

Saifedean Ammous – The Bitcoin Standard

The Bitcoin Standard – Lecture Notes

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By Saifedean Ammous

Introduction

Dr. Saifedean Ammous, author of *Principles of Economics* and *The Fiat Standard*, first made his name with his groundbreaking book *The Bitcoin Standard*. Here, Ammous tells the story of money itself — from primitive shells and stones, to precious metals, to government fiat, and finally to Bitcoin as the world’s first form of digital scarcity.

This lecture series distills the key arguments of the book into a structured curriculum. Rather than focusing only on Bitcoin’s technology, Ammous grounds the discussion in the history of money, the failures of fiat, and the civilizational role of sound money.

Links to lecture notes that I made on the different lectures covered @ saifedean.com

The Bitcoin Standard Lecture Notes

1. Money
2. Primitive Money

3. Monetary Metals
 4. Government Money
 5. Money and Time Preference
 6. Capitalism's Information System
 7. Sound Money & Individual Freedom
 8. Digital Money
 9. What Is Bitcoin Good For?
 10. Bitcoin Questions
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Part I: The Origins of Money

- **Money as a Market Institution:** Not decreed by governments, but emerging spontaneously to solve the coincidence of wants in barter.
 - **Primitive Monies:** Stones, shells, and beads illustrate how societies experimented with early forms before converging on metals.
 - **Monetary Metals:** Gold and silver rose to dominance because of durability, divisibility, and hardness — with gold ultimately winning due to its superior stock-to-flow ratio.
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Part II: Government and Fiat

- **Government Money:** No fiat arose by decree; all began as redeemable claims on gold or silver. The suspension of redeemability in 1914 birthed fiat and financed the bloodiest century of war.
 - **Time Preference and Civilization:** Hard money lowers time preference, encouraging saving, capital accumulation, and cultural flourishing. Fiat reverses this, raising time preference and incentivizing debt and consumption.
 - **Capitalism's Information System:** Prices transmit knowledge and guide economic calculation. Fiat money distorts this signal, causing malinvestment and cycles.
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Part III: Freedom, Digital Scarcity, and Bitcoin

- **Sound Money & Individual Freedom:** Fiat empowers states, fuels endless wars, and enables the welfare/warfare state. Sound money disciplines governments and protects liberty.
 - **Digital Money:** Bitcoin merges the finality of cash with the convenience of digital transfer. Its breakthrough is the difficulty adjustment, ensuring a fixed supply regardless of mining effort.
 - **What Is Bitcoin Good For?:** Bitcoin is the first and only strictly scarce asset. Unlike fiat or commodities, it cannot be inflated, making it the hardest store of value in history.
 - **Bitcoin Questions:** Addresses energy use, volatility, privacy, scaling, and altcoins. Bitcoin alone passes the neutrality test: no one controls it, and no one can change its rules.
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Key Themes

- Money emerges from markets, not government decrees.
 - Hardness — resistance to supply inflation — determines which money survives.
 - Fiat money enables wars, welfare, and waste by raising time preference and distorting price signals.
 - Bitcoin is the breakthrough: a digital, scarce, apolitical money beyond state control.
 - Sound money is not just about wealth — it is about civilization, freedom, and human flourishing.
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Conclusion

The Bitcoin Standard is more than a book about technology or investing. It is a story about civilization itself: how sound money allows humanity to plan, build, and thrive — and how fiat corrodes culture, freedom, and prosperity.

By introducing the first truly scarce digital asset, Bitcoin represents not just an upgrade to money, but an upgrade to civilization.

Just as *Principles of Economics* lays out the Austrian framework, and *The Fiat Standard* exposes the rot of fiat, *The Bitcoin Standard* provides the foundation: the monetary revolution of our time.
