

## HST 416: Markets & History Project

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For this project, you and 2-3 partners will select a market to analyze to help us understand the market society that we live in as well as changes in the logic of American capitalism. Groups will construct a paper AND presentation describing how a particular market has changed over time and how it connects to theories, values, institutions, and historical context that we have discussed in class. The trick will be constructing the topic narrowly enough that you can do justice to it, so take particular care in selecting a subject matter that is both interesting to you (and thus likely to the class) and specific enough to explain key issues within a relatively short amount of time.

**Step 1. Topic Selection.** In a group of 3-4, select a market to analyze. No two groups can do the same project (or overlap overly much), so you will want to clear your project with me ASAP – claims are on a first come first serve basis! Topics students have analyzed in the past include the following: diamonds, corn, firearms, human trafficking, video games, internet streaming services, marijuana, the NFL, Amazon.com, private prisons, toys, infant formula, and big data.

**Change over time.** Your group must be able to address the issue of **how this market has changed over at least a 20-year period** (longer is fine; 20 years that do not lead to today, such as looking at radio in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, also fabulous; using earlier incarnations of your market may also lengthen the project, as with markets that transformed due to technology, such as tobacco to e-cigarettes).

**Subtopics.** You also want to brainstorm possible topics within your market in order to think about your group’s approach. While you will have a shared introduction and conclusion, each member of your group will write and present on an individual subtopic that you should be able to work on independently, but when taken together, should present a substantive analysis of your selected market. Thus, your group does need to offer a comprehensive analysis of the market – you can’t do everything. Rather, you want to aim for coherence: think about subtopics within your market that will allow you to analyze your market in terms of the history of capitalism, don’t overlap too much, and, when taken together, make sense. Subtopics may focus on individual companies, products, or technologies, or should delve into production, labor, regulation, marketing, consumption, etc. Subtopics may delve into a global dimension of the market as long as it brings it back to domestic issues. As you revise, your group should come to a group thesis for the larger project. Sample subtopics are as follows:

- Diamonds: DeBeers, marketing, synthetic diamonds, blood diamonds (labor and reform)
- Amazon.com: rise and expansion to the “everything store,” labor, marketing, competition
- Marijuana: history of market, prohibition, economics of the war on drugs, pro-/anti-legalization

**Step 2. Proposal [5%].** Once your group has cleared a market with me, you will post an individual proposal to the **course blog**. Your proposal should give a **250-400-word description** of your **subtopic** and its connection to your market. What will you analyze?

**Be specific.** Your proposal should already reflect research on your topic, including cited evidence. How does your subtopic fit within your group’s selected market? Why do you think this topic will be of interest to our class? Your proposal **must cite at least THREE outside sources** (newspaper, journal, or magazine articles, podcasts, books, videos) that you think will be useful for your project. **These must be CREDIBLE sources and may NOT be randomdudesideasaboutstuff.com**. See the Resources link on

BlackBoard for popular resources. If you have questions about what does/not constitute a credible source, just ask. Recall that our library subscribes to resources like Lexis-Nexus that can help with this – you are not just at the mercy of your public search engine.

**Step 2. Give substantive feedback on 2 proposals for classmates NOT in your group [2%].** Use the comment feature on the Course Blog to do this. Feedback must be constructive and give ideas for moving forward. If feedback is “content-free” no credit will be given. Example of content free comments: “This is so interesting! I wish I’d thought of this! Be sure to use sources!” By contrast, substantive feedback includes recommending sources, asking specific questions, giving specifics about why you think something is interesting for our class, or pushing for clarification on connections.

**Step 3. Draft [10%].** The draft paper should include a group introduction, brief overview, and conclusion, but the bulk of the paper should be your sections as written by individual group members.

For the introduction and overview, introduce the topic. Based on initial sleuthing, assess the significance of your topic and market to our class (to logics and ethics of capitalism, to concepts we have discussed, to how labor, capital, production, consumption, etc. have changed over time). What do you think that your classmates have to learn from your topic? What are the key details classmates will need to know to understand your topic?

Individual sections should be 7-8 pages, double-spaced. This is actually quite short, thus you must be concise. Be sure to cite your sources. **Individual sections must have a minimum of 5 sources and should include at least 1 academic source.** In grading these sections I will ask the following:

- **Fit/Subject:** How well does this section fit into the larger theme of the paper? Does it incorporate concepts discussed in class? Is it historically minded?
- **Evidence:** How well researched is this section? Does it seem well substantiated? Does it draw on specific evidence, or does it feel more abstract? Does it use the requisite number of sources?
- **Writing & Analysis:** How well written is the section? Is it proofread? Thoughtful? Interesting? Is it long enough?

**Step 5. Feedback [3%].** Give your group members feedback on their sections. What is interesting? What is confusing or unclear? Advice on what to keep, revise, or flesh out with further research?

**Step 6. Finalize Paper [10%].** Utilize the feedback to revise paper for submission.

**Step 7. Presentation [10%].** Presentations will be as a group. The length should be 5-6 minutes/person (a group of 3 should present for 15-18 minutes). Your group will need to TEACH the class about your market. Do NOT try to share everything each group member discovered – instead, think about what is most significant for the class to know and what examples are most illustrative. But DO make sure that everyone has a job to do in presenting. Be sure to prepare, practice, and time your presentation.

**Step 8. Grade your groupmates [1%].** Complete survey to grade yourself and your groupmates on how well you feel you did on your paper and presentation. Group members will be graded individually, but do note that the stronger a group is, the better each group member looks.

**Step 9 [optional].** Revise paper one last time, post-presentation.