

Princeton University, Fall 2010
History 468

THE AMERICAN CORPORATION

Thursday, 1:30-4:20 p.m.
Frist 210

Eduardo Canedo
ecanedo@princeton.edu
Office location: Joseph Henry House 20
Office hours: Tuesday, 9:00-11:00 a.m.,
and by appointment

Jonathan Levy
jilevy@princeton.edu
Office location: Dickinson 102
Office hours: Tuesday, 2:00-4:00 p.m.,
and by appointment

The business corporation is today perhaps the most powerful and pervasive institution in American public life. This seminar studies the history of the American corporation – from its colonial origins to its present form as a major actor on the American, indeed, world stage. Moving across centuries, the course has two focuses. First, we trace the development of the corporation as a legal institution, examining its growing, while contested, economic, political, and cultural power. Second, we look inside the walls of the institution, examining the social life of the corporation. Topics include corporate power and democracy; competing forms of business organization and their ideological significance; the rise of the trusts and of antitrust; labor and finance; corporate culture and office life; regulation and deregulation; the multinational corporation; the corporation as a private citizen.

Requirements

Course requirements and the final grade consist of class attendance and participation (30%); four 2-4 page reading responses (40%); a 10-12 page final paper (30%).

Reading Responses

Your responses should not attempt to summarize the readings. Rather, they should offer an analysis, in your own voice, of questions or themes raised by the texts. The responses are due *before* the class day for which the readings have been assigned, and should be emailed to both Canedo and Levy. **You are responsible for one reading response every three weeks (one for weeks 2-3, another for weeks 4-6, 7-9, 10-12).**

Final Paper

Your final paper should build from one of the readings, and should examine more thoroughly an issue that you found interesting and would like to explore further. This will require doing some outside reading and research. Depending on your chosen text, the paper might take different forms. It might situate one of the books or articles that we have read in the larger historiography. It might take one of the primary

sources and position it against other voices, or examine its larger reception at the time and since. In each case, the paper should be guided by a well-formed historical question. The topic of the paper should be pre-approved by either Canedo or Levy. You must submit to your paper by email to both Canedo and Levy by January 11 (Dean's Date).

Readings

All readings are available on the course website ("course materials"), with the exception of the following books, which are available for purchase at Labyrinth Books (122 Nassau Street).

- C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (2002).
Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (2009).
George Anders, *Merchants of Debt: KKR and the Mortgaging of American Business* (1992).
Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World* (2009).

Schedule of Meetings

Week 1 (Sept. 16): What is the Corporation?

Week 2 (Sept. 23): Public and Private Power

- C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951), 3-12.
Pauline Maier, "The Revolutionary Origins of the American Corporation," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3, no. 50 (1993): 51-84.
Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward (1819).
Daniel Raymond, *Thoughts on Political Economy* (1820), 425-433.
Andrew Jackson, "Bank Veto," July 10, 1832.
Proprietors of Charles River Bridge v. Proprietors of Warren Bridge (1837).
Thomas H. Sill, "Corporations, Banks and Currency," Speech to the Convention of Pennsylvania, December 13, 1837.

Week 3 (Sept. 30): Corporate Personality

- Thurmond W. Arnold, *The Folklore of Capitalism* (1937), 185-206.
Gregory Mark, "The Personification of the Business Corporation in American Law," *University of Chicago Law Review* 54, no. 4 (1987): 1441-1483.
Colleen A. Dunlavy, "From Citizens to Plutocrats: Nineteenth-Century Shareholder Voting Rights and Theories of the Corporation," in *Constructing Corporate America*, eds. Kenneth Lipartito and David B. Sicilia (2004), 66-93.
Citizens United v. Federal Elections Committee (2010).

Week 4 (Oct. 7): The Captains of Industry

- Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., "The Beginnings of 'Big Business' in American Industry," *Business History Review* 33, no. 1 (1959): 1-31

Ron Chernow, Prologue, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.* (2004).

Ida T. Tarbell, *History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904), xxiii-xxv, 1-45, 56-70, 83-99, 110-124, 154-165, 196-227.

Henry Demarest Lloyd, *Wealth Against Commonwealth* (1894), 330-366.

Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth" (1889) and "Popular Illusions about Trusts" (1900), in *The Gospel of Wealth*, ed. Edward Kirkland (1962), 14-49, 78-91.

Kenneth Warren, *Triumphant Capitalism: Henry Clay Frick and the Industrial Transformation of America* (1996), 56-112.

Week 5 (Oct. 14): The Trust Question

Elizabeth Sanders, *The Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State* (1999), 267-313. "People Party's Platform" (1896).

Dudley G. Wooten, "The Loose and Risky Methods of Personal Enterprise," from *Chicago Conference on Trusts* (1899), 42-53.

Walter Lippman, *Drift and Mastery* (1914), 27-65.

Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey v. United States (1911).

George W. Perkins, "The Modern Corporation" in *The Currency Problem and the Present Financial Situation* (1908), 155-170.

Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom* (1912), 163-191.

Week 6 (Oct. 21): Welfare Capitalism

Roland Marchand, "The Corporation Nobody Knew: Bruce Barton, Alfred Sloan, and the Founding of the General Motors 'Family'," *Business History Review* 65, no. 4 (1991): 825-875.

David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America* (1980), 48-81.

Sanford Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism Since the New Deal* (1997), 35-94.

Louis Uchitelle, *The Disposable American: Layoffs and Their Consequences* (2007), 24-48, 124-150.

Week 7 (Oct. 28): The Global Corporation

Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (2009).

Geoffrey Jones, "Multinationals from the 1930s to the 1980s" in *Leviathans: Multinational Corporations and the New Global History* (2005), 81-104.

Week 8 (Nov. 11): Corporate Culture

C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951), 77-111, 161-286.

Peter Drucker, *Concept of the Corporation* (1946), 1-19, 130-208.

Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About It* (1974), xxxi-xxxviii, 41-49, 55-56, 164-168, 174-187.

Film screening: *The Corporation* (1973). Date, time and location of the screening t.b.a.

Week 9 (Nov. 18): Business on the Defensive

Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide* (1984), 165-220.

David Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes: The Political Power of Business in America* (1989), 37-112.

Ralph Nader, Preface, *Unsafe at Any Speed* (1965); "A Citizen's Guide to the American Economy," *The New York Review of Books*, September 2, 1971.

Milton Friedman, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 13, 1970.

Irving Kristol, "On Corporate Capitalism in America," *National Affairs* (Fall 1975): 124-141.

Week 10 (Dec. 2): Masters of the Universe

Steve Fraser, *Every Man a Speculator: A History of Wall Street in American Life* (2005), 525-572.

George Anders, *Merchants of Debt: KKR and the Mortgaging of American Business* (1992), xiii-xx, 42-175.

Film screening: *Wall Street* (1987). Date, time and location of the screening t.b.a.

Week 11 (Dec. 9): The Service Economy

Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World* (2009), Introduction and Chapters 1-6, 8 (paperback ed.: pp. 1-236, 268-301).

Sam Walton with John Huey, *Sam Walton: Made In America* (1992), 156-244.

Week 12 (Dec. 16): Finance and Global Crisis

Simon Johnson and James Kwak, *13 Bankers: The Wall Street Takeover and the Next Financial Meltdown* (2010), 153-222.

In-class film screening: *Inside Job* (2010) and a discussion with editor and co-writer, Chad Beck.

Department of History Grading Practices

Papers and Exams

An **A** or **A-** thesis, paper, or exam is one that is good enough to be read aloud in a class. It is clearly written and well-organized. It demonstrates that the writer has conducted a close and critical reading of texts, grappled with the issues raised in the course, synthesized the readings, discussions, and lectures, and formulated a perceptive, compelling, independent argument. The argument shows intellectual originality and creativity, is sensitive to historical context, is supported by a well-chosen variety of specific examples, and, in the case of a research paper, is built on a critical reading of primary material.

A **B+** or **B** thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates many aspects of A-level work but falls short of it in either the organization and clarity of its writing, the formulation and presentation of its argument, or the quality of research. Some papers or exams in this category are solid works containing flashes of insight into many of the issues raised in the course. Others give evidence of independent thought, but the argument is not presented clearly or convincingly.

A **B-** thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates a command of course or research material and understanding of historical context but provides a less than thorough defense of the writer's independent argument because of weaknesses in writing, argument, organization, or use of evidence.

A **C+**, **C**, or **C-** thesis, paper, or exam offers little more than a mere a summary of ideas and information covered in the course, is insensitive to historical context, does not respond to the assignment adequately, suffers from frequent factual errors, unclear writing, poor organization, or inadequate primary research, or presents some combination of these problems.

Whereas the grading standards for written work between A and C- are concerned with the presentation of argument and evidence, a paper or exam that belongs to the D or F categories demonstrates inadequate command of course material. A **D** thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates serious deficiencies or severe flaws in the student's command of course or research material. An **F** thesis, paper, or exam demonstrates no competence in the course or research materials. It indicates a student's neglect or lack of effort in the course.

Participation

A student who receives an **A** for participation in discussion in precepts or seminars typically comes to every class with questions about the readings in mind. An 'A' discussant engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others, and consistently elevates the level of discussion.

A student who receives a **B** for participation in discussion in precepts or seminars typically does not always come to class with questions about the readings in mind. A 'B' discussant waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some discussants in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.

A student who receives a **C** for discussion in precepts or seminars attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion.

A student who fails to attend precepts or seminars regularly and adequately prepared for discussion risks the grade of **D** or **F**.