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Methodological guide for creating a course work  
by undergraduates of the specialty 1-25 80 01 “Economics”

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The methodological guide is a set of modern theoretical and methodological principles for conducting research in economics.

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## ***FOREWORD***

In recent decades, the world has undergone radical technological changes. These technological changes are comparable in their impact on the evolution of mankind only with the Neolithic Revolution and with the era of the Age of Discovery, taking place against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, and leading to the creation of huge colonial empires. The global socio-technological revolution, of which we are all witnesses and participants, in its significance and consequences overshadows the problems and challenges lying on the surface that humanity, countries and peoples are facing today.

Indeed, in the modern world, the geopolitical balance has been violated, a unipolar world has formed and the struggle for all types of resources is intensifying. Economically developed countries have moved to a new post-industrial society, in which, as any informed reader knows, the share of the service sector is significantly increasing, "democratic institutions of Western society" are being formed and so on and so forth. European humanists of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries formed the concept of sustainable development, developed and argued for the need to look at the goals and criteria of progress in a new way. The geopolitical significance of the BRICS countries has radically changed... But this is not what characterizes the modern global socio-technological revolution, but the fact that for the first time in human history truly overall networks (based on the Internet) of social control and modeling of the behavior of large masses of people have been created. For the first time, social and functional technologies are becoming the main weapon in interstate struggle and interfirm competition, and also make it possible to significantly influence the forms of socio-economic conflicts. These technologies, or, in other words, an information weapon as a social and functional innovation is a type of information weapon that exposes certain groups of social subjects to impose on them the socio-economic behavior that the manipulator needs.

The purpose of this research seminar is to learn how to explore real, not imaginary, economic objects in these new conditions.

## **CONTENT AND PROCEDURE FOR PERFORMANCE OF THE WORK**

### **1. CHANGE IN THE SUBJECT OF ECONOMIC SCIENCE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

At the present stage, the transition of the global and national economies to a fundamentally new stage of development is being completed, which, as a rule, is defined by the concept of post-industrial society, but depending on the qualitative characteristics of this new society, it can also be defined as an “information society” (F. Machlup) [1]; “knowledge society” (N. Stehr) [2]; “techno-tronic society” (Z. Brzezinski) [3]; “network society” (M. Castells) [4]; “ecological post-industrialism” (T. Roszak) [5] etc. In our opinion, most likely the modern economic structure in economic countries can be characterized as a post-market super-industrial society.

The new society is characterized as follows. **Firstly**, the change in the nature of industrial production from mass production to flexible specialized in response to technological innovation; **secondly**, the transition of the role of the locomotive of economic development from industry to the service sector; **thirdly**, the formation of fundamentally new global finance, which go beyond their traditional functional role in the economic system of society and exist rather isolated from the processes taking place in the real sector of the economy. J. Baudrillard wrote to illustrate this gap “A very curious feature associated with the 1987 Walt Street crash is the uncertainty as to whether a real disaster actually took place and is expected in the future. The correct answer is no, there will be no real catastrophe since we live under the sign of a virtual catastrophe. In this context, the discrepancy between the fictitious economy and the real economy is eloquently manifested. It is this dissonance that protects us from the real catastrophe of the productive economy” [6]. He further adds that “money revolves in an inaccessible space that leaves the world as it is. Ultimately, the economy continues to produce, while the slightest logical consequence of the fluctuations of the fictitious economy would be enough to destroy it (let's not forget that today the volume of trade is 45 times less than the volume of capital flow)” [6]; **fourthly**, the growing role of social and functional innovations. With the expansion of the use of socially functional technologies to coerce actors into the behavior desirable for the Manipulator through the purposeful presentation of information on the Internet and traditional media, the perception of the subjects of their needs and interests is significantly distorted. “Any communication (*in the information society – the authors*), – writes J. Baudrillard in this regard, – in fact, there is only a forced scenario, a continuous fiction that relieves us of the emptiness of our mental screen, on which we are waiting for images with no less lust” [6] and, **fifthly**, a significant change in the role and functions of information in economic

life, an increase in the importance of knowledge for the development of the economy. In the modern era, information that is constantly being reproduced and catastrophically growing on the Internet comes to its opposite. “The excess of knowledge is indifferently scattered over the surface in all directions, while there is only the replacement of one word with another” [6]. J. Baudrillard emphasizes that “so many signs and messages have been written and disseminated that they will never be read. Lucky for us! For even with that small part that we absorb, something happens to us, like execution in the electric chair” [6]. Thus, we are discussing the use of an incredibly large volume of information messages not for obtaining or broadcasting new knowledge, but as an important tool of modern information war. Moreover, modern information wars are being conducted not only between states and political parties, but also between numerous classes and even individual commercial organizations. At the same time, this avalanche of Internet information barely intersects with the knowledge, technological solutions that are needed today more than ever by the real sector of the economy and the service sector.

The emergence of new and the preservation of old socio-economic structures in post-industrial society is accompanied by a significant complication of the system of socio-economic relations. Thus, in the study of socio-economic conflicts in a post-industrial society, along with the traditional difficulties in the study of the social-class structures of industrial and pre-industrial societies, additional problems arise. **Firstly**, the system of economic relations becomes more complicated in comparison with an industrial society. The number of peripheral socio-economic structures is increasing; the transformation of the dominant structures is accelerating; the professional and qualification stratification of society is increasing; difficulties of changing labor between different qualifying and professional groups, between individuals employed in the information and traditional economies, etc. **Secondly**, the dynamics of the post-industrial economic system is increasing and the share of the service sector in the creation and distribution of social wealth is growing. **Thirdly**, today the most perfect system of ideological “zombification” (Neuro-linguistic programming) of the population in post-industrial and other countries has been created, which prevents the majority of the population from realizing their group interests.

In the 1960s-90s of the last century in the countries of the golden billion, a new type of the man in the street was formed, a well-fed and self-righteous man in the street, who during these fertile fifty years (the European "golden age"), when the financial and political elites of capitalist countries were forced to fight against socialist idea, share part of their super-profits with their fellow citizens<sup>1</sup>... As a result, the new European man in the street, armed with the ideas of Protestant fundamentalism and “universal” values, did not notice that social lifts in the EU had long ceased to work, and decile coefficients had reached sky-

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<sup>1</sup> As an example, it is enough to refer to the events of 1968 in France and the subsequent changes in the social policy of this country.

high heights, in comparison with which property differentiation in the Roman Empire seems to be a model of social justice. The decile coefficient in the UK today is 100! The golden age in Western Europe is over, and the period of latent economic conflicts is over. As European competitiveness declines and polarization intensifies in the EU countries, socio-economic conflicts will intensify in them and between them. It will be impossible to understand the nature of these conflicts without updating the methodology of political economy.

Against this background, new pseudoscientific myths have been forming in the last thirty years. In our opinion, these myths include the philistine judgment that modern society is less differentiated than, for example, Western European societies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the idea that social classes are an “ideologized” category introduced by K. Marx... Analysis of a new methodological approach to the study of socio-economic relations in a post-industrial society is one of the important goals of this course.

In modern economic theory, a paradoxical situation is often observed when researchers substantiate and predict directly opposite trajectories of development and socio-economic changes, that is, when representatives of various economic specialties and schools, on the basis of their monitoring of national economies, often obtain directly opposite conclusions. This can be overcome only, firstly, by strengthening the methodological (political economic) component in the research of all economic specialties and, secondly, by returning to the economic theory of a living person with a complex system of motivations and socio-economic interests. In this case, object and subjective economic relations and structures will be considered as complementary.

There are three main types of social management in the broad sense of the word: power management, informational (informational-ideological), stimulation. Power management is the most cost-effective (according to the cost-benefit criterion) type of management, but only as long as the objects of power management agree to obey orders from above. M. Weber understood by “power” the ability of one person or a group of people to realize their own will in joint action, even in spite of the resistance of other people participating in the specified action” [7]. Thus, power relations are an opportunity on the part of some social subjects to more or less openly (authoritarianly) impose their will on other subjects, that is, to force these subjects to act in accordance with the interests of the former.

In the modern economy, the traditional methods of coercion to labor (administrative-command (power management) and stimulation) are being replaced by rather complex, but already well-adapted, mechanisms of replacing real economic motives (based on the needs and interests of the subject) with pseudo motives due to modern methods of information – ideological beliefs (via Internet technologies and traditional mass media), which can give rise to the target's behavior that runs counter to his needs, the needs of the group and class to which he belongs, of society as a whole. Thus, the information-ideological type

of management based on the knowledge, consciousness and conviction of individuals increases its importance in the economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the same time, such techniques are widely used as the substitution of concepts, as well as the vulgarization of the conceptual apparatus of modern economic science. Since the basis of the subjective orientational-regulatory (including motivational) complex is the subject's system of values, which predetermines the nature of all its other components – goals, attitudes, stereotypes, beliefs, behavioral models etc., then the most cost-effective impact on the subject seems to be due to instilling in them the goals, attitudes, stereotypes, beliefs, behavioral models necessary for the controlling subject, including through the use of such a discourse technique as substitution of grounds. At the same time, traditional incentives cease to act, since there is a psychological distortion of their perception, when the results of stimulation significantly differ from its goals and interests imposed on the actor. Thus, the leading objectively conditioned motive for labor and other socially significant activities can be replaced (with a pseudo-motive artificially imposed from the outside), which at the same time not only continues to perform the function of the most powerful motivation and direction of labor activity, but begins to give this activity a special personal meaning, producing socially significant behavior in the interests of the controlling subject, that is, the one that imposes pseudo-motives on the actors.

The modern market economy is critically dependent on information technology and global finance. In this economy, the socio-economic nature of labor motivation becomes significantly more complicated and undergoes a significant transformation for such reasons. firstly, an increase in the number of social classes in society, which complicates the problem of developing a certain balance of interests within the framework of a market economic structure; secondly, the widespread development of technologies for the non-lethal destruction of social subjects, which make it possible to replace the foundations of labor motivation, to introduce into the consciousness of individuals pseudo-motives that meet the interests not of their carriers, but the interests of manipulators; thirdly, the market economic structure is losing its dominant position in national economic systems and in international economic relations, which significantly violates the market principles of remuneration and labor incentives; fourthly, the role of the state as a configurator of market relations is significantly increasing, including in maintaining social justice in wages, which can cause egalitarian sentiments in society, and, accordingly, reduce the effectiveness of stimulation and administrative command management; as the post-industrial economic structure is developing, material incentives for labor are replaced by non-material incentives.

In the past twenty years, the instability of the world economy has significantly increased, which is primarily associated with a change in the role and functions of finance in it, as well as a significant increase in global financial instability. Moreover, financial instability is based on a change in the nature and



role of finance: from providing and serving the economy, they have become dominant over the economy.

As a result of the activities of global finance in the absence of effective intercountry institutional and financial filters (barriers) that protect national economies from speculative attacks of the global financial system, they can very quickly destroy the national industrial complex, agriculture and the way of economic life in this country as a whole. At the same time, “not only the established macroeconomic proportions are violated, but new disproportions are also emerging. Among them: the gap between investment and savings, countries with chronic deficits and chronic surpluses of current items of the balance of payments have emerged, debt is growing, and financial crises are becoming more frequent and intensifying” [8]. At the same time, the basis of global financial instability is the dollarization of the world economy. During the period of gold backing of the dollar as the main reserve currency, this largely reflected the political and economic realities of the second half of 40<sup>th</sup> – early 70<sup>th</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when immediately after World War II, the United States produced 56 % of world industrial and agricultural production and possessed approximately 70 % of the world's gold reserves.

After refusing to provide banking services to the US dollar the United States got the opportunity to “establish unlimited dollar emission, stimulate domestic demand in the country not by their real economic growth. In order to reduce its effectiveness. As a result, the US withdrew its obligations for the dollars it issued” [8]. As a result, in order to reduce their financial risks, all countries – owners of dollar foreign exchange reserves – placed them in the accounts of American banks, and the latter had a problem of how to place these extra dollars, which were not initially demanded by the American market. “Banks started to finance "bubbles" in the stock market, give out cheap mortgage loans with practically no control over borrowers, and carry out concessional lending to dictatorial regimes in the world. But the most negative consequence of these actions is, – rightly notes M. A. Sazhina, – that American financial institutions began to form international "hot money", which began to wander around the stock and foreign exchange markets of different countries, increasing their cyclicity, plunging into constant ups and downs” [8].

At the present time many countries are trying to minimize the dependence of their economies on hot money and global finance. In our opinion, an important goal of expanding the Customs Union of Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, and today it is not a customs union of three countries, but the Eurasian Economic Union, should be to weaken the negative impact on the economies of the member countries of global speculative finance, increase the confidence of households and commercial organizations to the national currency.

## 2. ECONOMIC TEXTS CODING

Umberto Eco wrote: “Text is a lazy mechanism that requires the reader to do some of the work for it. In other words, the text is a device designed to provoke as many interpretations as possible” [9]. The perception and interpretation of any text depends on the characteristics of the text itself and on the readiness (competence) of the reader. This property applies to any text. If we are talking about an economic text – scientific, journalistic or analytical, then it will necessarily have several levels of coding – “double coding is not an aristocratic jerk, but a way to show movement towards the goodwill and mental abilities of the reader” [9].

Unlike most other (including scientific) texts, triple coding is quite often present in scientific and popular scientific economic texts. The triple coding of economic texts arises for a variety of reasons. Let's consider this coding on the example of J. Keynes's book “The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money” and the science of macroeconomics generated by it. Today any student, no matter what specialty he receives, studies macroeconomics. If he has an economic specialty, then at least twice – first when studying economic theory, and then studying the course of macroeconomics itself. Non-economic students study the fundamentals of macroeconomics as part of a course in economic theory. The system of obtaining higher education existing today gives rise to the didactic need to simplify the macroeconomics at the university. As a result, the reading of such a simplified course, especially if the teacher reading it is a priest of the “cult of the self-regulating market”, where the state appears in the guise of a “night watchman”, leads to an actual contradiction between the ideas that the student receives about macroeconomics and the economic position of J. Keynes himself. Before developing our thought further, let us quote the words of Umberto Eco fully corresponding to this case: “Blessed Augustine in his work *De Doctrina Cristiana* (“On the Christian Doctrine”) writes: any interpretation of a part of the text is correct if it is confirmed by the rest of the same text and false if it comes into conflict with it. In this sense, the internal consistency of the text independently controls the reader's already uncontrollable interpretive energy” [9]. This means that the correctness or falsity of any interpretation of Keynes's views should be checked for compliance with all of his above-mentioned text.

In the work already mentioned above, J. Keynes writes: “Ricardo (*the theory of a self-regulating market economy – highlighted by the authors*) conquered England as completely as the Holy Inquisition conquered Spain. Not only was his theory accepted by the City, statesmen and the Academic world, but even the controversy itself ended. The alternative point of view has completely disappeared, and they simply ceased to be discussed” [10]. So, alternative points of view to the self-regulating market were not considered at all. J. Keynes directly points out that “however, although the doctrine itself (*the theory of a self-*

*regulating market – highlighted by the authors*) in the eyes of orthodox economists was not subjected to the slightest doubt (*until the 30s of the XX century – highlighted by the authors*), its obvious goals of scientific predictions has significantly undermined the prestige of its adherents over time. Professional economists since Malthus have remained clearly indifferent to the discrepancy between their theoretical conclusions and observed facts. This contradiction could not escape the common man; it is no coincidence that he began to treat economists with less respect than representatives of those scientific disciplines whose theoretical conclusions are consistent with the data of experience” [10]. It was written in the first half of the twentieth century, but it reads as if it was said yesterday about our home-grown “independent” economic experts – the Khlestakovs<sup>2</sup> from economics.

The second level of coding of the doctrine of J. Keynes stems from the definition of macroeconomics as a science that studies the joint, interdependent and interrelated activity of all economic entities within the framework of an integral economic organism – the national economy. He himself, with the sagacity of a genius, recognized the limitations of the application of his theoretical views in practice. This is a completely different approach, the second level of text coding. Why? Because J. Keynes, not stopping at replacing the social paradigm of the self-regulating market with the theory of active state regulation of the economy through the formation of effective demand, tried to go further – to show how closely everything in the economy is connected and interdependent. The above quotations from his book speak in favor of such a reading of J. Keynes. And not just quotes. And mainly not quotes, but theoretically grounded by him measures to overcome economic crises by stimulating the aggregate effective demand.

Before moving on to the third level of coding the teachings of J. Keynes, let us cite U. Eco's quote corresponding to this case: “when a text is created not for one specific addressee, but is addressed to the community of readers, the author knows in advance that his words will be interpreted not according to his intention, but in accordance with a complex strategy of relationships in which these readers are involved, who have a social asset in the form of linguistic competence, that is, knowledge of their native language. By “social property” I (*Umberto Eco – highlighted by the authors*) mean not only a certain language consisting of a set of grammatical rules, but the whole encyclopedia, that is, the sum of the knowledge that has been accumulated in the process of using this language: the cultural traditions generated by it and the set of all existing and pre-existing interpretations of many texts written in this language, including the text that is being read at the moment” [9]. From this quote, in our opinion, fol-

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<sup>2</sup> Khlestakov is the protagonist of the comedy “The Inspector General” by N. V. Gogol. One of the most famous images of Russian literature. From his surname comes the concept of “Khlestakovism”, meaning exorbitant lies and boasting.

lows the ambiguity, variability of relationships within the triad: author – text – reader.

We believe that in the spirit of Um. Eco, the text of J. Keynes can be viewed not as a frozen (dead) object, but as a living, constantly transforming and not fully cognizable phenomenon. Moreover, this liveliness can be generated and preserved only by today's reader, since J. Keynes has long been gone, and without him it is inadmissible to rewrite his text. As already mentioned above, J. Keynes directly pointed out that the Ricardian theory was used to justify the manifestations of social injustice and the obvious cruelty of the existing market economic system by the possessing classes, that is, the social paradigm of the self-regulatory market is aimed at apologetics for the preferential realization of very specific class interests. He also viewed the national economy as a living organism. It would seem that it is necessary to add these two theses and we get the obvious conclusion that the role of the state in the economy is not limited to macroeconomic goals and objectives, but is also aimed at realizing the interests of certain classes and other social groups.

J. Keynes approached this problem with the perspicacity of a genius, almost outlined it and even gave a part of the toolkit for its solution. This is the third level of coding of J. Keynes's texts. But he could not go further, he could not consistently develop this idea of his. The cultural environment in which he grew up and lived, class affiliation and possibly the fact that at that time in the West it was impossible to write about the class differentiation of society and not be accused of Marxism, interfered with it. And this accusation for a long time before and after the death of J. Keynes led to turning into an outcast in the Western academic and university environment.

### ***3. PRINCIPLES AND SEQUENCE OF WRITING RESEARCH WORKS ON ECONOMICS***

After determining the topic of research work, it is necessary consistently go through the following methodological levels of cognition of these complex social phenomena:

Stage 1: development of a preliminary understanding of the initial central concepts of the study. In other words, it is necessary to formulate definitions of such categories as subject(s), object, activity, social and economic systems. At the end of the research, these concepts can be clarified or even changed, but this does not relieve the researcher, who consistently relies on the principle of consistency in his work, from the need to present the object of research in the scientific description of a particular social phenomenon;

Stage 2: attention should be focused on identifying and disclosing the causes, conditions, contradictions that give rise to social subjects and systems based on social differentiation; it is necessary to clarify the historical conditionality of social systems, their genesis and movement tendencies;

Stage 3: it is necessary to find out the needs and interests that cause the need for existence and are realized (satisfied) through: firstly, societies based on the division of labor and, accordingly, social differentiation of the system, and, secondly, certain social subjects;

Stage 4: it is necessary to reveal the functional goals of the studied phenomenon, as well as the material and social conditions for the implementation of the goals and the implementation of the corresponding activities of social actors, it is necessary to show the forms and methods of realizing the goals of social actors;

Stage 5: ideal models and norms should be developed to regulate the functioning of social-subject relations, and the interaction of subject structures with the blocks of economic relations should be shown;

Stage 6: monitoring of the real subject structures of society is carried out;

Stage 7: a set of proposals is being developed to optimize the social subject structures of modern society in order to enhance its socio-economic vitality.

When determining the topic of the course work, you can do two things: 1) take the topic of the first chapter of the master's thesis for writing it, 2) write a work that will contribute to an in-depth study of any theoretical or applied economic problem.

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