

CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE
Lower-Division Course:
American Capitalism and Society: From Railroads to Starbucks
Spring 2010

Instructor: Prof. Elizabeth Tandy Shermer
Meeting Times: BC 25, MW, 1:15-230pm
Office: Center Court F15
Office Hours: W 330-530pm
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Business, whether big or small, is a vital part of modern US history. This course is a history of business in the broadest sense: we will consider the rise and fall of different economic sectors and individual firms but also explore the larger dynamics of the American economy, including the shift from proprietary to corporate to global corporate capitalism and the complex interplay between business, labor, politics, and culture.

This course has several learning outcomes: understand the processes and factors of causation involved in cultural, political, economic, and societal change; read primary sources with an understanding of the context, biases, and perspectives of the time when they were written.

Readings:

Sklar, *Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism*
Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*
Simon, *Everything But the Coffee*

The other readings are on Sakai under Resources or Modules.

Course requirements:

Class Participation	20%
Short Paper 1 (FEB. 19 TH)	20%
Short Paper 2 (MARCH 12 TH)	25%
Long Paper on <i>Wall-Street</i> Movies	35%

Though I will lecture at times, I want to discuss the readings, not only in terms of mastering the arguments of the secondary literature but also understanding how the primary documents on Sakai helped historians construct these arguments. **BRING COPIES OF THE READINGS TO CLASS EACH DAY!** in order to facilitate discussion. You have two unexcused absences. Additional absences, without an effort to make up the work with me, will result in a lowering of your overall course grade by 5% for every additional day missed. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus.

For your short papers, 4-6 pages: You will have a choice of questions. In general: For the first (DUE FEB. 19TH), you will construct your own argument about the debate over the “new capitalism.” For the second (DUE MARCH 12TH), you will construct your own argument about conflict among businessmen over how to deal with the rise of the liberal regulatory state. Your paper should draw connections to how these conversations shifted, reconfigured debates about

modern capitalism since the development of the modern liberal regulatory state. Both papers will draw exclusively from class secondary readings and the primary documents.

For your long paper: We will watch, as a class, *Wall-Street* (Tuesday, April 27th at the Ath). Then, as a class, we will go see the new sequel on Monday, May 3rd. Your final paper, in general, 10-15 pages will look at how these two films represent shifts in the culture, politics, and general zeitgeist of late twentieth-century and contemporary capitalism. Prompts will be posted on Sakai. Senior papers are due by 9am on May 7th. Everyone else's papers will be due by noon on May 14th.

Schedule:

Week 1: January 20, Introduction

Wednesday: Course Introduction

What is business history? History of capitalism? How should we think about the dynamic between business, politics, and the broader society?

Week 2: January 25 & 27, American Business and Capitalists Before Reconstruction

Monday: NO CLASS

Wednesday: American Business and Capitalism Before 1877

- * Beckert, "Merchants and Manufacturers in the Antebellum North"
- * Rothman, "The 'Slave Power' in the United States, 1783-1865"
- * Selections from Smith, *Virgin Land*

Week 3: February 1st & 3rd, The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism

Monday: The Mechanics of the Industrial Revolution

- * *Corporate Reconstruction*, 1-85

Wednesday: The Legal Framework for Corporate Capitalism

- * *Corporate Reconstruction*, 86-178

Week 4: February 8th & 10th, Debating the Corporate Order

Monday: Capitalism's Defenders(?)

- * Nasaw, "Gilded Age Gospels"
- * Selections from Taylor, *Principles of Scientific Management*
- * Carnegie, "Gospel of Wealth"
- * Sumner, "The Rich Are Good Natured"
- * *Harper's* Essay on The Town of Pullman

Wednesday: Capitalism's Critics(?)

- * "What's Good for the Goose"
- * Letters regarding the Pullman Strike
- * Populist Party Platform
- * IWW
- * Debs, 1897 Labor Day Message
- * Selected Documents from Workers' in the Industrial Era
- * Lloyd, Excerpts from *Wealth Against Commonwealth*

Week 5: February 15th & 17th, Reconstructing Capitalism and American Liberalism

Monday: The “New” Liberalism

- * *Corporate Reconstruction*, 179-333

Wednesday: 1912 Election

- * *Corporate Reconstruction*, 333-to the end.
- * T. Roosevelt, New Nationalism Speech
- * Wilson, “Monopoly or Opportunity” Speech
- * Taft, Third Annual Message to Congress
- * Debs, “The Socialist Party’s Appeal”

FIRST PAPER: DUE FEBRUARY 19TH BY 4PM IN MY OFFICE

Week 6: February 22nd & 24th, Questioning Capitalism and Corporate Order

Monday: Great Depression

- * *Invisible Hands*, ix-25
- * Newspaper Coverage of the Great Depression

Wednesday: The New Deal Regulatory State

- * Brinkley, “New Deal and the Idea of the State”
- * FDR’s First Inaugural Address
- * Signing Statement for Glass-Steagall Act
- * Signing Statement for the FHA
- * Preamble to the Wagner Act
- * FDR, “Four Freedoms” Speech
- * Perkins, “Social Insurance for U.S.”

Week 7: March 1st & 3rd, Business and the Liberal Order

Monday: Work With/Within

- * Excerpt from Nash, A.P. Giannini and the Bank of America
- * Eccles, “Monetary Problems of Recovery”
- * Excerpts from Berle and Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*
- * Excerpts from *The Permanent Revolution*
- * Kennedy, Yale Commencement Address
- * Excerpt, Galbraith, *Affluent Society*

Wednesday: Critics

- * *Invisible Hands*, 26-115
- * Goldwater, Depression-Era Editorials
- * Boulware, “Businessman’s Biggest Job”
- * Selections from Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*
- * Manion, Radio Broadcasts

Week 8: March 8th & 10th, Mid-century Capital Mobility: The Rusting Steelbelt

Monday: The Rusting Steelbelt

- * Excerpts from Cowie, *Capital Moves*
- * Excerpts from Surveys of Steelbelt Manufacturers

Wednesday: The Rustbelt

- * “A Trail of Ghosts Across Our Land”
- * Excerpts from *Face of Decline*
- * Lynd, “Genesis of the Idea...”

SECOND PAPER DUE MARCH 12TH BY 4PM

Week 9: March 15th & 17th, Spring Break

Week 10: March 22nd and 24th, Mid-Century Capital Mobility: The Sunbelt & Globalization

Monday: Sunbelt Hypercapitalism

- * Excerpts from Phillips, “Emerging Republican Majority”
- * Selected Documents on the Industrial Development of Phoenix, AZ

Wednesday: Early Globalization

- * Excerpts from Cowie, *Capital Moves*
- * Newspaper Articles on Responses to Globalization

Week 11: March 29th and March 31st, The Starbucks World(?)

Monday: NO CLASS – Read Simon, *Everything But the Coffee*

Wednesday: Class discussion of *Everything But the Coffee*

REQUIRED Thursday, April 1st, Ath Talk: Bryant Simon on Starbucks

Week 12: April 5th and 7th, Or Wal-Mart’s World?

Monday: The Coming of the Wal-Mart Economy

- * Moreton, “It Came From Bentonville”
- * Lichtenstein, “Wal-Mart: Template for 21st Century Capitalism”

Wednesday: Wal-Mart World

- * Documents on Wal-Mart in LA
- * Selections from Ehrenreich, *Nickled and Dimed*
- * Exchange in the *New York Review of Books* on Wal-Mart (& Company Response)

Week 13: April 12th & 14th, Business New Agenda?

Monday: Think Tanks and the New Economy

- * *Invisible Hands*, 115-166
- * Gilder, “Prometheus Unbound”
- * Friedman *Newsweek* editorials

Wednesday: The Powell Memo and Students for Free Enterprise

- * Moreton, “Make Payroll, Not War”
- * *Invisible Hands*, 166-236
- * *SIFE documents*
- * Powell Memo

Week 14: April 19th and 21st, The De-Regulatory Impulse

Monday: Carter-Era

- * Vogel, “Why Businessmen Distrust Their State”
- * Schulman, “Slouching Towards the Supply-Side”
- * Documents on Airline Deregulation

Wednesday: In the Age of Reagan

- * *Invisible Hands*, 236-270
- * Documents on the Reagan Era
- * Repeal of Glass-Steagall
- * NAFTA Signing Statement
- * “Legacy of the Clinton Bubble”

Week 15: April 26th & 28th, Wall-Street in the Late Twentieth-Century American Imagination

Monday: Celebrating the New Corporate Order

- * Excerpts from *Liar’s Poker*
- * Excerpts from Sullivan, *Selling Culture*

TUESDAY, April 27th: Ath dinner to watch *Wall-Street*

Wednesday: Protesting the New Corporate Order

- * “Interviews with Two Thai Workers”
- * Meyerson, “Battle in Seattle”
- * Friedman, “Senseless in Seattle”
- * Ross, “Sweated Labor in Cyberspace”

Week 16: May 3rd & 5th, The New New Thing

Monday: Early Technology Boom & Facebook

- * Rosenzweig, “Wizards, Bureaucrats, Warriors, and Hackers”
- * Excerpts from *The New New Thing*
- * Excerpts from the *Accidental Billionaires*
- * Newspaper Coverage of Facebook

MONDAY NIGHT: CLASS TRIP TO SEE *WALL-STREET SEQUEL*

Wednesday: A New Critique of Capitalism

- * Newspaper Coverage of Current Economic Crisis
- * Articles on *Wall Street* sequel

Final Paper:

- 🕒 **Seniors due May 7th**
- 🕒 **Everyone Else May 14th**