

History of American Capitalism

Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30 - 4:45 p.m.
Business 227

This course offers a broad overview of American capitalism from the era of the American Revolution through the present day. Focusing on the reasons for and effects of economic growth, it follows the transformation of North America from a rural, colonial outpost of the British Empire to the largest industrial power in the world, and considers how this in turn shaped the ways Americans produced and lived. The course will examine the political, social, cultural, geographical, legal, moral, environmental, and technological dimensions of economic life, capturing the historical dynamics of American capitalism.

Participation (25% of course grade). Your participation grade will be assessed on the quality and frequency of your contribution to in-class discussion. This, in turn, relies on the careful reading of assigned materials ahead of class meetings.

Papers (40%). You will write two short papers in this course (5-7 pages each).

Paper #1: Analyze a primary source document, exploring one or more themes and/or placing it in historical context. The document will be selected from the course syllabus. You are not expected to research your topic outside of course readings. The paper must be submitted no later than October 22 and before we discuss that particular document in class. For instance, if you wish to write on Andrew Jackson’s Bank Veto Message, you must submit the paper no later than the beginning of class on September 24, the date on which we plan to discuss the document as a group.

Paper #2: Analyze one of the films we are watching in the last six weeks of class using the scholarship and/or documents we are reading alongside the film. You are not expected to research your topic outside of course readings. The paper must be submitted before we discuss the film you select as a group.

Midterm Exam (10%). The midterm exam will consist of three short-answer identifications and one lengthier essay question. One week before the exam, you will be given three possible essay questions, of which one will appear on the actual exam. Though you will not have advance notice of possible short-answer IDs, you will be able to select the IDs you wish to write on from a list that appears on the exam.

Final Exam (25%). The final exam will follow the same format as the midterm exam, except that you will write two essays (one essay will be cumulative and the other will cover material from the second half of the term). As with the midterm exam, you will be given possible essay questions one week ahead of the final exam.

Readings. All readings will be available through our HuskyCT course website. Readings are subject to change; any changes will be preceded by an announcement in class.
**Academic Integrity.** Plagiarism and cheating are the gravest violations of academic conduct. They will be punished to the fullest extent possible, including failure in the course. Plagiarism consists of reproducing or utilizing ideas or text from other sources without proper attribution. For more information, see http://www.plagiarism.org and http://www.community.uconn.edu/student_code.html.

**Accessibility.** To request accommodations for a disability you must first contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (room 204 of the Wilbur Cross Building; http://www.csd.uconn.edu). You must have the appropriate forms from this office before we can arrange accommodations.

**SCHEDULE & READING ASSIGNMENTS**

1. **Introductions to Capitalism**
   9/1 (Tu.)
   9/3 (Th.)

2. **American Revolution**
   9/8 (Tu.)
   9/10 (Th.)
   *United States Constitution*, Article 1, Article 4 section 2, Article 6.

3. **Slavery**
   9/15 (Tu.)
   9/17 (Th.)
   “Management of Slaves, etc.,” *Farmer’s Register* (1837).
4. Early Industrialization

9/22 (Tu.)

9/24 (Th.)
Andrew Jackson, Bank Veto Message (1832).

5. American Civil War

9/29 (Tu.)
James Henry Hammond, “Cotton is King’ Speech,” (1858).
Abraham Lincoln, “Address before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society” (1859).

10/1 (Th.)

MIDTERM EXAM: 10/6 (Tu.)

6. New Birth of American Capitalism

10/8 (Th.)

10/13 (Tu.)

10/15 (Th.)
7. Revolt and Reform
10/20 (Tu.)

10/22 (Th.)
People’s Party of America, “Omaha Platform” (1892).

8. Consolidation
10/27 (Tu.)

10/29 (Th.)
*The Plow That Broke the Plains*, directed Pare Lorentz (1936).

9. Corporate Liberalism
11/3 (Tu.)

11/5 (Th.)
*The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, directed by Nunnally Johnson (1956).
10. Great Expectations
11/10 (Tu.)
  Lizabeth Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of
  Community Marketplaces in Postwar America,” American Historical Review (October
11/12 (Th.)
  Michael Harrington, “Pastures of Plenty,” in The Other America: Poverty in the United States
  Nancy MacLean, “Civil Rights at Work,” in Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the

11. Disruption
11/17 (Tu.)
  Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, “The Mass-Production Economy in Crisis,” in The
  Harlan County, U.S.A., directed by Barbara Kopple (1976).
11/19 (Th.)
  pp. 27-34.
  Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits,” The New
  Lewis Powell, “Attack on American Free Enterprise System,” Confidential Memorandum to
  the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, August 23, 1971.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

12. New Economy
12/1 (Tu.)
  Bruce Cumings, “Silicon Valley: A New World at the Edge of the Sea,” in Dominion from
12/3 (Th.)
  Sam Walton with John Huey, Sam Walton: Made In America (1992), pp. 156-244.

13. Insecuritization
12/8 (Tu.)
  Louis Uchitelle, The Disposable American: Layoffs and Their Consequences (2007), pp. 124-
  177.
  Jacob S. Hacker, The Great Risk Shift: The New Economic Insecurity and the Decline of the
12/10 (Th.)


Inside Job, directed by Charles Ferguson (2010).

**FINAL EXAM:** Friday, December 18, 1:00 pm - 3:00 p.m. (to be confirmed later in the term).