

HIST 471E9: Cultural History of Capitalism  
Dr. Will Mackintosh  
Spring 2015

**Popular Histories of Capitalism Blog Project**  
**Interview Posts Due: 1/28; 2/25; 3/25 (by 10 PM)**  
**Reflection Post Due: 4/15 (by 10 PM)**

Over the course of the semester, the class will collectively create a blog about current popular understandings of the history and meanings of American capitalism. One of the fundamental premises of this course is that capitalism has come to be seen as the natural and proper economic system for the United States (and humanity as a whole) through a series of complex social and cultural processes. The identification and explanation of these complex but fundamentally understandable processes is the central task of the emerging literature on the cultural history of capitalism, and it will be our central task this semester, as well. But in order to analyze the ways in which capitalism came to be seen as natural, we need to understand how we, as modern Americans, conceive of capitalism's naturalness. The point of this blog project is to capture this popular understanding, through interviews with random individuals of our acquaintance and thoughtful reflection on the results of these interviews.

This project will have three main components. During class time during the first week of the semester, we will collectively develop a rough set of guidelines for interviewing members of the public about how they understand capitalism and its history. We will also decide which publics we are going to seek to interview. The conclusions of this discussion will be made available to all students to guide our work going forward. During this discussion, we will also set up the blog platform necessary to support our publishing.

Then, over the course of the semester, each student will interview three people not in the class using these guidelines, and write up their findings in an "interview post" on the blog. These posts should not be merely or exclusively a Q&A transcription; they should also include broader reflection on the subject's understanding of the history and nature of capitalism. After each student has conducted three interviews, we will have a significant database of popular understandings with which to work.

Finally, at the end of the semester, each student will write a reflection post about the meanings and histories of capitalism that are circulating in the general public based on the body of interview posts. This post should also assess those meanings and histories in the context of the scholarship we have read over the course of the semester. By the end of the semester, we will have a polished, collectively-authored resource about current American meanings of capitalism.

Blog posts will be assessed on the appropriateness of their subject matter, the thoughtfulness of their reflection, the quality of their writing, their use of technology, the appropriateness of their style, tone, and phrasing, and on the number of errors in the text and citations.

For more on style and usage, please see Part II of the Chicago Manual of Style Online: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/contents.html>. For more on Chicago-style footnotes (if

necessary), see Ch. 14 of Chicago Manual of Style Online:  
[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch14/ch14\\_toc.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch14/ch14_toc.html).