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History 2457
History of Capitalism
Research Seminar
Mondays, 4–6PM
107 Robinson Hall

Capitalism dominates the globe like never before. Nearly all the world's territories and ever more human social relations are subsumed under the logic of capitalism. Yet the spread of capitalist social relations—both socially and spatially—has taken several centuries. This research seminar will guide students to begin exploring some of that history through their own research.

Exploring the history of capitalism is a topic of unparalleled importance. As we are living through the deepest crisis of capitalism of our generation, we are beginning to see much clearer that capitalism is historically contingent and deeply embedded within politics, the state, social relations and culture. We observe both how capitalism has changed, and how capitalism differs in various parts of the world. As a result, economic, business, labor, social and political historians are increasingly seeing their work as a contribution to the history of capitalism.

The seminar aims to identify emerging approaches to the history of capitalism and to facilitate interdisciplinary thinking. It seeks to tap the energy of new scholarship, working across the conventional boundaries that have constrained past work. In particular, we hope to create a unique forum for intellectual exploration and productive research.

Requirements

At the center of this seminar is the production of an original piece of research on the history of capitalism. Students are expected to complete an article-length piece (between 6,000 and 8,000 words) of writing, based on archival and library research and related to the theme of the course.

Moreover, students will be expected to attend weekly meetings, at which we will discuss important works on the history of capitalism, talk about research strategies and critically examine each others work. Moreover, at several points during the semester, scholars interested in the history of capitalism will present their works-in-progress to the seminar. Active participation in these discussions is required, as is reading the books, articles and papers assigned. Students might also be asked to comment on another scholar's work.

Students are expected to develop a topic for their research on the following timeline. They should be ready to discuss their proposed topic in a meeting on

September 26, producing for this meeting a three-page proposal outlining their topic, its significance, their proposed methodology and a bibliography. By **October 15**, participants will submit a first sample of their writing—either a short version of their paper or a part thereof. The final draft of an article-length paper is due on **December 12**.

Schedule

Fall 2011

August 31: Organizational meeting

Sept. 12: Studying Capitalism: Approaches

Douglass North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (1982). pp. 3-19.

Fernand Braudel, *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism*

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (1944 / 2001), introduction and pp. 35-80.

E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present*, 50: 76-136 (1971).

Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capitalism, and European States* (1992), 1-37, 67-126.

Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*, Introduction, Chapter 1.

Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War" in *American Historical Review* Issue 109 (Dec 2004), pp. 1405-1438.

Sven Beckert, "History of American Capitalism," in Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, eds., *American History Now*. (2011)

Sept. 19: Visit to Baker Library, Harvard Business School

Sept. 26: Paper proposal discussion

Reminder: Three-page paper proposals due to course website Sept. 24.

Oct. 3: Working in archives and tracking down primary sources

- Oct. 10: Columbus Day**
- Oct. 17: Presentation of research results**
Reminder: drafts are to be submitted to the course website by October 15.
- Oct. 24: Independent Research**
- Oct. 31: Presentation of research results**
- Nov. 7: Gareth Austin, London School of Economics**
"The State and Business in Ghana: Precolonial, Colonial, Postcolonial"

Jointly sponsored with Harvard Business School's Business History Group. Location to be announced.
3:30-5:00 PM
There will not be a pre-circulated paper for this session.
- Nov. 14: Leon Fink, University of Illinois at Chicago**
"The American Way of (Class) War: Re-Thinking Homestead, Pullman, and the Anthracite Strike of 1902"
- Nov. 17: Teaching the History of American Capitalism (Conference)**
12-6:30 PM
location to be announced
- Nov. 18- 19: The New History of American Capitalism (conference)**
location to be announced
- Nov. 21: Walter Licht, University of Pennsylvania**
"A Global History of American Capitalism"
- Nov. 25: Discussion of Paper Drafts**

2-5 PM, location tba