COURSE REQUIREMENTS: completion of the assigned reading; attendance and
discussion during the course's weekly meetings; and a 25-page paper, due at my office by
4:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 8th. The paper will summarize and critique the scholarly
literature on a topic (of each student's choosing) raised by the assigned readings and
group discussions.

COURSE THEMES: This readings course will examine how the American political,
economic, social and cultural system has evolved since mid-1930's. The course is
principally concerned with the history of U.S. political economy, by which is meant the
study of the connections between state and market. One of the most basic questions the
course will address is what power relations underlie specific economic outcomes. The
course will explore the emergence during the 1930's and '40's of an American variation
upon Western European corporatist models, and why other, competing, political and
economic agendas did not prevail during those same years. Next the course will examine
how the post-World War II social contract, or “New Deal,” between organized labor and
management functioned during its heyday, and why that social bargain ultimately came
apart during the early and middle 1960's. The remainder of the course will address the
political, economic, social and cultural consequences of those developments from the
mid-1960's through the mid-1990's.

At root this course is concerned with choices. Among the most important
questions it will address are the following: what were the political and economic
alternatives available to Americans from the mid-1930's through the mid-1990's? Why
have a few visions of U.S. political and economic development enjoyed so much more
vitality than others during that time? How have specific political and economic outcomes
affected different classes, groups and interests?

Related to those themes and questions is another that the course will consider in
depth: how did American liberalism change from the mid-1930's to the mid-
1980's? Why did a political philosophy that was once the nation's reigning ideology lose
so much vitality during the 1960's, '70's and '80's? To what extent were those changes
part of a broader retreat from social democracy within all of the highly industrialized
market systems?
READING ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments should be completed prior to the weekly class meetings. Students are expected to buy all of the books ordered for the course and available at local bookstores. Copies of the articles have been collected into a readings packet available from the Cop-ez center located at Tuttle Garage. Copies of the assigned readings not available at the bookstore or in the course packet will be placed on reserve in the Main Library.

March 27  Introduction
no reading assignment

April 3  Crisis, 1929-1938

April 10 Wartime Recovery and Its Consequences-I

April 17 Wartime Recovery and Its Consequences-II

April 24 The Middle Way

May 1  The Postwar Order Under Stress

May 8  Crisis and Response-I
Fraser & Gerstle, eds., The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, chaps. 7-9; Harris, The Harder We Run, chaps. 7-8; and Alice Kessler Harris, In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th Century America (2001)
May 15  Crisis and Response-II

May 22  The Limits and Limitations of Neoliberal Reform

June 5  The Eighties Equilibrium and Beyond