History 292
HI 292: Capitalism in America: Economic History of the US

Spring, 2019
Classes: TTThurs, 9:30-10:45, CAS 228
Office Hours: Wed, 10-11; Thurs, 11-12
or by appointment (ferleger@bu.edu)

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Course Outline and Requirements
This course focuses on the history of American Capitalism, that is, the business and economic history of the United States. The approach to the material will be broad rather than narrow and the lectures and assigned readings will not only deal with key individuals in the historical development of the American economy but also with related business, economic, organizational, political, institutional and social developments in American society as a whole.

The class will meet on Tuesday and Thursday, from 9:30-10:45. There will be two scheduled exams, plus a final. Exams will be based on classroom lectures and readings and each exam will be essay in format. The first and second exams will account for between 40 and 60% of the course grade, the final will also be worth between 40 and 60%. If your average is higher in the hourly exams the final will count 40%; if the final grade is higher than your hourly exams the final will be worth 60%. If you take both hourly exams I will drop the lower of the two grades. **There will be no make-up exams.** If you miss an exam, the final will be worth 75% and the other exam 25%. There may also be class presentations and short papers and they will account for 10-20% of your lowest exam grade.

Plagiarism is taking someone else's words, or even their ideas, and using them as though they were your own, without giving credit to the original author. This is a serious infraction. When you use more than 3 consecutive words from anyone else (even another student or the Internet), you must place the phrase in quotation marks and indicate its original source, whatever it may be. “Mosaic plagiarism” is when you modify the word order of the original source or plug in synonyms but still use the original sentence structure and idea sequence. When you use the organization structure or concepts from a source, you need to cite it in a footnote or parenthetically. Please see your CAS Academic Conduct Book for full details of possible sanctions.

Completion of the reading and participation in classroom discussions constitute the very essence of the classroom experience. Your attendance reflects your respect and courtesy to your fellow students. If you must miss a class, please tell me in advance. If you must miss several classes, please talk to me as soon as possible. Please feel free to interrupt the lectures if you have a question, a contrary opinion or different interpretation, or an example that is relevant to the discussion. Students are encouraged to participate and the course will be much more enjoyable and interesting if you become actively involved in it.

The articles and books in this course are very different in their approach to historical analysis than those in other history courses as well as in the emphasis on various theoretical frameworks. The course readings will provide you with a framework to understand and explore the business and economic history of the United States. **The readings, especially the articles, need to be read carefully and frequently, both to prepare for classroom discussion as well as for the exams.** The exams will emphasize the ability to explain and describe what happened rather than memorize. Exam essays will be
evaluated on the arrangement and orderly progression of ideas rather than only on the mere reproduction of factual information.

All articles are available at the blackboard site (blackboard learn). Go to the site and click on Spring 2019 (HI292 A1 Capitalism in America). The articles will be available on the site before the assigned reading date.

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Required Books:


Plus Additional Readings and handouts

Class topics and readings

January 22: Introduction


Readings:

The American Promise (hereafter AP), chapter: 16-20.

Glenn Porter, The Rise of Big Business, 1860-1920


February 12, (tentative date, first exam); January 31, February, 14, 21, 26, 28, March 5: Business, Labor, Manufacturing and WWI, 1900-1929

Readings:

AP, chapters, 21-22


March 7, 19, 21, 26, 28: The Development of a Mass Consumer Society, The Great Depression, and the New Deal: 1920-41

Readings:

AP, chapters 23-24

Sobel, chapters 2, 3.

David Hounshell, “Cul-de-sac: The Limits of Fordism & the Coming of Flexible Mass Production,” in From the American System to Mass Production, pages 263-301. [Blackboard]
April 2 (tentative 2nd exam), April 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25: Government, Business, Labor, World War II, the early post-WWII years, the 1960s to 2018

Readings:

AP, chapters 25-29

Sobel, chapters 4-11


http://www.alternet.org/story/153875/americas%E2%80%99s_dead_zones%3A_from_detroit_to_dyersburg%2C_why_does_prosperity_pass_so_many_places_by

Louis Ferleger and Jacob Magid, “How to End the Nightmare of Jobless America,” AlterNet, June, 2012
http://www.alternet.org/story/155731/how_to_end_the_nightmare_of_jobless_america


Review: April 30, May 2.