SYLLABUS

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Course Description

This research seminar examines the contemporary institutions, processes, and challenges of modern capitalism in advanced and lesser developed countries around the world. The course begins with a review of the work of several key thinkers on modern capitalism: Marx, Weber, Schumpeter, Polanyi, Offe, Block, and Tilly. It then proceeds to an analysis of salient topics in the evolution and reform of contemporary capitalism: class structure, labor and capital, poverty and inequality, the international trade and investment regime, economic (under)development and globalization. The course then focuses on the political economy of the United States, with a salient regard to the subject of health care. Student work in this course focuses on the research and composition of a 20-25-page original work on a topic relevant to the questions covered in the seminar. Intense course participation, including classroom discussion and periodic debates, is required.

What is Expected of Students

Students will be expected to read, think, criticize, and form arguments. That will require keeping up on reading assignments and attending class regularly. Students must be fully prepared at all times to discuss the readings and concepts from previous lectures. The best students will be critical but balanced in their assessments, and will develop coherent arguments that they can defend in their writing and their in-class discussion.

Reading Materials

All the reading materials for this course are available on e-reserves. Additionally, I will occasionally distribute handouts and clippings from The New York Times, the Financial Times, the Economist, Google, Wikipedia, YouTube and other sources via email. Students are also invited to check out links to course relevant web pages on the professor’s web page.

Grading

As a true research seminar the assessment of students’ performance will focus on the composition and completion of a 20-25 page research paper due at the end of the course. The first draft of this paper will be graded. Additionally, each student will be called upon during the course of the semester to participate in numerous debates and to present on the readings in structured critiques that will initiate all seminar discussions on the literature. The grade breakdown follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Debates</th>
<th>15%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Draft</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Research Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Draft</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Occasionally, the students’ knowledge of the topics, readings, and other assignments will be tested in periodic diagnostic evaluations. These are designed to assess the capacity of students to take copious and accurate notes. Each performance evaluation will form part of the global participation score.

The Debates

This seminar will use a series of adversarial debates (2x2 or 4x4) to address the literature on capitalism and globalization. Students will be instructed in how to organize these debates and how to participate with an emphasis on rejoinder and argument development.

The Seminar Paper

The culmination of student work in this seminar will be the composition of a seminar paper of 20-25 pages of text (typed, double-spaced, 12cpi, one-inch margins, paginated) and a research bibliography of a minimum of three pages, single-spaced. All drafts of the work prior to the final as well as the final must be handed in by 5 p.m. on the Courses directory on the due date (see below). All files, except for data files, must be in PDF format.

The composition of the seminar paper will be broken down into the following steps:

1. By Friday, Sept. 26, students will have decided upon a research topic in consultation with me.

2. By Tuesday, September 30, students will hand in a copy of a preliminary research bibliography of no fewer than 3 pages, single-spaced. A handout will define the proper citation and bibliographic reference format for the paper. Weak bibliographies and/or bibliographies that do not follow the required format will generate negative points assessable on the rough draft score.

3. By Friday, October 17, students will hand in a first draft of the argumentative section of their paper.

4. On Nov. 11, 13, 18, each student will orally present their research for no less than 15
minutes a piece in the research seminar. All colleagues will offer their input. If possible, we will schedule a couple of early presentations to free up the schedule at the end of the course.

(5) On Monday, Nov. 24, the final draft of the seminar paper will be due.

Consultation with me during each of these steps is crucial. We will also discuss the format and direction of paper topics and issues as part of the normal discussion of the research seminar. One of the most important lessons of the seminar is that good research depends upon the input and support of colleagues. Each student will be expected to contribute their share to this effort.

Class Participation

As a research seminar, the in-class discussions play a pivotal role in this course. Prior to each meeting, a selected number of students will be assigned the task of preparing talking points and discussion questions on the readings. These talking points should form the basis for both descriptive and critical points about the readings. Some students will be asked to answer these questions prior to class, all will be expected to answer them in the classroom. After each meeting, some students will be asked to post their class notes. All such work will be due on Caucus. In class, each student will present arguments to lead off general discussion in the seminar. Failure to follow through on any of these tasks will be penalized on the participation score.

Typically, I will begin each class session by offering a general overview of the issues to be discussed. I will also present you with a set of critical questions to structure discussion. After the overview portion, the seminar will proceed to student presentations, and then general discussion. I will conclude each class session with a brief review of the authors and readings for the next meeting. Whenever possible, each class will have a brief break of about 5 minutes.

Classroom discussion will extend to non-class times in this seminar. As part of the regular participation requirement, students must contribute to an ongoing dissemination of ideas on the Caucus conference set aside for this course. The professor will moderate the discussion and be responsible for the structure of the conference.

The Grading Scale

I will be using the following grading scale in this course:

98-100 A+
94-97 A
91-93 A-
88-90 B+
83-87 B
79-82 B-
76-78 C+
72-75 C
68-71 C-
67/below D/F
Academic Misconduct

Given the fact that academe relies upon the ethical conduct of scholars, students are held to the same standards in their own work. Any act of academic dishonesty or misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean. For further information, see the useful handout on “Avoiding Academic Misconduct.”

Special Needs

Students requiring access to learning tools/special schedules approved by Student Support Services should contact me at the beginning of the course.

NOTE: Readings must be completed for the dates assigned below.

Introduction (September 16, Tuesday)


Session 1: Theoretical Perspectives on the Development and Contradictions of Capitalism

Creative Destruction and the Satanic Mill: The Logic of Capitalist Evolution (September 18, Thursday)


Making the Political Order: The Capitalist State (September 23, Tuesday)

Organizations” (pp. 901-904) and “The Nation” (pp. 921-926), *Economy and Society* Vol. 2.


**Film:** PBS Frontline: “Tax Me If You Can” (to be shown, time and place TBA – also available online in streaming video: [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/tax/view/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/tax/view/))

*Recommended (extra credit on caucus discussion):*


**The Transnationalization of Capital(ism) (September 25, Thursday)**


**RESEARCH TOPIC DEADLINE (September 26, Friday)**

**Wither Labor? Political Erosion and the Ascendance of Creative Workers (September 30, Tuesday)**


**RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE (September 30, Tuesday)**

**Session 2: What About the Poor? Poverty and Inequality in Contemporary Capitalism**

**Class Structure and Social Mobility in Contemporary Capitalism (October 2, Thursday)**


*Recommended (extra credit on caucus discussion):*


**Travails of the Social Welfare State (October 7, Tuesday)**


**The Transnationalization of the Problems of Poverty and Inequality (October 9, Thursday)**


Debate #1: Can the international community substantially alleviate global poverty and inequality? (October 14, Tuesday)

Easterly, *The Elusive Quest for Growth*, chs. 6-7.


Debate #2: Can capitalism evolve solutions to poverty and inequality? (October 16, Thursday)

Easterly, *The Elusive Quest for Growth*, chs. 9, 11-12.


ROUGH DRAFT OF SEMINAR PAPER DUE (October 17, Friday)


Liberal Growth Models and their Crises (October 21, Tuesday)


Developmentalism Strikes Back? New Growth Models (October 23, Thursday)


*Recommended (extra credit on caucus discussion):*


**Debate #3: Is the liberal economic model the best one for growth in the 21st century?**
(October 28, Tuesday)

**Session 4: Limits of the Market Mechanism: A Case Study of Health Care in the United States**

**Health Care and Its Reform in the U.S. (October 30, Thursday)**


**Film:** “Sicko” (dir., Michael Moore, 2007).

**Debate #4 (in 2 parts): Does the market mechanism need more or less government regulation in the 21st century?** (November 4 and 6, Tuesday and Thursday)

**Session 5: Student Oral Presentations of Research**

November 11 (Tuesday), 13 (Thursday), and 18 (Tuesday)

**FINAL DRAFT OF SEMINAR PAPER DUE (November 24, Monday)**