

1. Economics in One Lesson, by Henry Hazlitt

(Other contenders, Gene Callahan, 'Economics for Real People', by Thomas Taylor, 'An Introduction to Austrian Economics', but I think Hazlitt wins)

Part One: The Lesson

Part Two:

The Lesson Applied	Disbanding Troops and Bureaucrats	What Rent Control Does
The Broken Window	The Fetish of Full Employment	Minimum Wage Laws
The Blessings of Destruction	Who's "Protected" by Tariffs?	Do Unions Really Raise Wages?
Public Works Mean Taxes	The Drive for Exports	"Enough to Buy Back the Product"
Taxes Discourage Production	"Parity" Prices	The Function of Profits
Credit Diverts Production	Saving the X Industry	The Mirage of Inflation
The Curse of Machinery	How the Price System Works	The Assault on Savings
Credit Diverts Production: The Curse of Machinery	"Stabilizing" Commodities	The Lesson Restated
Spread-the-Work Schemes	Government Price-Fixing	

Part Three: The Lesson After Thirty Years

2. The Mystery of Banking, by Murray Rothbard

Chapter I Money: Its Importance and Origins	Chapter XI Central Banking: The Process of Bank Credit Expansion
Chapter II What Determines Prices: Supply and Demand	Chapter XII The Origins of Central Banking
Chapter III Money and Overall Prices	Chapter XIII Central Banking in the United States: The Origins
Chapter IV The Supply of Money	Chapter XIV Central Banking in the United States: The 1820s to the Civil War
Chapter V The Demand for Money	Chapter XV Central Banking in the United States The National Banking System
Chapter VI Loan Banking	Chapter XVI Central Banking in the United States: The Federal Reserve System
Chapter VII Deposit Banking	Chapter XVII Conclusion: The Present Banking Situation and What to Do About It
Chapter VIII Free Banking and The Limits on Bank Credit Inflation	
Chapter IX Central Banking: Removing the Limits	
Chapter X Central Banking: Determining Total Reserves	

3. The Anti-Capitalistic Mentality, by Ludwig von Mises

I THE SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CAPITALISM AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CAUSES OF ITS VILIFICATION	III LITERATURE UNDER CAPITALISM
1. The Sovereign Consumer	1. The Market for Literary Products
2. The Urge for Economic Betterment	2. Success on the Book Market
3. Status Society and Capitalism	3. Remarks about the Detective Stories
4. The Resentment of Frustrated Ambition	4. Freedom of the Press
5. The Resentment of the Intellectuals	5. The Bigotry of the Literati
6. The Anti-capitalistic Bias of American Intellectuals	6. The "Social" Novels and Plays
7. The Resentment of the White-Collar Workers	IV THE NONECONOMIC OBJECTIONS TO CAPITALISM
8. The Resentment of the "Cousins"	1. The Argument of Happiness
9. The Communism of Broadway and Hollywood	2. Materialism
II THE ORDINARY MAN'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY	3. Injustice
1. Capitalism as it is and as it is Seen by the Common Man	4. The "Bourgeois Prejudice" for Liberty
2. The Anti-capitalistic Front	5. Liberty and Western Civilization
	V "ANTICOMMUNISM" VERSUS CAPITALISM

4. The Austrian Theory of the Trade Cycle, by Ludwig von Mises, Gottfried Haberler, and Murray Rothbard

Introduction: The Austrian Theory in Perspective, Roger W. Garrison

The "Austrian" Theory of the Trade Cycle, Ludwig von Mises

Money and the Business Cycle, Gottfried Haberler

Economic Depressions: Their Cause and Cure, Murray N. Rothbard

Can We Still Avoid Inflation?, Friedrich A. Hayek

The Austrian Theory: A Summary, Roger W. Garrison

5. Meltdown, by Thomas Woods

A.K.A. "A Free-Market Look at Why the Stock Market Collapsed, the Economy Tanked, and Government Bailouts Will Make Things Worse"

Mention 1920s, also mention late nineteenth century depression

6. The Road to Serfdom, by Friedrich Hayek

The Abandoned Road

The Great Utopia
Individualism and Collectivism
The "Inevitability" of Planning
Planning and Democracy
Planning and the Rule of Law
Economic Control and Totalitarianism
Who, Whom?
Security and Freedom
Why the Worst Get on Top
The End of Truth
The Socialist Roots of Naziism
The Totalitarians in Our Midst
Material Conditions and Ideal Ends
The Prospects of International Order
Conclusion

7. Socialism, by Ludwig von Mises

PART I. LIBERALISM AND SOCIALISM
PART II. THE ECONOMICS OF A SOCIALIST COMMUNITY
PART III. THE ALLEGED INEVITABILITY OF SOCIALISM
PART IV. SOCIALISM AS A MORAL IMPERATIVE
PART V. DESTRUCTIONISM

8. Human Action, by Ludwig von Mises

Mises sees economic calculation as the most fundamental problem in economics. The economic problem to Mises is that of action. Man acts to dispel feelings of uneasiness, but can only succeed in acting if he comprehends causal connections between the ends that he wants to satisfy, and available means. The fact that man resides in a world of causality means that he faces definite choices as to how he satisfies his ends. Human action is an application of human reason to select the best means of satisfying ends. The reasoning mind evaluates and grades different options. This is economic calculation.

Economic calculation is common to all people. Mises insisted that the logical structure of human minds is the same for everybody. Of course, this is not to say that all minds are the same. Man makes different value judgments and possess different data, but logic is the same for all. Human reason and economic calculation have limitations, but Mises sees no alternative to economic calculation as a means of using scarce resources to improve our well being.

Human action concerns dynamics. The opposite to action is not inaction. Rather, the opposite to action is contentment. In a fully contented state there would be no action, no efforts to change the existing order of things (which might be changed by merely ceasing to do some things). Man acts because he is never fully satisfied, and will never stop because he can never be fully satisfied. This might seem like a simple point, but modern economics is built upon ideas of contentment-equilibrium analysis and indifference conditions. It is true that some economists construct models of dynamic equilibrium, but the idea of a dynamic equilibrium is oxymoronic to Mises. An actual equilibrium may involve a recurring cycle, but not true dynamics. True dynamics involve non-repeating evolutionary change.

Mises explains dynamic change in terms of "the plain state of rest". A final state of rest involves perfect plans to fully satisfy human desires. A plain state of rest is a temporary and imperfect equilibrium deriving from past human plans. Though any set of plans is imperfect, to act means attempting to improve each successive set of plans. Movement from one plain state of rest to another represents the process of change, either evolutionary or devolutionary.

Mises links progress and profits. Profits earned from voluntary trades are the indicator of economic success. It is monetary calculation of profits that indicates whether an enterprise has generated a net increase in consumer well being over true economic costs. The close association that Mises draws between economic calculation and monetary calculation leads him to conclude that market prices (upon which monetary profits are calculated) are indispensable to progress in bettering the human condition. Without markets there are no prices, and without prices there is no economic calculation. One point that Mises made, but did not get enough attention, is that monetary calculation takes place primarily in financial markets. Monetary calculation is vitally important.

Mises stresses the importance of entrepreneurship because it is entrepreneurs who actually do monetary calculation. This fact puts entrepreneurs at the center of all progress (and failure). Entrepreneurs who estimate costs more correctly than their rivals earn high profits while also serving consumers. Such men rise to top positions in industry. Entrepreneurs who err seriously in their calculations experience financial losses and cease to direct production. Mises described this market test of entrepreneurial skills as the only process of trial and error that really matters. The concepts of monetary calculation, financial speculation, and entrepreneurship form the basis for the von Mises critique of socialism.

9. Man, Economy, and State, by Murray Rothbard

Fundamentals of Human Action
Direct Exchange
The Pattern of Indirect Exchange
Prices and Consumption
Production: The Structure
Production: The Rate of Interest and Its Determination
Production: General Pricing of the Factors
Production: Entrepreneurship and Change
Production: Particular Factor Prices and Productive Incomes
Monopoly and Competition
Money and Its Purchasing Power
The Economics of Violent Intervention in the Market

10. Money, Bank Credit, and Economic Cycles - by Jesus Huerta de Soto

CHAPTER 1: THE LEGAL NATURE OF THE MONETARY IRREGULAR-DEPOSIT CONTRACT	CHAPTER 6: ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE THEORY OF THE BUSINESS CYCLE
CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL VIOLATIONS OF THE LEGAL PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE MONETARY IRREGULAR-DEPOSIT CONTRACT	CHAPTER 7: A CRITIQUE OF MONETARIST AND KEYNESIAN THEORIES
CHAPTER 3: ATTEMPTS TO LEGALLY JUSTIFY FRACTIONAL-RESERVE BANKING	CHAPTER 8: CENTRAL AND FREE BANKING THEORY
CHAPTER 4: THE CREDIT EXPANSION PROCESS	CHAPTER 9: A PROPOSAL FOR BANKING REFORM: THE THEORY OF A 100-PERCENT RESERVE REQUIREMENT
CHAPTER 5: BANK CREDIT EXPANSION AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM	

If you can get through those, then 'The Ethics of Liberty', 'For a New Liberty', and 'Egalitarianism as a Revolt against Nature', by Rothbard might be up next, then 'What Has the Government Done to Our Money?', by Murray Rothbard, 'The Ethics of Money Production', by Jörg Guido Hülsmann , then 'A Theory of Money and Credit' by Mises, followed perhaps by 'Democracy: The God that Failed' by Hoppe, , and 'The Economics and Ethics of Private Property', by Hoppe.

For fiction, and light relief, you could also try 'Time Will Run Back', by Henry Hazlitt, 'The Moon is a Harsh Mistress', by Robert Heinlein, and for less light relief, 'Atlas Shrugged', by Ayn Rand, and of course, 'Nineteen Eighty-Four' by George Orwell.

After that, you should be well on the way... :-)