

# THE AMERICAN DREAM IN AN AGE OF GLOBAL CAPITAL, 1865-2020

## HIST 4030H

**Dr. Hamilton**  
**Fall 2011**  
**MWF 10:10-11:00am**  
**LeConte Hall, Room 102**

Office: 318 LeConte Hall  
Email: shamilto@uga.edu  
Office Hours: MW 11am-12:30pm,  
and by appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What is the American Dream? Satisfying, remunerative work and the promise of upward mobility? The material and psychological security provided by comfortable housing, nutritious food, good health, and educational opportunities for one's family? The pleasures of enjoying leisure time and stimulating entertainment, rather than having one's life defined entirely by work? All of these desires have shaped the culture and politics of American capitalism since 1865, and all have been crucial in defining America's past, present, and future role in a global economy. This course will explore the struggles, conflicts, and achievements of the workers, managers, consumers, political leaders, intellectuals, novelists, and participants in mass social movements who defined and redefined the American Dream over the long twentieth century. What was gained and lost for workers, owners, and consumers through the rise and fall of Fordist industrial capitalism? How have democratic ideals and U.S. domestic and foreign policies been shaped by the shifting demands of corporate capitalism? What rights and responsibilities does the corporation have in a democratic polity? Does the American Dream stand a chance in an era of multinational corporations, lax government regulation, decimated labor unions, and individualistic consumerism? Is the American Dream *fact or fiction*? Readings and lectures will examine these issues within a global context, as we investigate the interconnections of American society with worldwide transformations of migration patterns, corporate expansion and transnational commerce, and the perils and promises of "free enterprise."

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES and REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Objectives**

This is a reading-intensive course in which students will gain breadth and depth of knowledge about historical American political economy. Students will improve their skills in reading, writing, and discussing complex ideas at an advanced level. Good writing is learned in part by reading extensively and intensively, so we will do a significant amount of reading (up to 300 pages per week).

#### **Attendance**

Attendance at *every* class meeting is expected. I will take attendance daily, and all absences are considered unexcused, period. After your fourth absence from class, I will deduct *one percentage point* from your final course grade for each subsequent absence. If you encounter any issues in your personal or academic life that prevent you from attending class on a regular basis, you should contact me immediately.

#### **Discussion**

As this is a seminar-style course, our main task is to actively engage in discussion of the assigned readings; thus, 35% of your final grade will be based on discussion participation. Students are expected to come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Readings should be completed by the start of each class meeting. To facilitate discussion, each student will write **three** 250-400 word (1-2 double-spaced pages) responses to the readings during the course of the semester. Up to five pop quizzes and/or in-class writing assignments will also be administered to assure the reading is being done.

## Writing Assignments / Final Exam

There will be three formal essay assignments in addition to the reading responses. The first is a 750- to 1000-word paper on a theme suggested by Dr. Hamilton. The second is a research paper of 1750 to 2000 words on a topic of your choosing, due at the end of the semester. The third is a comprehensive final take-home exam that will cover course readings, lectures, films, and discussions. More detailed information on the various writing assignments will be posted on ELC as the semester progresses.

## Late Papers

Students will be penalized 10 points (out of 100) for every day that an assignment is late. No paper extensions will be granted.

## Note on Requirements

Please note that the course syllabus is a general plan for the course. Deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. This means that course readings and requirements are subject to change at the professor's discretion.

## Academic Integrity

All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Each student is responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. In short, do not plagiarize. Any infringement of the University's Academic Honesty Code—no matter how minor—will result in full disciplinary action. Visit the following website for more information: [http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic\\_honesty/academic\\_honesty.htm](http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_honesty/academic_honesty.htm)

## Grading

Discussion / Responses / Quizzes	<b>35%</b>
First paper	<b>15%</b>
Second paper	<b>30%</b>
Final take-home exam	<b>20%</b>

## READING LIST

The following books are required reading, and will be available for purchase at the bookstore (or online), as well as placed on hold in the library. Books marked with a dagger (†) are also available as eTexts (see ELC), though you will likely prefer to have them in physical paper as they are quite inexpensive. Other documents, marked in the schedule by an asterisk (\*) will be made available on ELC as PDFs. If you would like to avoid downloading the PDFs on a slow internet connection, simply provide me with a CD-R or USB flash drive and I will copy them for you.

Richard Powers, *Gain: A Novel* (Picador, 1998).

Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers* (Persea, 2003 [1925]).

†Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (New York: Signet Classics, 2000 [1900]).

†Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (New York: Signet Classics, 2007 [1922]).

Louis Hyman, *Debtor Nation: The History of America in Red Ink* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

## SCHEDULE

Aug. 15	Introduction to the Course
Aug. 17	Lecture: Fictions and Realities of American Capitalism <i>Suggested Reading:</i> *David Kamp, "Rethinking the American Dream," <i>Vanity Fair</i> , Apr. 2009, 118-180.
Aug. 19	<i>Required Reading:</i> Powers, <i>Gain</i> , pp. 1-48.

- Aug. 22 Lecture: The Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism  
 Aug. 24 *Required Reading:* Powers, *Gain*, pp. 48-184.  
 Aug. 26 *Required Reading:* Powers, *Gain*, pp. 184-355.
- Aug. 29 Lecture: The Labor Question  
 Aug. 31 *Required Reading:* \*Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," *North American Review* (1889); \*Henry Demarest Lloyd, *Wealth against Commonwealth* (1894) [excerpts].
- Sep. 2 *Required Reading:*\*Rosanne Currarino, "'Labor Wants More!' The AFL and the Idea of Economic Liberty," in *The Labor Question in America* (Urbana, 2010), 86-113.
- Sep. 5 NO CLASS—Labor Day (appropriately enough!)  
 Sep. 7 Lecture: Gender, Immigration, and the Boundaries of the American Dream  
 Sep. 9 *Required Reading:* \*Samuel Gompers, "Meat vs. Rice: Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion; American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism: Which Shall Survive?" U.S. Senate, 57th Cong., 1st sess., S. Doc. 137 (1902); \*Aristide Zolberg, "Global Movements, Global Walls: Responses to Migration, 1885-1925," in *Global History and Migrations*, ed. Wang Gungwu, (Boulder: Westview, 1996), pp. 279-307.
- Sep. 12 *Required Reading:* Yeziarska, *Bread Givers*, pp. xxi-xxxvi, 1-52.  
 Sep. 14 *Required Reading:* Yeziarska, *Bread Givers*, pp. 53-151  
 Sep. 16 *Required Reading:* Yeziarska, *Bread Givers*, pp. 155-234
- Sep. 19 *Required Reading:* Yeziarska, *Bread Givers*, pp. 237-297.  
 Sep. 21 Lecture: Mass Consumption and the Landscape of Desire  
 Sep. 23 NO CLASS: WRITING DAY
- Sep. 26 *Required Reading:* Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, chapters 1-8, 10, 12-16.  
 Sep. 28 *Required Reading:* Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, chapters 20-33.  
 Sep. 30 *Required Reading:* Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, chapters 34-39, 42, 44-47.
- Oct. 3 Lecture: A Chicken in Every Pot? The Seduction of Mass Production  
 Oct. 5 *Required Reading:* \*Henry Ford, "Mass Production," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1926).  
 Oct. 7 *Required Reading:* Hyman, *Debtor Nation*, 1-44.  
**Paper I Due**
- Oct. 10 Lecture: The Politics of Prosperity in the 1920s  
 Oct. 12 *Required Reading:* Lewis, *Babbitt*, chapters 1-14.  
 Oct. 14 *Required Reading:* Lewis, *Babbitt*, chapters 15-end.
- Oct. 17 Lecture: The Great Depression and the Crisis of Global Capital  
 Oct. 19 *Required Reading:* Hyman, *Debtor Nation*, pp. 45-72.  
 Oct. 21 Lecture: The "American Century"
- Oct. 24 *Required Reading:* \*Henry Luce, "The American Century," *Life*, Feb. 17, 1941, pp. 61-65; \*Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Four Freedoms" (1941).  
 Oct. 26 *Required Reading:* \*Friedrich Hayek, "The Road to Serfdom [abridged]" *Reader's Digest*, Apr. 1945, pp. 1-20; \*Chester A. Bowles, *Tomorrow without Fear* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), pp. 1-3, 30-49, 51-56, 84-86.  
 Oct. 28 NO CLASS—FALL BREAK

- Oct. 31 Lecture: Come Alive! You're in the Pepsi Generation  
 Nov. 2 *Required Reading:* Hyman, *Debtor Nation*, pp. 132-172.  
 Nov. 4 NO CLASS—RESEARCH DAY
- Nov. 7 *Required Reading:* Hyman, *Debtor Nation*, pp. 173-219.  
 Nov. 9 Film: "Edith the Job-Hunter," *All in the Family*, first aired September 28, 1974.  
 Nov. 11 *Required Reading:* \*Jefferson Cowie, "I'm Dying Here," in *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York, 2010), pp. 167-209.
- Nov. 14 *Required Reading:* \*Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address," Jan. 20, 1981; \*Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on the Economy," Feb. 5, 1981; \*William Greider, "The Education of David Stockman," *Atlantic*, Dec. 1981, 27-54.
- Nov. 16 Film: *The Corporation* (2005)  
 Nov. 18 Film: *The Corporation*, cont'd.
- Nov 21-25 NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break
- Nov. 28 *Required Reading:* Hyman, *Debtor Nation*, pp. 281-287; \*Paul Mattick, "Capitalism's Dismal Future," *Chronicle Review*, Mar. 13, 2011; \*Sabrina Tavernise, "Ohio Town Sees Public Job as Only Route to Middle Class," *New York Times*, Mar. 15, 2011.
- Nov. 30 Presentations  
 Dec. 2 Presentations
- Dec. 5 Presentations  
 Dec. 6 Presentations (Tuesday is a "Friday")  
**Paper II Due (Upload to ELC by 11:59pm)**
- Dec. 14 Final Exam Due to ELC by 11am**

