History 329 – History of American Capitalism – Spring 2014

Department of History, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Essential Facts

Prof. Dunlavy

Lectures: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-3:45 p.m., 1641 Mosse Humanities Bldg.
Office: 5109 Mosse Humanities, (608) 263-1854; mailbox #5009
Office hours: Mondays, 1:00-3:00 p.m., or by appointment
Email: cdunlavy@wisc.edu

Teaching Assistant – Justin Baldassare

Sections: all meet on Wednesdays
   Sec. 301: 12:05-12:55, B119 Van Vleck
   Sec. 302: 1:20-2:10, 1641 Humanities
   Sec. 303: 2:25-3:15, B235 Van Vleck
Office: 4271 Mosse Humanities, (608) 890-3306; mailbox #4052
Office hours: Thursdays, 12:15-2:15 p.m.
Email: baldassare@wisc.edu

Overview

How did American capitalism reach its current state? This is one of today’s most pressing questions, and it’s arguably the most exciting time in a century to grapple with it.

This course offers useful ways of thinking about (i.e., analyzing, understanding) American capitalism through a survey of its historical development since the mid-eighteen century. Although history cannot be used to predict the future, understanding the historical processes by which we arrived at our current state helps us to make sense of the changes going on around us.

Goals – knowledge and skill-building

This course offers you an opportunity to enhance both your knowledge of the history of American capitalism and your skill at thinking critically and historically.

Our survey is structured around three broad and persistent themes in the history of American capitalism:

- changes in the nature of American capitalism from the mid-18th century to the near-present;
- the ever-changing, though always essential, role of government, broadly construed, which both shaped and was shaped by American capitalism; and
- changes in American capitalism as a social world, defined by social rules (law and norms) and distinctive social relations.

The lectures, assigned readings, and writing assignments will encourage you to develop your ability to think critically. Critical thinking is one of the two most important skills that you can learn, whatever your career aspirations. The components of critical thinking are illustrated in the image to the right. For more information, see The Critical Thinking Community’s webpage at http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/our-concept-of-critical-thinking/411. I have also ordered, as a recommended
The second important skill is historical thinking. This means paying careful attention to events, to change over time, and to the particular sequence of events (chronology). It also means learning to grapple with complexity—e.g., with differing rates of change, with multi-causality, and with necessarily incomplete information. What could be more useful in today’s complex, rapidly changing world? If you would like to read more about historical thinking, I recommend William H. Sewell, Jr., Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

If you do well in this course, you may characterize your skills on your resumé with the following language: “adept at analyzing complex, dynamic events on the basis of incomplete information and at communicating the results of that analysis coherently and succinctly.”

Requirements and other details

Readings

The readings are a mixture of primary sources (i.e., documents produced in the years we are studying) and secondary sources (written in later years, usually based on primary sources). With the exception of Rampolla’s A Pocket Guide to Writing in History, the readings are available on Learn@UW (https://learnuw.wisc.edu, log in with your UW NetID). If there is sufficient demand, a course pack will be available for purchase at the Humanities Copy Center (across from our lecture hall).

If you would like to refresh or enhance your knowledge of U.S. history during the semester, a good choice for this course would be Pauline Maier et al., Inventing America: A History of the United States, 2d ed. (W. W. Norton, 2006), which I have ordered as a recommended reading.

Discussion sections

Discussion sections are an integral part of this course. Attendance is mandatory. Come prepared to participate actively and intelligently in the discussions, based on a close reading of the assignments and on your reflections on the lectures. Your teaching assistant, Justin Baldassare, will provide additional details in the first section meeting. Justin’s contact information, as well as the section times and locations, are listed on p. 1 of this syllabus.

Writing assignments

These are designed to help you develop essential skills—reading and listening carefully, evaluating and synthesizing what you have heard/read, and expressing your knowledge coherently and persuasively in writing. If you have not read the little, all-time classic, The Elements of Style, this would be an excellent time to do so. I ordered it as a recommended book (any recent edition). Also, be sure to make use of resources such as Rampolla’s Pocket Guide and the UW’s Writing Center.

Brief analysis

This, the first assignment of the semester, is due in sections on January 29. Its focus is on sharpening your analytical skills—in this instance, your ability to discern the key “take home” points in a set of documents.
**Take-home papers**

We will have three take-home paper assignments this semester, increasing in length from 250 to 750 words. These are designed to “grow” your skills in critical thinking and historical thinking. In each paper, you will be asked to respond to a question based solely on the lectures and assigned readings.

To get you off on the right track, I will hold a writing workshop in the lecture after the first take-home paper assignment is handed out.

**Final exam**

This will be a closed-book, blue-book exam consisting of one or more essay questions. Further details will be forthcoming in lecture.

Our final exam is on Sunday, May 11, 10:05-12:05 a.m. (not my ideal). If you have a "legal" conflict (three exams within 24 hours), or if you are a McBurney student, please inform Prof. D. as early as possible.

**Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of Your Grade</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in sections</td>
<td>A 93-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing assignments</td>
<td>AB 88-92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief analysis – due Jan. 29 (5%)</td>
<td>B 83-87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THP #1 – due Feb. 18 (10%)</td>
<td>BC 78-82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THP #2 – due Mar. 11 (15%)</td>
<td>C 70-77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THP #3 – due Apr. 15(20%)</td>
<td>D 60-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>F 0-59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table on the left indicates the relative weight of the various components that will form the basis for your semester grade. Your assignments will be graded on the scale shown at the right. Bear in mind that, even if your grade is at the upper (or lower) edge of a grading interval, it will still be reported at the end of the semester as the basic interval grade (e.g., 83 and 87 will both be reported as a B). Penalty for late papers: one full step (e.g., from A to B) for each day (partial days to be pro-rated).

**Intellectual engagement**

Faithful attendance of lectures is critical to getting the full benefit of a lecture course (seems rather obvious, doesn’t it!). But in a lecture course, it is all too easy to adopt a posture of passivity—sitting back and waiting to “receive” information. Developing analytical skills and historical understanding requires engagement. So cultivate an active posture in lectures (and sections). Don't be lulled by my use of PowerPoint in lectures: use the slides for what they offer—an outline of the lecture and related illustrations—and take your own notes to fill in the details. Engage actively and critically with your readings. Bring the questions that your active engagement stimulates to lectures, sections, or office hours. Engagement is a choice.

**Classroom etiquette**

If you cannot avoid arriving late for lectures (or leaving early), please let me know and sit near the door. Laptops are welcome in my lecture hall, but if you do anything other than use it to take notes—especially anything that would distract your fellow students—sit in the rear of the lecture hall (or, better yet, don't bother to come to lecture!). If you must arrive late for discussion section, be sure to talk with your TA in advance. Cell phones: please turn off during lecture and sections; no texting, please. Note that no electronic devices whatsoever will be permitted at the final exam.
Academic honesty

What is "plagiarism"? Here's a definition, based on *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10th ed.):

> To plagiarize is "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own; ... [to] present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source."

Plagiarism has become an increasingly serious offense as our world has become increasingly property-oriented. The very notion of "stealing" ideas or words implies private-property rights in them—a concept made explicit in the term “intellectual property rights,” a matter of great controversy in the internet/media world today and the subject of some of our readings this semester. The minimum penalty for plagiarism in this class is an "F" for the semester, and all cases will be reported to the Dean of Students for possible further action.

In taking this course, you are committing yourself to academic honesty—that is, to submitting assignments that reflect your own, original words and ideas and to acknowledging clearly when you are relying on the words or ideas of others.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, an excellent source of information is the webpage “What is Plagiarism” at [http://www.plagiarism.org/](http://www.plagiarism.org/). I have also posted on Learn@UW a copy of Turnitin’s *manual on plagiarism*). Be sure to read ch. 6 in Rampolla’s *Pocket Guide* as well.

Bias-Free Learning

I am committed to creating and maintaining a bias-free learning environment that allows each of you to do your best work. Please note carefully the following excerpt from UW policies:

*The University of Wisconsin-Madison, in accordance with the laws of the State of Wisconsin, seeks to protect its students from discrimination. S. 36.12 of the Wisconsin Statutes reads in part: No student may be denied admission to, participation in or the benefits of, or [be] discriminated against in any service, program, course, or facility of the (UW) system or its institutions or centers because of a the student's race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, disability, ancestry, age, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital status, or parental status.*

If religious obligations should conflict with sections or lectures or with the assignments, please be sure to give me or your teaching assistant advance notice. If you are a McBurney student, please talk with me early in the semester so that we can discuss necessary arrangements.

If you have any questions or concerns about these policies, please don’t hesitate to bring them to me or to the Dean of Students in the Division of Student Life. For more information on the university’s policies, contact UW-Madison’s Office for Equity and Diversity, 179A Bascom Hall, 500 Lincoln Drive, Madison, WI 53706; (608) 263-2378.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS – SEE NEXT PAGE...
Schedule of lectures, sections, and readings

Lecture topics are subject to change. The readings, which will provide the locus of discussion in sections, are best read in the order that they appear on the schedule below.

Week 1: January 21 – 23

Jan. 21 (T) Lecture – Introductions

Introductory reading

- Mary Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History, 6th ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010), chs. 1-4. This will help to orient those of you who have not taken a college-level history course and will serve as a refresher for those who have.
- “Themes and Concepts” – handed out in lecture; also on Learn@UW.

Jan. 22 – Discussion sections

Introductions – no assigned reading

Jan. 23 (Th) Lecture – Thinking about capitalism; “The nature of colonial capitalism”

**Keyword:** bill of exchange

Week 2: January 28 – January 30

Jan. 28 (T) Lecture – “The imperial political economy”

**Keyword:** colony

Jan. 29 (W) Discussion sections

Assigned readings


**Writing assignment**

- Due in sections: Brief analysis of the Beekman letters (printed; max. word count: 200). What do Beekman’s letters tell us about the social world of capitalism in his time? See the Themes and Concepts handout for guidance on thinking about the social world of capitalism.

Jan. 30 (Th) Lecture – “Revolutionary and post-colonial tumult”
Week 3: February 4 – 6

_Feb. 4 (T) Lecture_ – “Breaking with the colonial past: the War of 1812”

**Keyword:** War of 1812

_Feb. 5 (W) Discussion sections_

Assigned readings


_Feb. 6 (Th) Lecture_ - “A new institutional power: the corporation”

Week 4: February 11 – 13

_Feb. 11 (T) Lecture_ – “Capital and credit in antebellum capitalism”

**Keyword:** general incorporation

_1st take-home paper assignment – handed out in lecture today_

_Feb. 12 (W) Discussion Sections_

Assigned readings


_Feb. 13 (Th) – Workshop in lecture on the writing assignment_

Week 5: February 18 – 20

_Feb. 18 (T) – “Race and gender in antebellum capitalism”_
Feb. 19 (W) Discussion Sections

Assigned readings


Feb. 20 (Th) Lecture – “What was so revolutionary about ‘industry’?”

**Keyword:** "American System" (of manufacturing)

Week 6: February 25 – 27

Feb. 25 (T) Lecture – “Civil War: Refiguring state and economy”

**Keyword:** “American System” (the policy package)

Feb. 26 (W) Discussion sections

Assigned readings

- Excerpts from the annual reports to the shareholders of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, 1827, 1837, 1847, 1857.
  - Explore the book’s companion website at [http://railroads.unl.edu](http://railroads.unl.edu), focusing on the Topic: Railroad Work and Workers.

Feb. 27 (Th) Lecture – “New strategies of growth – integrating enterprises”

**Keywords:** horizontal integration, vertical integration

Week 7: March 4 – 6

March 4 (T) Lecture – “Social relations of capitalism transformed, part 1: labor”

**2nd take-home paper assignment – handed out in lecture today**

**Keyword:** Homestead

March 5 (W) Discussion sections

Last updated: 2/11/2014 4:27:12 PM – Be sure to check the next page for continuation.
Assigned readings

  - A Congressional View (Hon. William C. Oates, Chairman of the Congressional Investigating Committee)
  - A Constitutional View (George Ticknor Curtis)
  - A Knight of Labor’s View (T. V. Powderly, General Master Workman of the Knights of Labor)


**March 6 (Th) Lecture** – “Social relations of capitalism transformed, part 2: capital”

**KEYWORD:** plutocracy

**Week 8: March 11 – 13**

**March 11 (T) Lecture** – “Social barriers to entry: race and gender ca. 1900”

**KEYWORD:** The “Black Edison”

2nd paper assignment – due in lecture today

**March 12 (W) – Discussion Sections**

Assigned readings


**March 13 (Th) Lecture** – “The Weak American State – Myth and Reality”

**KEYWORD:** “race to the bottom”

**March 18 – 20 – Spring Break**
No lectures or sections this week.

Week 9: March 25 – 27

March 25 (T) Lecture – “Consolidating the mass production economy in the Great War”

**KEYWORDS:** dollar-a-year men, Simplified Practice

March 26 (W) Discussion sections

Assigned readings
- “National Garment Retailers' Association Arranges Meeting at Waldorf-Astoria, November 27, to Discuss the Conservation of Wool,” *American Cloak and Suit Review* 14, no. 6 (December 1917), 139-145.

March 27 (Th) Lecture – “The new interdependence: ‘Systems’”

**KEYWORD:** diversification

Week 10: April 1 – 3

April 1 (T) Lecture – “The Great Depression: Crisis of Capitalism?”

**KEYWORD:** technological unemployment

April 2 (W) Discussion sections

Assigned readings

*April 3 (Th) Lecture – “World war again - forging modern American capitalism”*

**KEYWORD:** military-industrial complex

---

**Week 11: April 8 – 10**

*April 8 (T) Lecture – “The surprise of post-WWII prosperity”*

**KEYWORDS:** National Defense Highways Act, automation

3rd take-home paper assignment – handed out in lecture today

*April 9 (W) Discussion sections*

Assigned readings – None this week; sections will focus on the paper assignment

*April 10 (Th) Lecture – “New Strategies – Conglomeration and Franchising”*

---

**Week 12: April 15 – 17**

*April 15 (T) lecture – “American business pushes abroad”*

**KEYWORD:** multinationals

3rd take-home paper assignment – due in lecture today

*April 16 (W) Discussion sections*

Assigned readings


*April 17 (Th) Lecture – “The problem of the corporation”*

---

**Week 13: April 22 – 24**
April 22 (T) Lecture – “Why the ‘new (social) regulation’?”

**Keyword:** OSHA

April 23 (W) Discussion sections

**Assigned readings**

April 24 (Th) Lecture – “Crisis again? The 1970s”

**Keyword:** stagflation

Week 14: April 29 – May 1

April 29 (T) Lecture – “A new era of capitalism? I. Reversing course”

**Keyword:** core business, deregulation

April 30 (W) Discussion Sections

**Keyword:** pseudo-professionalism

**Assigned readings**

May 1 (Th) Lecture – “A new era of capitalism? II. A new market revolution”

**Keywords:** “forced capitalists”

Week 15: May 6 – 8
May 6 (T) Lecture – “A new era of capitalism? III. Technological revolutions”

Final exam prep sheet – handed out in lecture today

Keywords: nanotechnology

May 7 (W) Discussion sections

Assigned readings – none this week; sections will focus on preparation for the final exam


End-of-semester events

Review – will be included in the last lectures

Final exam – Sunday, May 11, 10:05 a.m.-12:05 p.m., location TBA