

History 772

STUDIES IN RECENT U.S. HISTORY: U.S. POLITICAL ECONOMY SINCE THE
GREAT DEPRESSION

Spring 2006

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Office hours: Mondays, 2:00-3:30 p.m.

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

Steve Fraser & Gary Gerstle, eds., The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980 (1989), chaps. 1-4; Margaret Weir and Theda Skocpol, "State Structures and the Possibilities for 'Keynesian' Responses to the Great Depression in Sweden, Britain and the United States" (1985); Eric Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?" (1984)

April 10 Wartime Recovery and Its Consequences-I

Robert Zieger, The CIO: 1935-1955 (1995), skim chaps. 1-4, read chaps. 5-9

April 17 Wartime Recovery and Its Consequences-II

Howell John Harris, The Right to Manage: Industrial Relations Policies of American Business in the 1940's (1982)

April 24 The Middle Way

Charles S. Maier, In Search of Stability: Explorations in Historical Political Economy (1987), chaps. 3-4; "Scholarly Discussion: The Postwar Social Contract" (1996); Fraser & Gerstle, eds., The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, chaps. 5-6; and David Stebenne, "Thomas J. Watson and the Business-Government Relationship, 1933-1956" (2005)

May 1 The Postwar Order Under Stress

Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History" (1982); Herbert Hill, "The Problem of Race in American Labor History" (1996); William H. Harris, The Harder We Run: Black Workers since the Civil War (1982), chap. 6; and Eric Arnesen, "Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination" (2001)

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
Allen J. Matusow, Nixon's Economy: Booms, Busts, Dollars, & Votes (1998)
- May 22 The Limits and Limitations of Neoliberal Reform
Olivier Zunz, Leonard Schoppa, and Nobuhiro Hiwatari, eds., Social Contracts under Stress: The Middle Classes of America, Europe, and Japan at the Turn of the Century (2002); and David Stebenne, "IBM's 'New Deal': Employment Policies of the International Business Machines Corporation, 1933-1956" (2005)
- June 5 The Eighties Equilibrium and Beyond
Fraser & Gerstle, eds., The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, chap. 10; and Eric Avila, Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles (2004)