

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
Department of History  
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History 574

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PROSPECTUS

In defense of capitalism its contemporary apologists have mounted an offensive on all fronts. Rarely have they been so vociferous, or so confident that the great motor force of social progress is (and must be) material self-aggrandizement. With a sanguinity which brushes aside skepticism, they have chanted as axiomatic those assumptions about human comportment or community well-being which were the stock-in-trade of early Victorian ideologues. No matter that the structure and strategy of contemporary monopoly capitalism bear no resemblance to the workings of the small-scale, competitive industrial system in the mid-19th century. In its basic postulates the Faith has remained remarkably constant: so that the writings of a Milton Friedman or a George Gilder echo the ruddy apologetics of a Samuel Smiles or Nassau Senior; so that the discourse of Mr. Reagan or Mrs. Thatcher breathes with nostalgia for a past when, presumably, hard work and free enterprise were the sure ingredients for success.

Thus, in our collective readings and individual research projects, we will be concerned to analyze the premises of the prevailing ideology; and to evaluate them in the light of the historical record or of actual practice: that individual self-interest informs all human behavior; that "homo economicus" has no greater passion than "to truck, barter, and trade for profit" (A. Smith); that "private vices add up to the public good" (B. Mandeville); that in the free market system success or failure is a function (pure and simple) of the individual's effort and capacity; that ever-expanding production for profit (no matter what is produced or how) is synonymous with progress; that free enterprise is the indispensable condition for political democracy....

Time was when the dictum of Calvin Coolidge -- "that the business of America is business" -- appeared to trivelize the requirements of a culture and the needs of a community. But not so in this day and age, when the prestigious MBA and the "fast track" pose as the desiderata of life....Is it sufficient to dismiss the rich history of socialist criticism as one long, unbroken preface to bureaucratic communism? Is it sufficient, in order to berate or minimize the struggle for a more human, egalitarian community, to underscore the patent failure of certain self-styled socialist regimes? To such questions, and others, we will return, over and again, as our collective discourse proceeds.

A. The Weekly Discussion Meetings

We have listed below the reading assignments for each discussion. During our first collective session, on January 25, we will indicate briefly the significance of each reading, and the major problem which it addresses.

We will expect you to have read the material under discussion (or most of it at least). But more than that: we will require all of you to come each week with two typed questions, the ones which (after having reflected about the book) you consider critical for our discussion. Thus, as the point of departure each Friday, one of you will be chosen at random to read off those questions. The rest of the group will then accept your choices and proceed to address them; or reject your questions as insufficient and substitute others.

## 1. The Required Paperbacks

R.H. Tawney -- The Acquisitive Society  
 Karl Polanyi -- The Great Transformation  
 E.P. Thompson -- The Making of the English Working Class  
 Gareth Stedman-Jones -- Outcast London  
 Harry Caudill -- Night Comes to the Cumberlandds  
 Richard Edwards -- Contested Terrain  
 G. William Domhoff -- The Powers that Be  
 Frances Piven and Richard Cloward -- The New Class War  
 Manuel Friginals -- The Sugarmill

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In addition to those required books we have asked the bookstores to stock a small number of two other titles, which are purely optional: J. Beecher and R. Bienvenu, The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier; and Friedrich Hayek, The Road to Serfdom.

## 2. Calendar and Agenda

February 1 -- Tawney, The Acquisitive Society  
                   chapters 1 through 6; 9; 11  
 February 8 -- Polanyi, The Great Transformation  
                   chapters 3 through 10  
 February 15 -- Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class  
                   chapters 9; 11 (pp 350-75); 13 (pp 521-75)  
 February 22 -- Stedman-Jones, Outcast London  
                   chapters 8 through 15  
 March 1 -- Caudill, Night Comes to the Cumberlandds  
                   chapters 6; 7; 9; 10; 13; 14; 17 through 19  
 March 8 -- Edwards, Contested Terrain  
                   chapters 1; 4 through 8  
 March 15 -- Domhoff, The Powers That Be  
                   chapters to be assigned  
 March 29 -- Piven and Cloward, The New Class War  
                   the entire volume  
 April 12 -- Friginals, The Sugarmill  
                   parts 1; 3; 5

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April 19 -- Research Team A  
 April 26 -- Research Team B  
 May 3 -- Research Team C  
 May 10 -- Research Team D

## B. The Research Teams

1. In analyzing the ideology and workings of capitalism, we should form a collective: so that we collaborate in our research; so that the particular contribution of each participant enhances our common understanding. Thus, we will organize four research teams, each of which will investigate a large and significant problem.  
 Each research team will consist of four active participants, everyone of whom will conduct an inquiry into some particular aspect of the overall problem.  
 Aside from the weekly seminar session the members of each research team should meet together informally, at a mutually convenient time during the week, to discuss their findings; to confront the criticisms and questions of others; and little by little, to develop among themselves a common vocabulary of understanding. Thus, over the course of the semester, each research team should develop strong bonds of familiarity: so that when its four participants lead the seminar, they can carry on an exciting, spontaneous, yet coherent conversation about their research problem.
2. By the end of the term, the research team will submit a written report. Those reports should comprise four sections, each written by one of the four participants and embodying the results of his (or her) inquiry. We're talking then about a collective report but bringing together four interrelated approaches to the general problem which the research team has addressed.
3. As members of the seminar, you will carry a reasonably heavy load of reading in preparing for the weekly discussions. In those circumstances we can't realistically expect you to plunge profoundly into your particular research topic. Thus, we are interested, first and foremost, in introducing you to the topic: so that you understand what it tells us about the premises and practices of capitalism; so that you can then proceed to carry your inquiry as far as your time permits.  
 Thus, for each topic we will direct you to one or two principal books, which should enable you to define and understand the subject. These titles should be the foundation of your research. In addition we may list (in parentheses) other volumes which also address the topic; even if you don't have the time to read those supplementary books carefully, you should at least peruse them and become somewhat familiar with their approach. If you should be propelled by feverish enthusiasm about your investigation, then you should move beyond our suggestions: into directions which your insight and imagination have charted.
4. The Four Research Teams: A; B; C; D
- a. Research Team A:

Subject of Inquiry: the Utopian Critique of Capitalist Culture, in Theory and Practice

The research group will examine and analyze the utopian vision; in so doing they should evaluate the significance of utopianism: its expose (whether explicit or implied) of free market capitalism and bourgeois culture; its

"subversive" function within the Established Order; its value and limitation as a source of social change.

1. the utopian vision as cultural and social subversion:

Beecher and Bienvenu, ed. -- The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier  
William Morris -- News from Nowhere

2. Oneida as a communal experience

Pierpont Noyes -- My Father's House : an Oneida Boyhood  
Jessie Kinsley -- A Lasting Spring  
(Ira Mandelka -- Religion, Society and Utopia in 19th  
century America)

3. the utopian critique of Paul Goodman

Paul (and Percival) Goodman -- Communitas  
Paul Goodman -- Growing Up Absurd  
(Paul Goodman, People and Personnel; Anatole Kopp,  
Changer la vie)

4. cultural subversion in action: the French Uprising of May 1968

Alain Schnapp, ed. -- The French Student Uprising  
Daniel Singer -- Prelude to Revolution  
(Reimut Reiche -- Sexuality and Class Struggle)

b. Research Team B:

Subject of Inquiry: the sovereignty of the Free Market and its consequences  
The research group will examine and analyze the workings of free market  
capitalism: the dominion of private or corporate gain over community well-  
being: the illusion of equal powers in the market place, or of authentic  
free choice.

1. power and impotence in the workings of corporate capitalism

Barry Bluestone -- The De-Industrializing of America: Plant Closings  
Richard Barnet -- Global Reach (especially Part 3)  
(newspaper and periodical sources for specific cases of  
plant closings and community disintegration)

2. the new industrial and technological catastrophes: the unprecedented hazard of the unrestrained freedom to produce

Newspaper and periodical accounts of several glaring catastrophes  
(government inquiries if they exist): the mammoth explosion in  
Flixborough, England (June 1, 1974); the lethal pollution of the  
atmosphere in Seveso, Italy (July 10, 1976); the ecological disaster  
caused by the Amoco Cadiz in Brittany, France (March 16, 1978); Three  
Mile Island (March 28, 1979); Bhopal, India (December 1984)

3. coercion and labor migration: Objectification in the Free Market

History Task Force -- Labor Migration under Capitalism: the  
Puerto Rican Experience

Hugh Tinker -- A New System of Slavery

(Manuel Castells, "Immigrant Workers & Class Struggle," Politics  
& Society No. 5, 1975, pp 33-36; Gary Cross, Immigrant Workers  
in Industrial France: Daniel Berman, Death on the Job)

4. the illusion of equal opportunity: the reproduction of poverty in the  
free market

Michael Harrington -- The New American Poverty

Michael Harrington -- The Other America

(John Gaventa -- Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and  
Rebellion in the Appalachian Valley)

c. Research Team C:

Subject of Inquiry: Capitalist "development" in the Third World

The research group will examine and analyze the contradictions between  
authentic development and various growth strategies; and the modalities of  
neo-colonialism...in a word, the sources of the North-South crisis

1. capitalist strategies in 3rd world agriculture: the mission of Western  
agribusiness and the fate of poor peasant masses

Susan George -- How the Other Half Dies

Susan George -- Feeding the Few

(Rene Dumont and Nicholas Cohen, The Growth of Hunger;  
James Petras and Robert Laporte, Cultivating Revolution)

2. capitalism and the imperative of racism: the case of South Africa

Frederick Johnstone -- Class, Race and Gold: a study of class  
relationships and racial discrimination

Dan O'Meara -- Volkskapitalism: Class, Capital and Ideology

(Bernard Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South  
Africa; John Cell, -- the Highest Stage of White Supremacy)

3. "growth" or development in the 3rd World: the case of the Phillipines

Stephen Shalom -- The US and the Phillipines: a study of neo-  
colonialism

W. Bello, D. Kinley -- Development Debacle & the World Bank in the  
Phillipines (Norman Girvan, Corporate Imperialism; Cheryl Payer,  
The World Bank)

4. the capitalist "miracle" in Brazil: human and ecological costs in the  
Amazon

Shelton Davis -- Victims of the Miracle

R. Bourne -- Assault on the Amazon  
 Jean Eglin and Herve Thery -- Le Pillage de l'Amazone  
 (R. J. Goodloe and H.S. Irwin, Green Hell to Red Desert?;  
 periodical accounts of Daniel Ludwig and his Amazon projects)

d. Research Team D:

Subject of Inquiry: Ideology and Myth...the enduring axioms of free-market dogma

The research group will address the fundamental premises of the System; and compare them with its actual workings; and consider the social or moral implications of those premises in the light of the socialist critique.

1. "la carrière ouverte aux talents": that in free-market capitalism upward mobility depends only on individual ability: the situation workers
  - Ely Chinoy -- Automobile Workers and the American Dream
  - Harry Braverman -- Labor and Monopoly Capitalism: the Degredation of Work
  - Robert Linhart -- The Assembly Line  
 (T. Nichols and H. Beynon -- Living with Capitalism)
2. "la carrière ouverte aux talents:" the reproduction of ruling elites
  - Ferdinand Lundberg -- The Rich and Super-Rich
  - C. Wright Mills -- The Power Elite  
 (P. Collier and D. Horowitz -- The Rockefellers; John Updike, Rabbit novels)
3. the axiom that the corollary of free market capitalism is the open marketplace of ideas and values: the making of consumers, disciplined wage-earners, national chauvinists
  - Stuart Ewen -- Captains of Consciousness
  - Joel Spring -- Education and The Corporate State
  - Richard Drinnan -- Facing West  
 (John Mackenzie, Propaganda and Empire; Alasdaire Clayre, Work and Play)
4. the axiom that "free enterprise" fosters the laissez-faire state
  - Bertram Gross -- Friendly Fascism
  - Ralph Miliband -- The State in Capitalist Society  
 (T.K. Quinn, Giant Enterprise: Threat to Democracy; Robert Brady, Business as a System of Power)