

History 247 / UW-Madison / Fall 2001

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[Prof. D.](#)

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Course Highlights



- **Themes:** we'll study closely-linked changes in the nature of American business and in the American political economy over two centuries
- **Analysis:** learn key conceptual tools for analyzing change in American business and sharpen your critical-thinking skills
- **Writing:** enhance your ability to communicate your ideas in prose

Click the links above for all details.



Fall 2001



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American Business History

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Description - Goals

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This lecture course explores the dramatic changes that have marked American capitalism since the mid-eighteenth century. Throughout the semester, we will emphasize **two themes**:

- the increasing importance and power of the **corporation**, and
- changes in the role of **government**, without which business life would be -- in Thomas Hobbes' words -- "nasty, brutish, and short."

As we explore these themes, the lectures, the readings, and your writing assignments will address **three broad questions**:

- **how** the nature of American business changed from one era to the next;
- **why** these changes (and not others) took place; and
- with **what consequences** (social, political, economic).

The course is designed to pursue **three goals**:

- to give you basic **factual knowledge** of changes in American business from one era to the next;
- to sharpen your **analytical skills** -- that is, to improve your powers of
 - **critical analysis** (your ability to read closely, to reason soundly, and to express your thoughts clearly); and of
 - **historical analysis** (your ability to analyze and interpret complex, dynamic events with imperfect information -- if you do well in the course, you can put that on your resumé).
- to perform the mental feat of "**de-naturalizing**" **American business** -- as you develop an understanding of the forces that pushed change in certain directions but not others, you will begin to see that business-as-we know-it is the product of specific historical forces, not an inevitable, pre-determined outcome. This insight, in turn, helps in making sense of changes underway in American business today.

For the nitty-gritty details, click the links above.

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WebCT

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Schedule -- WARNING: under construction

Sept. 4-6	Oct. 2-4	Oct. 30-Nov. 1	Nov. 27-29
Sept. 11-13	Oct. 9-11	Nov. 6-8	Dec. 4-6
Sept. 18-20	Oct. 16-18	Nov. 13-15	Dec. 11-13
Sept. 27-27	Oct. 23-25	Nov. 20	Dec. 21

Lecture topics are subject to change. Clicking the hyperlink on the readings will take directly to the E-Reserves copy. For additional information, check [Find Readings](#).

Sept. 4-6	Lecture Topics [return to top]
	Intro, course mechanics
	#1 On the periphery of the world economy
	Section Assignment
	Sections WILL meet this week / first brief writing assignment handed out
	Blackford and Kerr, Introduction + ch. 1
Sept. 11-13	Lecture Topics [return to top]
	#2 The world of colonial business
	#3 Constructing a nation's business: revolution and constitution-making
	Section Assignment
	First brief writing assignment due
	Read: Selected letters of Gerard G. Beekman from Philip L. White, transcriber and ed., <i>The Beekman Mercantile Papers, 1746-1799</i> (New York: New York Historical Society, 1956).
	Read: Blackford and Kerr, ch. 2 (review ch. 1)
Sept. 18-20	Lecture Topics [return to top]
	#4 Reorienting American business: War of 1812
	#5 A new institutional power: the corporation
	Section Assignment
	Read: Abimelech Coody [Gulian C. Verplanck], Letter to the Hon. Saml. L. Mitchell . . . on the Danger of Putting Money into the U. States' and Manhattan Banks . . . (New York, 1811).
	Read: Blackford and Kerr, chapters 3-4
Sept. 25-27	Lecture Topics [return to top]
	#6 Land and capital -- how much for whom?
	#7 Origins of the myth of "laissez-faire"
	Section Assignment
	Second brief writing assignment handed out

		<u>Daniel Raymond</u> , <i>Thoughts on Political Economy</i> (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas, Jun'r., 1820), 425-433 -- chapter on "Corporations".
		Read: [Daniel Henshaw], <i>Remarks upon the Rights and Powers of Corporations, and of the Rights, Powers, and Duties of the Legislature Toward Them ... by a Citizen of Boston</i> (Boston: Beals and Greene, 1837, excerpt.)
		Read: <u>Anonymous</u> , <i>On the Rights and Powers of Corporations. A Notice of the Pamphlet by a Citizen of Boston. By His Fellow Citizen</i> (Boston, 1837).
		Review: Blackford and Kerr, chapters 3-4
Oct. 2-4	Lecture Topics [return to top]	
	#8	The "industrial revolution" -- what was it?
	#9	Fostering technological change
		Section Assignment
		Second brief writing assignment due
		Read: <u>American Society for the Encouragement of Manufactures</u> , "Address to the People of the United States (1817)," in <i>The Philosophy of Manufactures: Early Debates over Industrialization in the United States</i> , eds. M. Brewster Folsom and Steven D. Lubar (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 199-224.
		Read: <u>James Swan</u> , "Address on the Question for an Inquiry into the State of Agriculture, Manufactures and Commerce (1817)," in <i>ibid.</i> , pp. 225-240.
		Review: Blackford and Kerr, chapters 3-4
Oct. 9-11	Lecture Topics [return to top]	
	#10	American railroads: disorderly development
	#11	The social limits of property rights: race and gender in antebellum business
		Section Assignment
		Read: <u>Excerpts from the annual reports</u> of the directors of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to their shareholders in 1827, 1837, 1847, 1857.
		Read: Blackford and Kerr, chapter 5
Oct. 16-18	Lecture Topics [return to top]	
	#12	The Civil War: birthing a national economy
	#13	The paradox of American corporations: plutocracy ascendant
		Section Assignment
		Take-home essay assignment handed out
		Read: Documents re. plantation management from John R. Commons et al., <i>A Documentary History of American Industrial Society</i> , vol 1, <i>Plantation and Frontier</i> (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1910), pp. 112-
		Read: Blackford and Kerr, ch. 6 (review ch. 5)
Oct. 23-25	Lecture Topics [return to top]	
	#14	New managerial strategies: vertical and horizontal integration
	#15	Money and human capital in the late 19th century
		Section Assignment
		Take-home essay assignment due
		Read: <u>Andrew Carnegie</u> , <i>How to Win Fortune</i> , reprinted from the <i>New York Tribune</i> , 13 April 1890. (12 pp. -- <i>the copy on Electronic Reserves is poor but the best available!</i>)

	Read: <u>Andrew Carnegie</u> , <i>An Employer's View of the Labor Question</i> , reprinted from <i>The Forum</i> , April 1886. (12 pp.)
	Read: TBA (labor perspective)
	Review: Blackford and Kerr, chapters 5-6
Oct. 30, Nov. 1	Lecture Topics [return to top]
	#16: Social barriers to entry: race and gender at the turn of the century
	#17: Rethinking business "regulation"
	Section Assignment
	Read: <u>Booker T. Washington</u> , <i>The Negro in Business</i> (orig. pub., 1906), ch. 1.
	Read: <u>W. E. B. Du Bois</u> , <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (orig. pub., 1903), ch. 3 -- "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others".
	Read: <u>Rheta Childe Dorr</u> , <i>What Eight Million Women Want</i> (1910), ch. 5 -- "Women's Demands on the Rulers of Industry".
	Read: Blackford and Kerr, chapter 7
Nov. 6-8	Lecture Topics [return to top]
	#18: Alternatives to the large corporation
	#19: Consolidating the power of big capital: the era of the Great War
	Section Assignment
	Third brief writing assignment handed out
	Read: <u>Frederick W. Taylor</u> , <i>Principles of Scientific Management</i> (1911), ch. 2.
	Read: <i>Selections from Hearings before Special Committee of the House of Representatives to Investigate the Taylor and Other Systems of Shop Management . . .</i> (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912).
	Review: Blackford and Kerr, chapter 7
Nov. 13-15	Lecture Topics [return to top]
	#20: "Fordismus" -- the power of systems
	#21: Financial-managerial capitalism in crisis: the 1930s
	Section Assignment
	Third brief writing assignment due
	Read: <u>Henry Ford</u> in collaboration with Samuel Crowther, <i>Moving Forward</i> (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1930), pp. 62-88.
	Read: TBA (on white-collar work)
	Read: Blackford and Kerr, chapters 8-9
Nov. 20	Lecture Topics [return to top]
	#22: Another war -- or, the making of modern business
	#23: The surprise of the 1950s
	Section Assignment
	NO SECTIONS THIS WEEK
	Read: Blackford and Kerr, chapters 10-11
Nov. 27-29	Lecture Topics [return to top]
	#24: The problem of the corporation

	#25	Multinationals: "global reach"
	Section Assignment	
		Read: Kurt Vonnegut, <i>Player Piano</i> (Dell, 1986).
		Review: Blackford and Kerr, chapters 10-11
Dec. 4-6	Lecture Topics [return to top]	
	#26	Understanding change: conglomerates and the "new regulation"
	#27	Crisis again: the 1970s
	Section Assignment	
		Read: Robert H. Hayes and William J. Abernathy, "Managing Our Way to Economic Decline," <i>Harvard Business Review</i> 58 (July-August 1980): 67-77.
		Read: TBA (opposing perspective)
		Read: Blackford and Kerr, chapters 12-13
Dec. 11-13	Lecture Topics [return to top]	
	#28	The contradictions of the 1980s
	#29	Novelty in the 1990s
	Section Assignment	
		Read: Selections from <u>New York Times</u> , <i>The Downsizing of America</i> (New York: Random House, Times Books, 1996).
		Review: Blackford and Kerr, chapters 1-2
TBA	Review session	
Dec. 21	Final exam, 7:45 a.m. [return to top]	

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Description - Sections

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This course includes mandatory discussion sections. Each week you will receive a list of keywords and discussion questions to guide your reading; also, expect regular, brief writing assignments. Your teaching assistant, [Stacey Smith](#), will give further details in section the first week of the semester. Note that participation in sections (details below) accounts for 25% of your course grade.

Teaching assistant:

- [Stacey Smith](#)
- Office: 5268 Humanities
- Telephone: (608) 263-1868
- Mailbox: #5072 (by the 5th-floor elevator in the "History corner" of Humanities)
- Email: slsmith9@students.wisc.edu

Section times/places:

- Wednesday, 2:25 p.m., 2653 Humanities
- Wednesday, 4:35 p.m., 2115 Humanities
- Thursday, 9:55 a.m., 574 Van Hise
- Thursday, 11:00 a.m., 2165 Grainger

Participation is comprised of several elements.

1. **Attendance** is necessary but not sufficient.
2. **Preparation:** Be sure to do the assigned reading before section. Come with questions about the readings, lectures, or writing assignments.
3. **Discussion:** Active and informed discussion of the readings and lectures enhances the value of your section. You can make a difference!

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Description - Grades

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Your grade this semester will be calculated as follows:

participation in sections	25%
brief writing assignments (3)	5 - 10 - 10% each
Take-home essay	25%
Final exam (blue book)	25%