



# The World in 1776/2026: The Wealth of Nations at 250



**18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

**University of Glasgow, University Avenue, Glasgow, G12 8QQ**

## Conference Summary

The Wealth of Nations is one of the most influential, yet misunderstood, books in human history. It is known today mostly as a work of economics, when it was much more. Adam Smith's analysis of the new form of freedom that was emerging during the Enlightenment has shaped the way we think about morality and politics, as well as the economy. It was written against the backdrop of a revolutionary age, in which the emergence of empires transformed the global economy and new Enlightenment ideas sowed the seeds of representative government. Writing on the eve of the American Revolution, Smith used his expertise in political economy to argue against the imperial policies of the time, including slavery, as inconsistent with Enlightenment values. He critiqued the power of large corporations and accused them of corrupting the British government and undermining the free market.

The debates Smith engaged are still with us: How should we regulate business? How can we protect workers from exploitation? How can we address inequality? What economic and political relations should countries have with one another? In this workshop we will use Smith's answers to these questions as a springboard to generate new answers for our time.

## Conference Convenors

- **Dr Maha Rafi Atal**, University of Glasgow
- **Dr Craig Smith**, University of Glasgow

## Schedule

### Thursday, June 18th

#### **8:45am Opening Remarks - Maha Rafi Atal and Craig Smith**

#### **9am-10:30am Plenary 1**

- The World in 1776: Empires and Revolutions
- Glory Liu, Georgetown University - "Smith and the American Revolution"
- Sandra Peart, University of Richmond - "Smith on Independence: from Slavery to Sovereignty"
- Spyridon Tegos, University of Crete - "Adam Smith on Political Misnomers: The Cases of Regimes that conceal other Regimes, Ancient and Modern"

#### **10:30-11 Coffee Break**

#### **11am-12:30pm Featured Panel 1**

- The World in 1776: The Wealth of Empires
- Hiroki Ueno, Tokyo University - "Adam Smith and the Imperial Enlightenment: Tory Advocacy of American Independence, New British History, and Pan-European Political Economy in the Wealth of Nations"
- Ana Paula Londe Silva, Federal University of Minas Gerais - "Adam Smith's engagement with the public debate on imperial political economy: lessons from his library"
- Mark Rathbone, North-West University - "Between Silence and Agency: Africa in Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations"

12:30pm to 2pm Lunch

### 2pm to 3:30pm Plenary 2

- The World in 2026: Monopolists and Robber Barons
- Erin Lockwood, UC-Irvine - “Exorbitant profits, expensive luxury, and subservient interests: how The Wealth of Nations clarifies the structural power of contemporary big tech”
- Erik Peinert, Boston University - “Monopoly Politics”

### 3:30pm to 4pm Coffee Break

### 4pm-5:30pm Featured Panel 2

- The World in 1776: Age of Revolutions
- Mark Skousen, Chapman University - "Benjamin Franklin: Adam Smith's Invisible Hand?"
- Dan Klein and Michaela Loughran, George Mason University - "Adam Smith's hopes for a liberal America”

## **Friday, June 19th**

### **9am – 10:30am Plenary 3**

- The World in 2026: Commerce and Justice
- Jim Otteson, Mendoza College of Business, Notre Dame - "The Dignity of the 'Lowest Ranks of the People': Adam Smith on Respect and Moral Equality."
- Eoin McLaughlin, Heriot-Watt University - “Towards an Inclusive Wealth of Nations”

### **10:30am-11am Coffee Break**

### **11am -12:30pm Featured Panel 3**

- The World in 2026: Monopolists and Robber Barons
- Katarzyna Szarzec and Pawel Marszalek, Poznan University - "Should the power of Big Techs be limited? A Smithian perspective”
- Spencer Pack, Connecticut College - "Adam Smith on 21st Century Attempts to Create New Forms of Money: Bitcoin and other Cryptocurrencies”
- Stefan Fritsch, Bowling Green SU - "Adam Smith and Corporate Power in the Era of Digital Feudalism “

### **12:30pm to 2pm Lunch**

- 2pm – 3:30pm Featured Panel 4
- The World in 2026: Commerce and Justice
- Kristin Collins, George Mason University - "A Smithian Approach to Recognition, Representation, and Masculinity"
- John Kristof, Educational Choice and Nathanael Snow, Ball State University - "School Choice and the Development of Civic Virtue: Insight from Adam Smith"
- Leo Steeds, Kings College London - "Interpreting Adam Smith's "natural liberty" in the Anthropocene"

### **3:30pm to 4pm Coffee Break**

### **4pm – 5pm Closing Discussion**