonomics*. Interestingly, these two works have a number of common attributes, both literary and in economic theory. Both contain an intersection of economic theory with literary concerns - inherent in the fact that both exist in a written form - and thus both can be discussed and analyzed from a perspective that not only engages these authors as economists, but as writers. Both authors have remarkably similar preoccupations, though with a few telling differences. In the end, this is a story that deals with a cycle of theory, popularity, and criticism; the return to an earlier paradigm, and the value and impact of our history on our present.