

## History Department

### First Year Seminar Global Historical Capitalisms FYS 100B

Sarah Watts, Department of History  
Spring 2010, W 3-5:30

**Description:** This course conceptualizes the historical origin and development over the last 500 years of modern capitalism in a world-historical context, its novelty and dynamics, the global structural transformations that produced it, and the interests and institutions that drove it. The emphasis is on comparing European and East-Asian capitalisms.

**Rationale:** It is a commonplace that, in our lifetimes, Western-style capitalist globalization has achieved an unprecedented and rapid economic and cultural encirclement of the globe. Yet, one could argue that until recently, world capitalism lacked a history and most Westerners located its origins in Europe. Western capitalism, however, was itself a newcomer to a long-established East Asia-African trade system which by 1400 positioned the Indian Ocean and the Chinese economy at the center of world trade. At that point, China had more capitalists and richer capitalists than in any other area of the world. Yet industrial capitalism, whose conditions existed in China, arose in eighteenth-century England, and we examine reasons why. Europe after 1500 witnessed the rise of nation states out of feudalism, the growth of a historically unique relationship between merchants, the state, and religion, and the new flow of world bullion from the Americas. Everyone knows the story of European world exploration and the bounty that devolved to Europe from its commodities, but few understand that more than 70% of the Spanish gold and silver which enriched Western Europe ended up in China at the exact time the empire decided to monetize its vast economy. With the European voyages of discovery, overseas trade sponsored by Europe's new nation states connected to and overtook that of Asia, gradually moving the center of world trade from the Indian Ocean to the Levant, and thence to the Atlantic. By 1850, European capitalism eclipsed that of Asia, where countries were reduced to outright colonies or client states.

**Goals:** Students will widen their conceptual categories of historical meaning and create new ones in a global context. We will absorb a diverse array of historical information, develop meaningful valences of analysis, and formulate for each of ourselves an understanding of the processes of historical change over time. We will think, write and speak better. As we explore multiple interpretations of eastern and western capitalism, we will discern the premises of our own beliefs, and will be better armed to live usefully and responsibly in the twenty-first century.

**Format: Reading, Writing and Oral Assignments:** This will be a reading-discussion-and-writing-intensive seminar that will develop Socratic dialogue and critical thinking skills, improve research capabilities, and spur accomplished writing. We will sit in a circle and analyze readings. This format assumes that student observations, analysis and debate form a valuable and integral part of learning and class should be interactive and democratic, not merely didactic. For each class, students are responsible for maintaining informed discussion. This requires that they read each week's assignments thoroughly and carefully, *think about what they have read*, and come to class prepared to ask relevant questions and make meaningful contributions *based on evidence in the readings*. Informed class discussion requires integrating and connecting information between the readings, lectures, other classes and websites. It requires listening to what's being said and supplying effective responses, again, supported by evidence. It requires learning how to *dialogue*, linking one's response to what's come before and perusing a topic. It means differentiating between ideas (both your own and those of others) based on little evidence or opinion and ideas based on historical evidence. It means discovering and exploring contradictions and opposing viewpoints. It requires *questioning*, the readings, the professor, other students, your own assumptions. Informed class discussion means, ultimately, that students are responsible for the overall scholarly quality of what transpires in our deliberations. This is a

challenge--to become fully engaged, to discover new ways of educating yourself, to find out who you are in the educational process.

**Writing:** Essays will be unannounced, meaning that you should come to any class prepared to write. Once each essay is edited (not simply graded) and returned, the class as a whole examines arguments made in the essay and we evaluate what constitutes good writing and argument. Students will produce approximately twenty pages of essay over the semester.

**Book Reviews:** Book reviewers will explain the book's main arguments, their validity and objectivity, and *what contribution the work makes to our class material*. (This is an ongoing requirement, as later class material may relate to information in your book. You will then answer questions from the class. Book reviews may take no longer than 15 minutes, not counting q & a. Time your remarks accordingly.

**Grading:** Uses a five point scale of A=4 and F=0. Essays count for 40%; Class discussion 40%; Book Reviews 20%. Failure to attend class without official approval results in the reduction of ½ final grade point for each missed class, i.e. A to A- or B- to C+. Failure to attend class on the day a book review is due results in an F for the book review.

**Documentaries:**

- Food, Inc.
- Life and Debt
- Buying into Sexy
- Ecuador, Divided over Oil
- Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room
- Frontline: The Warning
- Frontline: Inside the Meltdown
- Wal Mart: The High Cost of Low Price

**Readings:**

James Fulcher, *Capitalism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2004.  
Robert Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: Fate and Fortune in the Rise of the West*. Rowman and Littlefield, Second Edition, 2007.  
Scott Cook, *Colonial Encounters in the Age of High Imperialism* Longman, 1997.  
David Harvey *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* Oxford, 2007.  
Participant Media, *Food, Inc. A Participant Guide*, Public Affairs, 2009.

Supplementary resources: Various, I will email articles concerning the recent near-breakdown of the global financial system. You should stay informed daily on that and global issues through a *substantial* news source such as NPR, the *Guardian Weekly*, *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and *Le Monde*. Newspapers are uneven in coverage of international events and, reflecting the bias of the dominant political orthodoxy, are largely unaware of the capitalist paradigm and uncritical of development issues. *The Economist* magazine, for example, is unsurpassed in comprehensiveness and coverage of contemporary issues, but you will readily detect its adherence also to the dominant economic orthodoxy of the industrial west.

**Schedule:**

Week 1 Jan 13: Syllabus and introduction. Assignment of book reviews.

Week 2 Jan 20: Empires, States, New World; 1500-1800

No Class

Reading:

a) Marks, Intro and Chapter. 1.

For each chapter in Marks, consult the questions and external links in the study guide at: <http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com/RL/books/marks/>. Class discussions and essays over the Marks

reading will utilize these study questions. Come to class prepared to discuss them. I will ask you to lead a discussion on any question or on questions of my own.

b) Capitalism: An Overview:

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/178493/economic-system/61117/Market-systems#toc242146>;

Week 3 Jan 27: China, the Empire.

Reading:

- a) Marks 2.
- b) Kenneth Pomeranz, "Two Worlds of Trade, Two Worlds of Empire: European State-Making and Industrialization in a Chinese Mirror" Chapter 4 in David A. Smith, et. al. *States and Sovereignty in the Global Economy* Routledge 2002 in ZSR library book record, click on Netlibrary Electronic Book.
- c) Kenneth Pomeranz, "Political Economy and Ecology on the Eve of Industrialization: Europe, China, and the Global Conjuncture" *American Historical Review* 2002 107(2): 425-446 22p.
- d) <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~sgabriel/research.html> On left bar, click on China Essays. Essay 2: Paper Tigers: Chinese Feudalism: stop at pp beginning "The destruction of the Qing dynasty....."

Week 4 Feb 3: Empires, States, Colonies, 1500-1800

Reading:

- a) Marks 3.
- b) Film: *Fighting the Tide: Developing Nations and Globalization: Part 2: Ecuador: Divided over Oil* DVD6847

Week 5 Feb 10: The World in 1700: Industrial Revolution in Britain: the Age of High Imperialism

Reading:

- a) Marks 4.

Book Review1: Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, (Cambridge, 1999) Chs 1,3, 5 and John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, sections on the economic impact of the slave trade on slave trading European countries.

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 6 Feb 17: Colonialism

Reading: Cook, Preface, Intro, Chs. 1,2, 3.

Book Review2: Anna Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 7 Feb 24: The Gap

Reading:

- a) Marks 5.
- b) Cook, 5, 6.
- c) Herman Daly, "The Perils of Free Trade" *Scientific American*, Nov. 93: 50-57.

Book Review3: choose one from second pp., Cook, p. 71.

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 8 Mar 3: Theorizing capitalism and the capitalist state.

Reading:

- a) Karl Marx: Essay 1: "Capitalism, Socialism..." in <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~sgabriel/research.html>, starting with paragraph "Let us

begin with the latter problem..." and ending with pp "Thus, neither private ownership..."

- b) Adam Smith:
- c) Smith, *States and Sovereignty*, Preface, Introduction, ch. 1.

Book Review4: Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Violence*, Wiley, 2007.

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Reminder: email articles for week 9

Spring Break March 6-14

Week 9 Mar 17: Our Very Own Economic Crisis

Reading: emailed articles and view the following BEFORE coming to class:

- a) Frontline: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/>  
*The Warning*  
*Inside the Meltdown*
- b) *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* DVD 3533 (on hold in ZSR)

Come to class prepared to write a summary of the 2008 Meltdown in the US.

Book Review5:

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 10 Mar 24

Reading:

- a) Fulcher, 1,2.
- b) Harvey, Intro, 1,2.

Book Review6 Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 11 Mar 31

Reading:

- a) Fulcher, 3, 4.
- b) Harvey, 3,4.

Book Review7: Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 12 Apr 7

Reading:

- a) Fulcher 5.
- b) Harvey 5,6.

Film: *Life and Debt*

Book Review8: James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 13 Apr 14

Reading:

- a) Fulcher 6.
- b) Harvey 7.
- c) Weber, Ch. 1-2  
Film: *Buying into Sexy: The Sexing Up of Tweens*. DVD 6988

Book Review9:

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Week 14 Apr 21

Reading: Weber, Chs 3-5.

Film: Food, Inc.

Week 15 Apr 28

Reading: Weber, 6-8 thru p. 166 and pp. 197-207.

### **Book Reviews**

Dale Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital and World Economy*

Geoffrey Gunn, *First Globalization: The Eurasian Exchange, 1500-1800*

Anna Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*

James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*

Neil Smith, *The Endgame of Globalization*

Alfred Steiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*

Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Violence*, Wiley, 2007.

Arlie Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*

Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*, Oxford, 1991.

Takeshi Hamashita, Giovanni Arrighi, et. al, *The Resurgence of East Asia: 500, 150 and 50 Year Perspectives*, Routledge 2003.

Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Time*, Verso, 2009.

Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*

Jeffrey Sacks *CommonWealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet*

See negative reviews for long discussion of TVE's in rural China compared to state owned businesses: UN material in review by "Magellan"

Paul Collier *The Bottom Billion*

Lester Brown *Plan B: Mobilizing to Save Civilization*

James Belich *The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo World, 1783-1939*

Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*

Lisa Lindsay, *Captives as Commodities: The Transatlantic Slave Trade* 2007

Philippa Levine: *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset*, Ch. 9: Scientific Racism and Empire

Mike Nickerson *Life, Money, and Illusion: Living on Earth as if we Want to Stay*

Chapter: Money, its Creation, Management and Growth. New Society Publishers

(shows how misuse of money contributed to the concept of perpetual growth)

Norman Diodge, *The Brain that Changes Itself*, Chs. on Culturally Modified Brain, and Plasticity and the Idea of Progress

James Speth, *The Bridge at the End of the World* Capitalism and the environment

**Other Sources:**

**ZSR Databases:** World Bank, World Development Indicators; World Bank, Global Development Finance

[Europa World Plus](#) (Political, historical and statistical information organized by country) [Political Handbook of the World](#) (online trial through April 23rd)

*Statesman's Yearbook* Ref Desk JA51 S7 2008

*Globalization: Encyclopedia of Trade, Labor, and Politics* Ref HF1359 .G5854 2006

*Handbook of World Families* Ref HQ515 .H3356 2005

*World Employment Report 2004-05 : employment, productivity and poverty reduction* Ref HD5706 .W675 2005

Michael Veseth *The New York Times Twentieth Century in Review: The Rise of the Global Economy* Ref HC59.15 .R52 2002

*The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World* Ref JA61 .O95 2001

*Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global women's issues and knowledge* Ref HQ1115 .R69 2000

*Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development factbook 2007: global economic, environmental and social statistics* HC59.15 .O33 2007

*The state of the world's cities 2004/2005: globalization and urban culture* HT151 .S644 2004

*Encyclopedia of diasporas: immigrant and refugee cultures around the world* JV6225 .E53 2005

*International Migration Report 2002* Ref JV6019 .I56 2002

*Illegal Immigration: A reference handbook* JV6483 .L45 2007

*Global warming in the 21st century* QC981.8.G56 J643 2006

*Equity and development* HC59.7 .W659 2006

*Vital signs 2006-2007: the trends that are shaping our future* HD75.6 .B77 2006