

HISTORY 471E9: CULTURAL HISTORY OF CAPITALISM

Dr. Will Mackintosh, Spring 2015

Wednesday Evening 6:00-8:45 PM, Monroe 233

Office Hours: MWF 11:00 AM-12:00 PM and W 2:00-4:00 PM, in Monroe 216.

Contact Info: The best way to reach me is via email at wmackint@umw.edu. You can expect that I will respond to you within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours over the weekend. Likewise, the best way for me to reach you is via email, so be sure to read your UMW email regularly. I do not respond to my office voicemail.

Course Description

In this senior readings seminar we will consider the history of capitalism, especially as manifested in the United States. We will study some economic history in order to understand the origins, evolution, and importance of capitalism as an economic system, but mostly we will read scholarship from the recent historiography on the cultural history of capitalism. As we dive into this new scholarship, we will explore the moments of contingency where capitalism was implemented, the lived experiences of capitalism, and the specific social and cultural processes by which capitalism came to be seen as the natural and proper economic system for the United States and humanity as a whole. We will ultimately work to understand and displace contemporary narratives of capitalism's inevitability by showing how it was constructed and legitimated in history.

Learning Outcomes

- Comprehension of historical process
- Ability to synthesize research findings
- Understanding of the discipline's methods and processes
- Ability to write with clarity about the past

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase at the University of Mary Washington Bookstore:

- Karl Polanyi *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Beacon Press, 2001) ISBN-13: 978-0807056431
- T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford University Press, 2005) ISBN-13: 978-0195181319
- Stephen Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States* (Harvard University Press, 2009) ISBN-13: 978-0674032446
- Jessica M. Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, and the Creation of a Transatlantic Financial Crisis* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) ISBN-13: 978-1107640863
- Michael Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy: A History of Men's Dress in the American Republic, 1760-1860* (University Of Chicago Press, 2006) ISBN-13: 978-0226977959
- Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (Basic Books, 2014) ISBN-13: 978-0465002962
- Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton University Press, 1994) ISBN-13: 978-0691034591

- Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2012) ISBN-13: 978-0393342376
- Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America* (Harvard University Press, 2014) ISBN-13: 978-0674736351
- Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression* (Harvard University Press, 2012) ISBN-13: 978-0674058132
- Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Harvard University Press, 2010) ISBN-13: 978-0674057401
- Jerry Z. Muller, *The Mind and the Market: Capitalism in Western Thought* (Anchor, 2003) ISBN-13: 978-0385721660

Course Requirements

Below are listed the components of this course, along with the weight that they carry in determining the final grade.

Reading and Class Participation (25%): Students are required to do all the reading listed on the syllabus. The reading will either be in the required texts or in PDFs uploaded to Canvas. Readings are to be completed by the day on which they are listed below, and students must bring the readings to class with them, either on paper or in electronic form. Since this course is a seminar, students are expected to create the learning experience of the course largely among themselves. You will be graded on your willingness and ability to contribute to class discussion. In general, your class participation grade will not be judged on whether what you say is “right” or “wrong,” but on whether your comments reflect active thought about the readings, lectures, and discussions. Your grade will also reflect your attendance and your level of preparedness for class discussion. In a seminar, class discussion is the most important part of the experience, so it weighs very heavily in your final grade.

Leading Class Discussion (15%): Every student will be required to lead class discussion twice over the course of the semester. Discussion leaders will have three responsibilities. First, they must post questions for discussion on Canvas by 6 PM the night before class. Second, they must lead discussion in class, helping everyone achieve a fuller understanding of the readings through questions and explanation. Third, they must post a summary of the class discussion on Canvas by 6 PM on the Friday after class. Students *must* meet with the professor early in the week of their first session leading class discussion in order to plan their discussion, and they are *strongly recommended* to meet with the professor before their second time leading discussion. Students will sign up as discussion leaders during the first week of class.

Popular Histories of Capitalism Blog Project (Interview Posts: 10%, Reflection Post 10%): 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. This project will have three main components. 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. 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. 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. By the end of the semester, we will have a polished, collectively-authored resource about current American meanings of capitalism.

Research Project (Research Paper: 25%; Class Presentation: 15%): Students will undertake a research project on a topic related to the cultural history of capitalism. Each student will write a proposal with a brief annotated bibliography and a 8-10 page research paper, and will also give a presentation to the class about their research. Specific assignments will be distributed before each due date. All assignments must be turned in on time; late papers will be graded down five points per day for a week, after which they will not be accepted. Papers must be turned in on Canvas. Inability to upload your work to Canvas *is not* an excuse for lateness; make sure you are able to effectively use the technology *before* the due date.

Extra Credit: You will be eligible to receive an extra 5 points on the class presentation assignment if you attend at least one session of the History and American Studies Symposium on Friday, April 26th and turn in a one-page paper summarizing and critiquing one presentation that you found to be of interest. This extra credit assignment is due at the final.

Policies and Procedures:

Grading Scale: I calculate all grades on a 100-point scale, and convert them into letter grades at the end of the semester using the following scale:

A	Unusual Excellence	(93 or higher = A; 90-92 = A-)
B	Work Distinctly Above Average	(87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B-)
C	Work of Average Quality	(77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C; 70-72 = C-)
D	Work of Below Average Quality	(67-69 = D+; 61-66 = D)
F	Failure, No Credit	(0-60 = F)

Grading Policies: Please note the following rules related to grading:

- I will upload grades to Canvas, but please be aware that Canvas's calculations of your final grade are approximate. Canvas can't be configured to reflect all of my grading policies, so I use an Excel spreadsheet for maximum precision. What you see on Canvas will be a reasonable estimate of your final grade, but it is not a perfect reflection of my calculations.
- When I hand back assignments, I will not entertain any discussion of the grade for the next 24 hours. I will then entertain discussion of the grade for one week, after which point the grade is considered final.
- Students who do not post satisfactory interview posts, or students who fail to achieve regular and active class participation, will be reported as *unsatisfactory* on mid-semester reports.

Classroom Rules: Please follow these rules in my classroom at all times:

- Since this is a discussion seminar, no laptop use is allowed in the classroom.
- No cell phone use is allowed in my classroom, including text messaging. If you must write or reply to a message, please leave the classroom and do not return for the rest of the class session. All instances of cell phone use will materially affect your class participation grade. I am really, really serious about this. Every time I see a phone, your class participation grade will plummet. And don't try using them in your lap or behind your book, either. I can tell. Trust me.
- There is no sleeping or extraneous talking in my classroom. If you have a conversation that cannot wait, then please leave the classroom to have it, and do not come back. If you are too tired to stay awake in class, then stay home, get some sleep, and accept the absence.

Disabilities: The Office of Disability Services is the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist

students with disabilities. If you receive services through that office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodations. I will hold any information you share with me in strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you have not made contact with the Office of Disability Services and have reasonable accommodation needs, please see: <http://academics.umw.edu/disability>.

Academic Honesty: It is your responsibility to understand the definition of plagiarism according to Mary Washington's Honor Code and to avoid plagiaristic practices in your own work. If you do plagiarize or cheat, you can expect to have your case brought before the Honor Council. Several resources are available online to help you identify and avoid plagiarism and to understand Mary Washington's definitions and procedures, and to help you identify and avoid plagiarism. You can access them through the Department of History and American Studies website: <http://cas.umw.edu/historyamericanstudies/history-department-resources/plagiarism>. If you have further questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please come to me and I will help you avoid it.

This syllabus is subject to change

Reading and Discussion Schedule: [* = Student-Lead Class Discussion]

Week	Readings & Assignments [due on the date listed]
Wk 1: Introduction	W 1/14: Introduction; Speaking Center Visit; Build an Interview Questionnaire
Wk 2: History of an Epoch	W 1/21: Polyani, <i>The Great Transformation</i> ; Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism"
Wk 3: Revolutionary Capitalism*	W 1/28: Breen, <i>The Marketplace of Revolution</i> ; First Interview Post Due
Wk 4: Currency and Value*	W 2/4: Mihm, <i>A Nation of Counterfeiters</i>
Wk 5: A Cycle of Panic*	W 2/11: Lepler, <i>The Many Panics of 1837</i>
Wk 6: Clothing, Identity, and Business*	W 2/18: Zakim, <i>Ready-Made Democracy</i>
Wk 7: Slavery and Capitalism*	W 2/25: Baptist, <i>The Half Has Never Been Told</i> ; Second Interview Post Due
<i>Spring Break</i>	
Wk 8: Capitalism and Childhood*	W 3/11: Zelizer, <i>Pricing the Priceless Child</i> ; Research Proposal/Bibliography Due
Wk 9: The Corporation Triumphant*	W 3/18: White, <i>Railroaded</i>
Wk 10: Living with Risk*	W 3/25: Levy, <i>Freaks of Fortune</i> ; Third Interview Post Due
Wk 11: Free Markets in the American Century*	W 4/1: Burgin, <i>The Great Persuasion</i>
Wk 12: Capitalism and Christianity*	W 4/8: Moreton, <i>To Serve God and Wal-Mart</i>
Wk 13: Capitalism and Culture*	W 4/15: Muller, <i>The Mind and the Market</i> ; Reflection Post Due
Wk 14: NO CLASS	W 4/22: Research Paper Due
Finals Week: Final Research Presentations , Wednesday, April 29, 7:00-9:30 PM	