

FALL 2018

THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM

HIS 196 T | R 3:25-4:40
Instructor: Camden Burd



UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

Fall 2018

Class Time: Tuesday & Thursday 3:25 – 4:40

Class Location: LeChase Hall 163

Instructor: Camden Burd

Contact: Camden.burd@gmail.com

Office Hours: By Appointment (Though I can often be found in the Humanities Center)

Course Description

This course examines the trajectory of American capitalism alongside major moments in the nation's history. We will explore how ideas of capitalism influenced the American Revolution, led to the outbreak of Civil War, and shifted during the Great Depression. We will discuss the political economy of capitalism and why the government advocates for certain products and services while outlawing or labeling others as taboo. We will read works by individuals who believed in the promise of capitalism alongside other writers who felt ignored and abandoned by the system. Over the course of the semester students will become aware that capitalism, in addition to a political and economic system, is a set of ideas and cultural attitudes about wealth, citizenship, identity, gender, and the use of natural resources. Students will walk away from this course with a historical understanding of today's political debates and the empathy to understand the competing visions for America's modern capitalist system.

Required Texts

- Cohen, Lizabeth. *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.
- Hyman, Louis and Edward E. Baptist. *American Capitalism: A Reader*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.
- John, Paul. *Sam Patch, Famous Jumper*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2004.

Grading

Grades for this course will be determined using the University of Rochester's grading scale:

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|------------|------------|
| 93-100 = A | 73-76 = C |
| 90-92 = A- | 70-72 = C- |
| 87-89 = B+ | 67-69 = D+ |
| 83-86 = B | 63-66 = D |
| 80-82 = B- | 60-62 = D- |
| 77-79 = C+ | 0-59 = F |

Attendance (10%): Students are expected to attend every class session. That being said, I understand that life circumstances can influence class attendance. Every student is allowed to miss two class sessions without penalty. However, any absences beyond the designated two will result in the loss of 2% points from the final grade. Once a student misses 5 courses (beyond the aforementioned two) the student will receive zero points for the attendance portion of their grade. If for some reason I am forced to cancel class beyond what is shown on the course schedule, I will reward one absence back to you.

Participation (30%): Because this class is a mixture of lecture, discussion, and in-class exercises, students must come ready to participate. Please come prepared to discuss assigned readings and share your insights, questions, and thoughts about them. Discussion is not optional in this course—it is required. You have important insights and opinions and the entire class benefits from hearing them.

In-Class Writing Responses (30%): There will be numerous in-class writing responses throughout the semester. The writing-responses will be offered at the beginning or end of each class and serve as personal reflections on the assigned reading or lecture. I will use the responses to gauge a student's critical engagement with the course content. These will be kept short, consisting of one or two short answer response questions.

Exams (30%): There will be two exams over the course of the semester. Both are in-class writing exams and will cover themes and concepts discussed in class. Students will be given blue book exam forms at the beginning of the designated class and will have the duration of the class session to complete the exam. Students may not use books or notes during the exam.

Classroom Etiquette

This course is a seminar. Seminars operate best in a critical yet respectful environment. Differing opinions in classroom discussions are encouraged. If you happen to disagree with someone else's argument or opinion, please do so in a respectful and courteous manner. Persistent rude or insensitive comments will result in a deduction from your final grade for the course. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated and will be reported to university officials for review and potential disciplinary action.

Technology Policy

Although some of our in-class writing assignments will be handwritten, you may bring a laptop or other portable screen to class to take notes. However, the use of cell phones and smart phones is strictly forbidden during class. If you choose to use digital technology in class, it must be for academic purposes. Occasionally, I may ask you to turn off your devices (such as during class discussion when total attention is required). If the use or misuse of technology becomes an issue during in-class discussions, workshops, and assignments (i.e., checking Facebook, watching Youtube videos, Tweeting, etc.), then I reserve the right to alter the technology policy as I see fit.

Late Work and Missed Assignments

Late work will not be accepted. No exceptions. Any extenuating circumstances should be communicated directly to the instructor as soon as possible. Exam dates and assignment deadlines are made clear at the beginning of the course which means there are few reasonable excuses for missing them.

Academic Honesty

As members of an academic community, students and faculty assume certain responsibilities, one of which is to engage in honest communication. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of the trust upon which an academic community depends. A common form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. The representation of another person's work as one's own, or the attempt "to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source." More specifically, the use of an idea, phrase, or other materials from a written or spoken source without acknowledgment in a work for which the student claims authorship. Examples include: the

misrepresentation of sources used in a work for which the student claims authorship; the improper use of course materials in a work for which the student claims authorship; the use of papers purchased online and turned in as one's own work; submission of written work such as laboratory reports, computer programs, or papers, which have been copied from the work of other students, with or without their knowledge and consent. A student can avoid the risk of plagiarism in written work or oral presentations by clearly indicating, either in footnotes or in the paper or presentation itself, the source of any idea or wording that he or she did not produce. Sources must be given regardless of whether the idea, phrase or other material is quoted directly, paraphrased or summarized in the student-writer's own words.

Academic Assistance

This classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. I invite you to talk with me about any concerns or situations that may affect your ability to complete your assignments successfully. If you have any issues throughout the semester I strongly encourage you to contact the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). CETL supports undergraduate students at the University of Rochester with services that promote academic success, including course-specific collaborative study groups, study skills counseling, a study skills course, and disability support.

Course Schedule (August 30- December 11)

August 30: Introduction

September 4: What is Capitalism?

Reading: "The Wealth of Nations," 3 – 10. (Reader)

Reading: "The Communist Manifesto," 12 – 24. (Reader)

Reading: Max Weber, "The Spirit of Capitalism" (Blackboard)

September 6: NO CLASS

September 11: The Colonial System

Reading: "The First Charter of Virginia," 33 – 39. (Reader)

Reading: William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 82 – 107 (Blackboard)

September 13: The American Revolution and Early Struggles

Reading: Woody Holton, "The Capitalist Constitution," 35 – 62. (Blackboard)

Reading: "Sections from the United States Constitution," 93 – 99. (Reader)

Reading: "Federalist Paper, No. 12" (Blackboard)

September 18: The Market Revolution

Reading: "Report on Manufactures," 124 – 135. (Reader)

Reading: Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work*, 30 – 55. (Blackboard)

September 20: The Market Revolution cont.

Reading: Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work*, 56 – 74. (Blackboard)

September 25: The Market Revolution cont.

Reading: Paul Johnson, *Sam Patch, The Famous Jumper* (2003)

September 27: Slavery & Capitalism

Reading: “Virginia Slavery Laws,” 52 – 55. (Reader)

October 2: Slavery & Capitalism

Reading: “Slavery in the United States,” 161 – 170. (Reader)

Reading: “Vincent Nolte Describes the Cotton Market,” 146 – 151. (Reader)

October 4: Sectional Tensions & Civil War

Reading: “In Defense of the American System,” 153 – 161. (Reader)

Reading: “The Financial Power of Slavery,” 221 – 231. (Reader)

Reading: “Address Before Wisconsin State Agricultural Society,” 232 – 236.
(Reader)

October 9: MIDTERM EXAM

October 11: America’s Second Industrial Revolution

Reading: Excerpt from *Railroaded*, 256 – 264. (Reader)

Reading: Excerpt from *The Company*, 57 – 78. (Blackboard)

October 16: NO CLASS FALL BREAK

October 18: Industrialization’s Winners

Reading: “The Monied Metropolis,” 245 – 251. (Reader)

Reading: “The Gospel of Wealth,” 283 – 288. (Reader)

Reading: “Principles of Scientific Management,” 335 – 342. (Reader)

October 23: The Urban and Rural Discontents of Industrialization

Reading: “How the Other Half Lives,” 266 – 269. (Reader)

Reading: “The Omaha Platform,” 270 – 277. (Reader)

Reading: “The Populist Vision,” 278 – 282. (Reader)

Reading: “Twenty Years At Hull House: With Autobiographical Notes,” 289 – 295.
(Reader)

October 25: Industrialization and Nature

Reading: Gifford Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation* (Blackboard)

October 30: The Great Depression and New Deal Capitalism

Reading: “Second Fireside Chat,” 354 – 359. (Reader)

Reading: Message on Tennessee Valley Authority (Blackboard)

November 1: Capitalism at War

Reading: “Emergency Address,” 366 – 371. (Reader)

Reading: “Executive Order to Desegregate Wartime Production,” 372 – 374.
(Reader)

November 6: Jim Crow Capitalism

Reading: “The Souls of Black Folk,” 297 – 304. (Reader)

Reading: “Selection of Jim Crow Laws, 1880s – 1960s,” 305 – 312. (Reader)

November 8: Consumer Capitalism

Reading: Cohen

November 13: Consumer Capitalism

Reading: Cohen

November 15: American Capitalism and The World

Reading: “The Marshall Plan,” 378 – 381. (Reader)

Reading: “IBM Annual Report,” 402 – 405. (Reader)

November 20: Chemicals, Consumerism, and Critiques of Post-War Consumerism

Reading: Edward Abbey, “Polemic: Industrial Tourism and the National Parks,” (Blackboard)

November 22: NO CLASS THANKSGIVING RECESS

November 27: Automation, Unemployment, and the Roots of a Gig Economy

Reading: “Labor and Money Capital,” 414 – 419. (Reader)

Reading: Richard DeVos, *Believe!*, 55 – 69. (Blackboard)

November 29: Deindustrialization

Film: *Roger and Me* (1989)

December 4: Mapping Industrial America’s Legacy

December 6: American Capitalism Today and Questions for Tomorrow

December 11: FINAL EXAMINATION