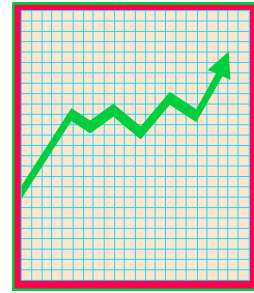


# HIST 364

## History of American Business



### General Description

#### Overview and Objectives

This course is an introduction to the economic and business history of the United States from the time of European and African colonization of the New World to the present. The course has a broad focus. The writing assignments and readings deal not only with the key individuals and institutional developments in American business history but also with related economic and social developments in American society as a whole. Consequently, topics such as the origins and evolution of capitalism, economic growth, technological change, the changing relationship between labor and capital, and globalization will be covered. The broad scope of the course assumes some, but not “expert,” familiarity with the general course of American history.

This course is designed for students in history, business, and related fields. Still, I hope the topics covered here will also appeal to anyone interested in the evolution of business. “Business” is such a fact of life—like taxes or death—that most people assume it doesn’t have a history. But the structure of business and its relationship to government is not static. Its progress was not inevitable but was responsive to individual decisions, the limitations of resources and the environment, and both the constructive and restrictive interventions of government throughout American history.

This course is valuable for aspiring historians. Any history of America that ignores business and economics ignores the basic possibilities and constraints of human existence. Economic change is the engine of history. For the business student, history can serve as a conceptual road map for the future. Do you want to know how the Internet will transform American business? Let the transportation and communication revolutions in the nineteenth century be your guides. History can’t predict the future, but it can help business students think

analytically and strategically about the direction of their own world. Most of all, the study of history can contribute to our intellectual development. It helps us to think more conceptually and, more importantly, to develop the communication skills we use to transmit ideas to others. A history of American business, in short, combines the practical mindset of business with the practical but broadly liberal aspirations of history.

### **Study Tips**

The course is divided into fifteen lessons. It is structured chronologically but also is focused on particular themes. The Discussion section for each lesson will provide a general introduction; you should read that first. Your textbook will provide a survey of American business history and will establish a general contextual framework. You should tackle this reading second. Some assignments also require more specialized reading from secondary texts. You should do this reading third, after you master the general concepts. Try to do all of your reading with “pencil in hand.” Be an active reader. While you are working your way through a text, try to note both key information and arguments. History is constructed of facts and analysis. You will be responsible for both. Before you start reading, familiarize yourself with the questions asked in the written assignments. That way you will be able to note key facts and arguments while you read.

Many of the readings and written assignments in this course will be difficult. Much of the supplementary reading material is pitched at a high level and most of the writing assignments are intellectually rigorous. Try not to let this discourage you. Your responses do not have to be perfect. My teaching philosophy has always been to aim high; challenging work, I believe, raises the level of all students.

### **Required Textbooks**

The following textbooks and course pack are required for this course. They may be purchased from the Higher Grounds bookstore in the Friday Center using the book order form in this manual.

- Blackford, Mansel G. and K. Austin Kerr. *Business Enterprise in American History*, 3rd edition. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1994.
- Carlton, David L. and Peter A. Coclanis. *Confronting Southern Poverty in the Great Depression*. Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1996.

- Cocolanis, Peter A. *Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670–1920*. Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Chandler, Alfred D. *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977.
- Greene, Jack P. *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture*. University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- HIST 364 Course Pack

## Written Assignments

Each assignment requires a written response. These responses will vary in length, so be sure to follow directions. Students generally bring different levels of writing ability to a course. This is not an English course, but the ability to analyze and communicate is central to the conduct of historical argument. You will not be graded on your grammar, but sloppy work will lower your grade. Keep the following points in mind:

1. Regardless of a written assignment's length, construct your responses in standard essay form. That means you should include a thesis that outlines the general direction of your argument and a body that develops and demonstrates your thesis with a combination of analysis and fact. Your assignments should conclude with a summarizing statement that emphasizes and supports your main thesis and evidentiary arguments.
2. Both your thesis and your evidence should be in your own words. When necessary, quote from your sources. If you use an idea or fact from an outside source, be sure to cite it in the text. If you use one of the assigned texts, a short parenthetical citation will suffice—for example (Blackford, 35).
3. Your assignments will be graded on four factors:
  - Does the essay answer the question? Often students don't read a question closely and their essays, as a consequence, wander into areas not demanded by the assignment.
  - Is the essay logically consistent? (If the historical evidence is contradictory, try to account for it within the general framework of your thesis.)

- Does the essay develop and support its arguments with appropriate and available factual evidence?
- Is the essay's thesis clear, creative, and complex?

**Grading and  
Final Exam**

Three-quarters of your final grade will be determined by averaging the grades of your fifteen written assignments. Your final exam will count for the remaining quarter of your grade, but remember, *you must pass the final exam to pass the course*. The exam is open book, meaning you are free to consult your notes, course manual, and textbooks.