History 890
Graduate Readings Seminar in
American Economic History and the History of Capitalism
Spring 2011, Mondays 5:30 – 8:20 PM
Hamilton 570

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1–3 PM, and by appointment

This seminar is designed to expose graduate students to a rich and vibrant field of historical inquiry. We will examine some of the major methodological and conceptual issues explored by scholars of American capitalism (whether they self-identify as such or not). Through rigorous historiographical analysis, we will ask how historians have studied major problems of political economy, how different schools of thought frame the central questions of American economic history, and how attention to material factors can inform our own work. The seminar is aimed at graduate students in American history who will find this reading list helpful in constructing their comps lists. Nonetheless, it is also open to students from other fields and departments who are interested in the historical problem of political economy and the history of capitalism.

Assignments:
Each week, we will read and discuss a major work in economic history and the history of capitalism. One student will be the appointed discussion leader and take charge of introducing the material and central debates. In preparation for that role, that student will write a short (3–4 page) review of the assigned book with reference to one or two related works, which she or he should choose from the list of recommended readings for that week. (Students who wish to use material not on this list should discuss the choice with the instructor first.) These reviews will be due to the instructor the night before class. Each student should expect to lead two discussions and write two short reviews.
(Depending on enrollment, certain weeks may feature more than one discussion leader.) In addition, all students will write a substantial historiographical essay of approximately 15 to 20 pages on a subject of their choice, in consultation with the instructor, which will be due during exam week.

Grade Breakdown:
Seminar Participation: 25%
Reviews and Discussion Leading: 30%
Major Essay: 45%
Seminar Schedule

Week 1: January 10—**Introduction to Course**
   Required:
   Sven Beckert, “History of American Capitalism”
   Jürgen Kocka, “Writing the History of Capitalism”

Week 2: January 24—**What is The History of Capitalism?**
   Required:

Week 3: January 31—**Capitalism and the Founding**
   Required:

   Suggested:
   Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913)

Week 4: February 7—**The Rise of Industrial Capitalism**
   Required:
   Seth Rockman, *Scraping By* (2009)

   Suggested:
Week 5: February 15—The Political Economy of Slavery
Required:
Walter Johnson, Soul by Soul (1999)

Suggested:
Drew Faust, James Henry Hammond and the Old South (1982)
Thomas Bender, ed., The Anti-Slavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation (1992)
Stephanie McCurry, Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country (1997)
Stephanie Smallwood, Saltwater Slavery (2007)

Week 6: February 21—Money and Power in an Expanding Nation
Required:
Stephen Mihm, A Nation of Counterfeiters (2007)

Suggested:
Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (1945)
Harry Watson, Liberty and Power (1990)
Sven Beckert, The Monied Metropolis (2001)
Adam Rothman, Slave Country (2005)

Week 7: February 28—The Managerial Revolution
Required:

(No Reviews for this week.)

HAVE A PRODUCTIVE AND ENJOYABLE SPRING BREAK
Week 8: March 7—Corporate Liberalism (and the Progressive Era)
Required:
Suggested:
   James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State* (1968)

Week 9: March 21—The Great Depression
Required:
Suggested:
   Peter Temin, *Did Monetary Forces Cause the Great Depression?* (1976)

Week 10: March 28—The New Deal
Required:
Suggested:
   William Leuchtenberg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (1963)
   Ellis Hawley, *The New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly* (1966)
   Gary Gerstle and Steve Fraser, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order* (1989)
Week 11: April 4—Les Trentes Glorieuses
Required:

Suggested:
  Herbert Stein, Presidential Economics (1984)
  Jonathan Bean, Beyond the Broker State (1996)
  Meg Jacobs, Pocketbook Politics (2005)
  Jennifer Delton, Racial Integration in Corporate America (2009)
  Louis Hyman, Debtor Nation: The History of America in Red Ink (2011)

Week 12: April 11—The Age of Compression
Required:
  Judith Stein, Pivotal Decade (2010)

Suggested:
  Paul Krugman, Peddling Prosperity (1994)
  Jennifer Klein, For All These Rights (2003)
  Philip J. Cooper, The War Against Regulation (2009)

Week 13: April 18—The Political Economy of the Service Economy
Required:

Suggested:
  Barbara Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed (2001)
  Shane Hamilton, Trucking Country (2008)
  Nelson Lichtenstein, Retail Revolution (2009)

Week 14: April 25—Globalization and Its Discontents
Required:

(No Reviews for this week.)

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW ESSAY DUE MAY 6, 5 PM