First Year Seminar
Entrepreneurs in American History

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Office Hours: MWF 3 or by arrangement. I'm generally around from 8:30 to 5, MTWTF.

Goals:
The course's primary goal is to understand the motives, strategies and impacts of entrepreneurs in the past, as a way to understand the challenges facing entrepreneurs of today – and because the topic is inherently interesting. Entrepreneurship is the "process by which individuals and groups take advantage of their knowledge and resources to identify and pursue opportunities, initiate change and create value in their lives and lives of others." This course will cast a wide historical net, taking a broad view of entrepreneurship – focusing mainly on entrepreneurs in business, but also examining entrepreneurship in the public policy arena and in social movements. It will situate these entrepreneurs in the economy of their own times, exploring their successes and failures, and examining their impacts on society. The approach will blend biography with a broader view of the economy and society of each period and theories about entrepreneurship.

Students will do considerable reading, writing, discussion and critical thinking – honing all these skills. Most class meetings will center on a group discussion of the challenges facing the entrepreneur being discussed and examining the impacts of his or her choices. We will discuss both the positive and the normative – what they did and what impact they had and also what they *should* have done and what their critics and supporters have argued.

Grades:

Class discussion and participation = 20%	Quizzes on readings = 20%
Short-papers = 30%	Term paper and presentation = 30%

Short paper assignments (six)   Length = c. 500 words
What was the subject's greatest success and greatest failure as an entrepreneur? Explain carefully. What traits and external factors help explain these successes and failures?

Term paper assignment   Due: November 22 (noon)
Write a 15-page paper on an entrepreneur that we haven't covered in class and lead a 20-minute discussion of the entrepreneur. In your paper a) summarize the key facts about the entrepreneur, b) explain the most important decisions and strategies of the entrepreneur, and c) explain the impact that the entrepreneur had on society. Be prepared to answer questions and to demonstrate thorough background knowledge of the industry or arena in which he or she operated. It's OK to write on someone who wasn't in business – e.g. religious, scientific, educational, and social entrepreneurs are fair game.

Course schedule:

August 27 to September 3: The Role of Entrepreneurs in the Economy
Mark Casson, "Entrepreneurship," *Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*
Saras Sarasvathy, "What Makes Entrepreneurs Entrepreneurial?"
September 5 to September 15: Eli Whitney
Constance Green, *Eli Whitney and the Birth of American Technology*
Two-page paper due September 15
No class meeting on September 12
September 17: Thomas Edison
September 19 to September 24: Frederic Tudor
Gavin Weightman, *The Frozen-Water Trade: A True Story*
Two-page paper due September 24
September 26 to October 8: John Rockefeller
Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.*
Two-page paper due October 6
October 10: Andrew Carnegie
October 13: George Bailey
October 15 to October 22: Charles Yerkes
John Franch, *Robber Baron: The Life of Charles Tyson Yerkes*
Two-page paper due: October 22
Fall break: October 17
October 24: Preparing for Research (meet with Mary Scanlon in ZSR Room 476)
October 27 to November 10: Jimmy Hoffa
Thaddeus Russell, *Out of the Jungle: Jimmy Hoffa and the Making of the American Working Class*
Two-page paper due: November 7
No class meeting on October 31
November 5: Entrepreneurial Presidents
November 12 to November 14: Thomas Watson and Robert Noyce
Week of November 17: No class meetings, work on your term paper
Term paper due: November 22 (noon)
November 24 to December 5 and Saturday, December 6 at noon
Presentation of term papers