Capitalism: A Global History

This course surveys classic as well as recent approaches to the history of capitalism. The earliest weeks will focus on historically grounded definitions of capitalism as they were formulated in debates over the transition from feudalism to capitalism. We will examine competing explanations for the “the great divergence” between Europe and the rest of the world. The course continues to move chronologically to discussions of the consumer revolution of the eighteenth century, the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and the emergence of finance capitalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Various relationships will be considered, between, slavery and capitalism, antislavery and capitalism, capitalism and imperialism, capitalism and freedom, and capitalism and socialism. The course will conclude by examining the “downturn” of the 1970s and debates over the rising maldistribution of wealth in the late twentieth century.


Sept. 15 No class (no replacement class)

Sept. 22 No class (replacement class 9/25)


Jan De Vries, *The Economy of Europe in the Age of Crisis*


Stanley L. Engerman, “Some Considerations Relating to Property Rights in Man,” *Journal of Economic History*

Gavin Wright, *Slavery and American Economic Development*.

John Clegg, “Slavery and Capitalism”


Nov. 3  Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism*

Nov. 10  Great Depression?

Nov. 17  Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade*


Dec. 8  Steve Fraser, *The Age of Acquiescence*