American Business History

History 247
Prof. Dunlavy

This is a lecture course (4 cr. for undergraduates) that surveys the history of American business from colonial times to the 1980s. For this semester's schedule of lecture topics and weekly reading assignments, see the pages that follow. The readings marked with an asterisk (*) are taken from the books listed immediately below; these can be purchased at the University Bookstore (or other local stores) and a few copies have been placed on reserve at the College Library (Helen C. White). The rest of the readings are contained in a reading packet that can be purchased at Kinko's on University Avenue; two copies are also available on reserve at Helen C. White Library.

All students are required to attend not only the lectures but also a weekly, 50-minute discussion section (times to be arranged during the first week of class). As a rule the discussion sections will run one week behind the syllabus. In other words, the reading assignments and lectures scheduled for one week will be discussed in sections the following week.

There will be two midterms and one final exam, all with the same basic "essay" format. Grades will be based on participation in sections (25%), the two midterm exams (20% each), and the final exam (35%).

REQUIRED BOOKS


Kurt Vonnegut, Player Piano (Dell, 1986).
LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Sept. 6  Introduction to American Business History
Sept. 8  The 18th-Century World Economy

*Blackford and Kerr, pp. 1-35 only.
Joyce Oldham Appleby, Economic Thought and Ideology in  
University Press, 1978), pp. 73-98 (Ch. 4, "The Dutch as a  
Source of Evidence").

Sept. 13  Colonial Business in the North and South
Sept. 15  The Revolutionary War

*Blackford and Kerr, pp. 36-80.
Thomas M. Doerflinger, A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise:  
Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary  
Philadelphia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina,  
1986), pp. 135-64 and 335-64 (Ch 3., "Enterprise and  
Adversity," and Ch. 8, "American Economic Development and  
the Case of Philadelphia").

Sept. 20  Business in the Constitution
Sept. 22  The War of 1812 and the Business Revolution

*Blackford and Kerr, pp. 82-121 (Ch. 3, "The Expansion of  
American Business: Agriculture, Commerce, and  
Industry").
6 pp.
Oscar Handlin and Mary F. Handlin, "Origins of the American  
Business Corporation," Journal of Economic History 5 (May  
"Speech of Mr. Lawrence of Belchertown, in the Senate of  
Massachusetts, on the Amendment Offered by Mr. Cushing  
to the Lowell Rail-Road Bill," February 18, 1836.  20 pp.

Sept. 27  The Industrial Revolution: What It Was and What It Wasn't
Sept. 29  Divisive Issues: Internal Improvements, the Tariff,  
Banking, and Slavery

*Blackford and Kerr, pp. 122-50 (Ch. 4, "Government and  
Business").
John F. Kasson, Civilizing the Machine: Technology and  
Republican Values in America, 1776-1900 (Penguin Books,  
1977), pp. 3-51 [Ch. 1, The Emergence of Republican  
Technology].
Oct. 4  Precursor of "Big Business": Textile Manufacturing
Oct. 6  The Railroad, Part I: A Worrisome New Technology

  Kasson, Civilizing the Machine, pp. 55-106 (Ch. 2, "The Factory as Republican Community").

Oct. 11  FIRST MIDTERM EXAM (covering readings and lectures through Sept. 29 and discussion sections through Oct. 7)
Oct. 13  The Railroad, Part II: Administering the "Octopus"

  *Blackford and Kerr, pp. 152-93 (Ch. 5, "The Emergence of Big Business").

Oct. 18  The Civil War: Turbulent Transition to an Industrial Economy
Oct. 20  Organized Capitalism, Part I: Vertical and Horizontal Integration


Oct. 25  Organized Capitalism, Part II: Bureaucracy, Oligopoly, and Imperialism
Oct. 27  Regulating Big Business: From the ICC to Trust-Busting in the Progressive Era

  *Blackford and Kerr, pp. 196-264 (Ch. 6, "Government and Business in the Gilded Age").

Nov. 1  Rationalizing Labor: Welfare Capitalism as Backward Integration?
Nov. 3  Mobilizing for the First "Great War"

  *Aitken, Scientific Management in Action, pp. 3-48 and 85-185.
Nov. 8  Big Business Triumphant: The 1920s
Nov. 10 Strategy and Structure: Diversification and the M-Form

*Blackford and Kerr, pp. 266-301 (Ch. 8, "The Diversified, Decentralized Company").
Hughes, The Vital Few, pp. 274-355 (Ch. 7, "Henry Ford and the Automobile Age").

Nov. 15 SECOND MIDTERM EXAM (covering readings and lectures through Nov. 3 and discussion sections through Nov. 11)
Nov. 17 The Long, Slow Slide into Depression, 1929-1932

*Blackford and Kerr, pp. 302-16 only (first part of Ch. 9, "The American Political Economy in Transition").
*Sobel, The Great Bull Market (complete)

Nov. 22 The New Deal
Nov. 24 HOLIDAY (begin reading the Vonnegut novel)

*Blackford and Kerr, pp. 316-37 only (last part of Ch. 9, "The American Political Economy in Transition").

Nov. 29 Mobilizing for the Second Great War
Dec. 1 In the Aftermath of World War II: Return to Normalcy?


Dec. 6 Business in a New Socio-Political Context: Modern Managers and the "New Regulation"
Dec. 8 The Troubled 1970s: OPEC and Stagflation

*Vonnegut, Player Piano (complete).

Dec. 13 Structural Changes in the 1980s: International Competition and Domestic Deregulation
Dec. 15 Review

*Blackford and Kerr, pp. 426-45.

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Dec. 17  FINAL EXAM (10:05 a.m.)