HISTORY OF CAPITALISM

Overview:

In recent years scholars have built upon the work of prior generations of business historians, labor historians, and economic historians to develop a new field that has become known as the “history of capitalism.” This seminar will consider the methodologies and substantive contributions of recent scholarship in the field, in conjunction with classic works on the history of political economy.

Assignments and Grading:

This is a readings seminar, and the primary expectation is that every student will arrive in class prepared to contribute to in-depth discussions of the assigned texts. Unless students request otherwise in the first two weeks of the semester, this course will be graded on a pass/fail basis.

Texts:

A number of the course readings (denoted with an * in the syllabus) will be available on electronic reserve. The other readings, listed below, should be acquired separately:

• Adam Tooze, *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World* (Viking 2018).

**Thursday, August 30th: Introduction**


**Monday, September 10th: Historicizing Capitalism**


**Supplementary Readings:**

• Jerry Muller, *The Mind and the Market: Capitalism in Modern European Thought* (Knopf, 2002).

Monday, September 17th: The Changing Politics of Labor


Supplementary Readings:

- Roy Rosenzweig, Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920 (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Monday, September 24th: Economic Histories of Industrialization


Supplementary Readings:

• Douglass North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (Norton, 1982).
• Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (Basic, 1986).

**Monday, October 1st: Railroads and the Rise of the Modern Corporation**


**Supplementary Readings:**

• Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (Hill and Wang, 1982).

Monday, October 8th: Slavery and the Market


Supplementary Readings:

Monday, October 15th: Commodities, Risk, and the Rise of Finance


**Supplementary Readings:**
• David A. Moss, *When All Else Fails: Government as the Ultimate Risk Manager* (Harvard University Press, 2002).

**Monday, October 22nd: Class and Classlessness**


**Supplementary Readings:**

**Monday, October 29th: The Boundaries of the State in American Political Development**


**Supplementary Readings:**


**Monday, November 5th: Race, Capitalism, and the Carceral State**


**Supplementary Readings:**

Monday, November 12th: Measuring Prosperity


Supplementary Readings:

Monday, November 26th: Technology and the Transformation of the Self


Supplementary Readings:
• Richard Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (Yale University Press, 2006).
• Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism*.

Monday, December 3rd: A Neoliberal Age

• Adam Tooze, *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World* (Viking 2018).

Supplementary Readings:
• Mark Blyth, *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).
• *Wendy Brown, Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone, 2015).
• David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2005).
