

History of Business in the US

HST 377A

Instructor: Mandy L. Cooper, PhD

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Office Hours: Tues., Wed., and Thurs. from 12:00-1:30 in Lindner Hall – Arts & Sciences 200C
and by appointment

Course Description:

In 1640, Madeira wine was a simple, cheap wine from a Portuguese island colony. By 1815, it had become a luxury drink that indicated Atlantic cosmopolitanism and was sold as far inland as the frontier region of the Ohio River Valley. How did this happen, and why does it matter for American business? Distribution networks in the colonies shaped Atlantic markets, fueling the taste for madeira. Following a specific commodity like wine, calico, rice, or enslaved men and women reveals economic networks that tightly bound business in the early United States to global markets. It's in these economic networks that connected North America with Europe, Africa, South America, and the Caribbean that we can find the beginnings of global forms of capitalism that characterize American business even today.

Have you ever wondered how the United States became a global superpower in business? Or how corporations came to dominate American business?

This course will examine the historical development of business in the United States from the colonial period to the present, as well as the relationship between events in the U.S. and the development of global forms of capitalism. Students will examine topics such as trade networks in the Atlantic World, the advent of slavery and the slave economy, the rise of big business and the development of the modern corporation, and the relationship between management and labor. Students will leave this class with a historical perspective on American business and understand its connections to the development of global capitalism.

The readings, lectures, and assignments have been structured to help students think critically about history and not simply memorize facts, dates, places, and names. The course relies on three kinds of sources: lectures, primary materials, and secondary readings. The lectures are intended to introduce analytical ideas: the big themes, questions, and problems from a particular historical moment. Those ideas will then help you analyze the assigned readings. Primary source materials are sources that were created in the historical time period that we're studying. They allow us, as historians, to enter into that period, to get closer to it, and to get a more direct sense of what was happening at the time. Secondary sources, such as the assigned book chapters and articles, are different: they written after the fact, are filtered through someone else's observations, and are thus removed from the actual time period in question. The analysis of the two kinds of sources is also different. With primary sources, we are focusing on materials generated in the past; in learning how to critically analyze those materials, we are also coming to terms with the dynamics of the past. With secondary sources, we would be weighing what other people said about the past and determining which analysis we find most compelling. Students should leave this class with a better and deeper understanding of American history and why the past remains relevant today. While this course is geared toward history majors, students of all

fields should find this class helpful in learning how to participate in scholarly discussion and analyze historical arguments.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:

- Identify major trends in the history of business in the United States
- Articulate critical perspectives on both primary and secondary sources, in both verbal and written analyses

This course addresses the following student learning objectives for the Department of History and Geography:

1. Go beyond narrative and memorization to think critically about the past as interpretation.
2. Understand how one's perspective, both as a historical actor and as a student of the past, fundamentally shapes meaning. Doing so requires an understanding of how constructs such as class, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and religious commitment dynamically shape social structures, national identities, and all forms of human relationships.
3. Understand the concept of historiography and be able to provide examples of history as an ongoing conversation about the past.
4. Locate, evaluate, contextualize, and interpret primary sources.

Course Text: There is no course text for this class. Readings will consist of book chapters, articles, and primary sources. Book chapters and primary sources will be posted on Moodle, and articles can be found via the library's website. We will go over how to find and access articles in class.

Class Structure: Each class will begin with a lecture that draws from your readings. At certain points during class, I will stop and ask you to discuss specific points from the readings and lecture. Your response and discussion should reveal your knowledge of the assigned reading. A portion of each class will be devoted to discussing the primary source reading for that day, generally one or two short items. Diverse and strong opinions are welcome; however, I expect students to conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner at all times.

Reading Assignments: Students should complete the assigned readings for a particular lecture before class. You will need to thoroughly read the book chapters and/or articles (posted on Moodle) and come to class prepared to discuss what you have read. We will discuss strategies for reading analytically (and quickly!) in class. If you miss a lecture, the readings will serve you well, but you should also ask a classmate if he/she would be willing to share a copy of their notes for that day. The primary sources are brief (generally only one to two pages each), and we will go over them in class together. Students are expected to come to class having done the required reading and prepared to thoughtfully engage in the lecture, discussion, and primary source exercise.

Assignments: Students will complete three assignments in this course: researching and bringing in primary sources, periodic blog postings, and a short primary source analysis paper. The first assignment will be researching and bringing in primary sources for one of the last six class sessions. Each student will sign up for one of these sessions, find **ONE** relevant primary source, post the source to the appropriate forum on Moodle by 6PM on the day before class along with a paragraph explaining why the source was chosen and what it will add to our discussion of that day's theme. They will then lead the class discussion on their chosen primary source. The second assignment is blog postings on the discussion forums on Moodle. Each student will sign up for two blog postings on the second day of class. These blog postings should deal with some aspect of the primary materials—the assigned readings other than the textbook—for the classes indicated. Blog posts are due by 6PM on the day before the class for which the readings are assigned. The blogs are meant to serve two purposes. First, they prepare both you and me for the lecture and discussion. If you are familiar with the material that we will cover in class, then you will get more out of the lecture and discussion. I read the blogs before class, which helps me to figure out what you are thinking about the material so I can better frame the issues for you. The second purpose of the blogs is to prepare you for the papers and for the exams. This is your chance to try out ideas to develop for the longer assignments. The final assignment will be a primary source analysis of 3-4 pages. I will provide you with a short list of primary sources to choose from for this analysis. More information on the assignments will be handed out in class.

Exams: There will be two take-home exams. Students will be provided with essay topics in advance and asked to write on one out of the two provided topics.

Grading Scheme:

Participation: 15%

Discussion Forum Posts: 15%

Primary Source Class Discussion: 10%

Primary Source Analysis: 20%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Attendance Policy: The university does not have a specific attendance policy. Please be aware, however, that it will be very difficult for you to succeed in this course if you do not attend class. Consequently, two or more absences will result in a penalty on your participation grade. If you encounter extenuating circumstances that result in two or more absences, you should speak to me personally.

Religious Holidays: In supporting religious diversity, Elon has a policy and procedures for students who wish to observe religious holidays that are in conflict with the academic calendar, allowing students an excused absence. Students who wish to observe a holiday during the semester must complete the online [Religious Observance Notification Form \(RONF\)](#) by September 17, 2018, with the exception of Rosh Hashanah. Excused absence requests for Rosh Hashanah Day 1 and Day 2 must be submitted by September 7, 2018.

This policy does not apply during the final examination period. Students are required to make prior arrangements with the instructor for completion of any work missed during the absence. Once the completed ROLF is received, the Truitt Center will confirm the excused absence with notification to the instructor and the appropriate academic dean, along with a copy to the student. Students may contact the Truitt Center staff with any questions (336-278-7729).

Late Work: All papers and assignments are due at the start of class on the date listed on the syllabus. Late work will not be accepted without a documented excuse (i.e. doctor's note). If you cannot come to class the day your paper is due, you have until the start of class that day to email it to me.

Honor System: Elon's honor pledge calls for a commitment to Elon's shared values of Honesty, Integrity, Responsibility, and Respect. To be clear about what constitutes violations of these values; students should be familiar with [code of conduct policies described in the student handbook](#).

Students with questions about the specific interpretation of these values and violations as they relate to this course should contact this instructor immediately. Violations in academic-related areas will be documented in an incident report which will be maintained in the Office of Student Conduct, and may result in a lowering of the course grade and/or failure of the course with an Honor Code F. Violations specifically covered by academic honor code policies include: plagiarism, cheating, lying, stealing, and the facilitation of another's dishonesty. Multiple violations may result in a student's suspension from the University.

Learning Styles and Learning Support: We all learn in different ways, and it is important that this course be accessible to students with a variety of learning styles and needs. Those with diagnosed learning differences should register with Disabilities Resources using the following link: https://elon-accommodate.symlicity.com/public_accommodation/. *Anyone* should feel free to approach me if he or she feels that the course material is inaccessible for any reason.

Disability Resources is located in the Koenigsberger Learning Center (Belk Library 226; 336-278-6568). For more information about Disabilities Resources, please visit their website: <https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/koenigsberger-learning-center/disabilities-resources/>.

Writing Center: Elon's [Writing Center](#) in the Center for Writing Excellence is staffed by trained peer-consultants who can help you with all of your writing projects (for any class or major and for any extracurricular, personal, or professional purposes), so take advantage of this excellent academic resource and include a visit to our Writing Center as part of your writing process.

Media Services: Many of our class sessions will require the use of a laptop or tablet for in-class activities. Please bring a laptop or tablet to each class. Students can borrow equipment (including laptops) to use in class and course projects from Elon's [Media Services](#), located within Belk Library.

Office Hours: I am always happy to discuss any questions or concerns you have regarding this course. I am always available during office hours, and you are welcome to schedule an appointment outside of those times by emailing me.

Syllabus Updates: Please note that readings and due dates are subject to change. I will notify you of any changes to the course schedule in class.

Course Schedule

Thurs., January 3	Introduction to Business History Major Themes, Questions, Problems, Concerns In-Class Assignment: Sven Beckert, “History of American Capitalism” in <i>American History Now</i> , edited by Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr
Fri., January 4	The Atlantic World and Business in Early America Primary Sources: Farmers Ask the Rhode Island Assembly to Regulate Commercial Fishing, 1766. Boston Merchant Thomas Hancock Launches a Covert Voyage to Amsterdam, 1742. New York Merchant Gerard G. Beekman Insures Slave Cargo from Africa, 1749. Boston Shopkeeper Lewis Deblois Advertises the Latest London Goods, 1757. In-Class Activity – Transatlantic Slave Trade Database
Mon., January 7	Business, Credit, and Entrepreneurship in the Early United States Secondary Reading: Bruce H. Mann, “Debtors and Creditors,” in <i>Republic of Debtors</i> In-Class Activity with Primary Sources TBA
Tues., January 8	The Business of Slavery Secondary Reading: Alexandra Finley, “‘Cash to Corinna’: Domestic Labor and Sexual Economy in the ‘Fancy Trade,’” <i>Journal of American History</i> , September 2017. (Available through library website). Primary Sources: Painting of Enslaved Persons for Sale Solomon Northrup Describes a Slave Market, 1841 In-Class Activity: Slavery Adverts 250
Wed., January 9	Industrialization and the Market Revolution No Secondary Reading Primary Sources:

[Harriet H. Robinson Remembers a Mill Workers' Strike, 1836](#)

Industrialist Kirk Boott Chronicles the Great Achievements at Lowell, 1827 (on Moodle)

Thurs., January 10 Internal Improvement and the Rise of the Corporation
Primary Sources:
[James Madison Asks Congress to Support Internal Improvements, 1815](#)
The Corporation Becomes an Artificial Citizen, 1844
Nathan Appleton Explains How Banks Benefit Everyone, 1831
**EXAM QUESTIONS HANDED OUT IN CLASS

Fri., January 11 Big Business in America's Gilded Age
**Last day to withdraw from course with a "W"
Secondary Reading: Richard White, "Men in Octopus Suits," in
Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America
Primary Sources:
[The Tournament of Today – A Set-To Between Labor and Monopoly](#)
[Andrew Carnegie's Gospel of Wealth \(June 1889\)](#)

Mon., January 14 Labor and Regulation in the Gilded Age/Progressive Era
No Secondary Reading
Primary Sources:
[Lawrence Textile Strike \(1912\)](#)
["Next!" \(1904\)](#)
**FIRST EXAM DUE BY START OF CLASS

Tues., January 15 The Rise of Consumer Society
Secondary Reading: Lizabeth Cohen, "Encountering Mass Culture" in
Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939,
Primary Source Group 1
In-Class Activity – Advertising Posters

Wed., January 16 Business during Depression and War
Secondary Reading: Lizabeth Cohen, "Workers Make a New Deal" in
Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939,
Primary Source Group 2

Thurs., January 17 Challenges and Opportunities in the Post-War World
Primary Source Group 3

Fri., January 18 The Gender of Business
Secondary Reading: Mary A. Yeager, "Considering Businesswomen," in
Major Problems in American Business History: Documents and Essays

Primary Source Group 4

Mon., January 21 Martin Luther King. Jr. Day, no class

Tues., January 22 Globalization
Secondary Reading: Alfred E. Eckes, Jr., and Thomas W. Zeiler,
“Enduring the Crises, 1973-1986” in *Globalization and the American Century*

Primary Source Group 5

****PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS DUE**

Wed., January 23 The Recent Past (1990s-Present)
Primary Sources:
[Bill Clinton on Free Trade and Financial Deregulation \(1993-2000\)](#)
Primary Source Group 6

Thurs., January 24 EXAM DUE BY 11:30AM