

Department of History
University of Wisconsin
SEMESTER II, 1989-1990

HISTORY 901

MR. HOLLINGSWORTH

As this is a pro-seminar, the main concerns of the class will be reading and discussing the literature on the political economy of the United States since 1890. Each week, the readings will focus on topics around which the literature is organized. During the semester, you should become familiar with the literature on the history of American political economy since 1890 and sensitive to its inadequacies. You should also become aware of the potential for conducting research in new areas.

A major concern of this course is to analyze the changing nature of American capitalism and the role of the state during the twentieth century and to analyze how they are distinctive as well as similar to that in other highly industrialized, capitalist societies. The course will devote particular attention to class relationships, focusing on the distinctive characteristics of the working-class and capital in the United States. The course will be especially concerned with why the relations between labor and capital in the United States are different from that in other highly industrial societies, and how class relationships have influenced the role of the American state.

In so far as the course is concerned with the state, the primary focus will be on the role of the state in shaping economic and social policies. For example, in the area of social policy, the readings will confront the problem of why the welfare state has differed so much in the United States from other highly industrial countries. In the area of economic policy, the readings will be concerned with problems which are inherent capitalist economies, but the focus will tend to focus on differences in various economic sectors of the economy. The readings will confront the problem of why class relationships have varied from one industrial sector by the economy to another (e.g., textiles, steel, automotive, aircraft, computer, agriculture, etc.) and why these relationship have varied over time within the same sector.

Within this context, readings will devote particular attention to the changes in the institutional arrangements which have altered the nature of American capitalism and the American political system since the late nineteenth century. In addition, the readings will explore how various institutional arrangements in American society have influenced the performance of the economy. More specifically, the readings will analyze (1) the political and economic institutions which have emerged in the United States since 1890, and (2) how these institutional arrangements have influenced various types of social and economic policies which have been implemented since the Second World War.

Students in the course should emerge with a good understanding of the (1) inherent tensions between democratic and capitalist institutions, (2) the persisting crises which are inherent in capitalism systems, and (3) why the American economy is performed as it has at different time points.

Much of the course will focus on the social, economic, and political arrangements which had become highly institutionalized by 1940. The last part of the course will focus on how these institutional arrangements placed constraints on the formation and implementation of public policies after 1940. In addition, substantial attention will be devoted throughout the course to analyzing what classes and groups have benefitted by the social, economic, and political arrangements in the United States since 1890.

READING

There are more titles on the reading list than any student can master. The purpose of the reading list is to acquaint you with the literature, and to suggest titles on subjects which you may wish to express in greater depth either during the course or later.

Each week, there is a core of readings. I hope that you will be able to read these. However, for some weeks, there is a heavy reading assignment in the core area. My hope and expectation is that you will find the reading interesting and that you will want to read as many as time permits.

CLASS DISCUSSIONS

Each week, the discussions will focus on the subject of that week's readings. The discussions will be led by groups of two or three students who should collectively prepare for the class sessions which they will lead. Each student should participate in leading at least two class discussions during the semester.

A seminar involves collective effort. It will work well only if everyone works together. If you ease up, you injure the quality of the entire class.

Each student is to write two papers, each being approximately 10-12 typed, double-spaced pages in length. These papers are to be critical reviews of books or literature which confront major problems or questions posed by the course. The model for these papers will be essays which appear in either The New York Review of Books or Reviews in American History. All paper topics

must be approved in advance by Mr. Hollingsworth. The first paper is due no later than March 14 and the second paper is due no later than the week of the last class meeting (May 9), though you may submit your papers before these dates. Each student is advised to choose topics well in advance of these dates.

GRADING

Grading will be based on written assignments and discussion participation -- including one's role in leading the class discussions.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES AVAILABILITY

There are two types of readings. Those which are core readings which I recommend that everyone read. In addition, for most weeks, there are other titles which you may wish to consult. Materials to be read by everyone are noted with an *. Materials with # should be purchased in the University Bookstore. In addition, I have prepared a packet of core readings which each student should purchase at Kinko's, 620 University Avenue.

Many other materials have been placed on three hour reserve at either the State Historical Society or the Helen C. White Library. If you cannot locate a book or article in these various places, please contact me.

From time to time, additional materials will be placed in the Department of History Library on the fourth floor of the Humanities Building (Room 4257). the department library hours are:

8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

1:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday.

The History Library is closed Saturday, Sunday and holidays.