

# MoneyLand: Business and American Culture

(syllabus revised 10/26/2016)

**HIST136 sections 0101, 0102, and 0103 \* Fall 2016**

**class meetings: SYM 0200, M/W 10:00-10:50a \* section meetings: weekly**

	<b>email</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>office hours</b>
<b>Prof. David Sicilia</b>	dsicilia@umd.edu	TLF 2119	M 8:30-10:00; W 11:00-12:30; and by appt.
<b>Teaching Assistant Mr. Kyle Pruitt</b>	kpruitt@umd.edu	KEY 3116	M 11:00-2:00; and by appt.

A sprawling and perplexing schism runs through the center of American cultural history, end to end. From colonial times to the present, the U.S. (and its predecessor colonies) have been widely acknowledged as being the world's preeminent business society – from the first commercially-oriented settlements, to the office towers (not cathedrals) that long defined our urban landscapes, to the twentieth century's "company men" and celebrity CEOs, to the recent dot.com and housing financial manias. At the same time, popular culture – embodied in sermons, novels, films, public commentary, and television programs – has been unremittingly critical of American business.

This course – which explores several leading themes and genres in American business culture – is animated by that long-standing historical tension. How and why have Americans excelled at commerce, industry, and services while our cultural leaders and tastemakers – ministers, novelists, playwrights, cartoonists, public intellectuals, movie producers – have, almost without exception, cursed and accused firms and business leaders of being avaricious, anti-social, dehumanizing, and undemocratic. For their part, business leaders often have weighed into the debate in spirited defense. This struggle to define American business culture reveals much about changes and continuities of our broader national identity.

**Themes and goals.** Major themes in the course include: myths and realities of American entrepreneurship; the gendering of enterprise; corporations as perceived threats to democracy; changing notions of business failure; salesmanship and alienation; conflict and convergence between business and religion; and Hollywood populism.

This course is designed to help students:

- develop the ability to assess and think critically about historical issues and about how people interpret those issues;
- develop skills in analyzing historical artifacts, especially primary documents, and reaching informed conclusions about those artifacts;

- understand how culture, social structure, diversity, or other key elements of historical context have an impact on individual perception, action, and values.
- hone analysis, discussion, and writing skills.

**Class etiquette.** During class meetings kindly refrain from chatting, texting, reading newspapers, eating, or otherwise distracting yourself or other students from the lecture and from your note taking. *Laptop computers are permitted only for note taking;* individuals who use laptops to surf the web – which is very distracting to students sitting nearby – will be asked to leave. If you must arrive late or leave early, do so quietly from a rear exit and sit in the back of the room. *Cell phone usage is prohibited at all times.*

**Class participation.** The best way to earn high marks for discussion is to complete each week's required reading **before** class meetings, and bring to class the documents and/or books with key passages highlighted along with your own questions and issues for discussion.

**Course grades** will be calculated according to the table below. The grading scale is 100-98 = A+; 97-93 = A; 92-90 = A-; 89-88 = B+; 87-83 = B; 82-80 = B-; 79-78 = C+; 77-73 = C; 72-70 = C-; 69-68 = D+; 67-63 = D; 62-60 = D-; 59-0 = F.

assignment	date/place due	% of course grade
class participation	weekly/section	14 % (1% each)
short essays	weekly/Canvas	28 % (2% each)
project proposal	Sept. 21, 10:00 p.m./Canvas	5 %
first in-class exam	Oct. 19, 10:00-10:50 a.m./SYM0200	15 %
project full draft	Nov. 9, 10:00pm/Canvas	8 %
second in-class exam	Dec. 20, 9:00-10:00 a.m./SYM0200	15 %
final project	Dec. 20, 9:00 a.m./SYM0200	15 %

**Required readings.** These is one textbook for the course, which is available at the University Book Center: Upton Sinclair, *The Flivver King*. All other course readings will be available through Canvas, unless otherwise indicated as a web url.

**Make-up Exams and Late Papers.** If for any family or medical reason you find it absolutely necessary to miss an in-class examination, you must contact your Teaching Assistant before the examination to obtain her consent to your absence if you wish to take a make-up exam. Unless you make other arrangements with the instructor, project assignments will be penalized one full letter grade for each day late, and short essays will be penalized one point (out of two) for each day late.

**Undergraduate Policies.** This link <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html> will take you to the university's undergraduate policies on:

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY  
THE CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT  
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT  
DISCRIMINATION  
ACCESSIBILITY  
ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, OR MISSED ASSIGNMENTS  
STUDENT RIGHTS REGARDING UNDERGRADUATE COURSES  
OFFICIAL UMD COMMUNICATION  
MID-TERM GRADES  
COMPLAINTS ABOUT COURSE FINAL GRADES  
COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY  
FINAL EXAMS AND COURSE EVALUATIONS  
CAMPUS RESOURCES

Because this information pertains to all your undergraduate courses, including this one, it is worth your while to familiarize yourself with it.

**Reviewing Grades.** One of the ways to learn a great deal in this course is by reviewing carefully exams and papers returned by your TA with comments. Please take the time to do this, and follow up with your TA if you have any questions about her commentary. Reviewing comments on the first paper and exam is a great way to prepare for the second paper and exam, respectively. If you believe one of your assignments was graded unfairly, please follow these steps: 1) Do not try to speak with your Teaching Assistant about your grade at the end of the class period in which the assignment was handed back; take at least 24 hours to read and think about the comments and grade. But do not wait more than a few days to follow steps 2-4; 2) Reread the assignment and your written work; 3) Write down the reason or reasons why you think the grade is inappropriate; 4) Give these comments to your TA and arrange a time to meet with her.

**Course evaluations.** As a member of our academic community, you as a student have a number of important responsibilities. One of these responsibilities is to submit your course evaluations each term through CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. Please make a note of the link for accessing the submission system for spring 2015: [www.courseevalum.umd.edu](http://www.courseevalum.umd.edu).

## Schedule of Topics and Assignments

### Week 1 (Aug. 29 & 31): Sprouts of American Capitalism, Pt. 1

- *all sections meet*
- Bernard Bailyn, "The Apologia of Robert Keayne," *William and Mary Quarterly* (Oct., 1950), pp. 568-587.
- Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., and Richard S. Tedlow, "Benjamin Franklin and the Definition of American Values," in Chandler and Tedlow, *The Coming of Managerial Capitalism* (1985), pp. 2-24.

### Week 2 (Sept. 7): Sprouts of American Capitalism, Pt. 2

- no sections meet
- same readings as previous week
- short essay 1 AND short essay 3 due in Week 3 section meeting

### Week 3 (Sept. 12 & 14): Go-Getters and Failures

- Samuel Clough, "Memoirs of an Itinerant Worker," in Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., and Richard S. Tedlow, *The Coming of Managerial Capitalism* (1985), pp. 424-434.
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1840), vol. 2, section 2, part 19: "What Causes Almost All Americans to Follow and Industrial Calling"  
[http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/DETOC/ch2\\_19.htm](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/DETOC/ch2_19.htm)

### Week 4 (Sept. 19 & 21): Self-Made Myths and Realities

- Horatio Alger, *Paul the Peddler* (1871), pp. 133-174, 271-281.
- William Miller, "Recruitment of the American Business Elite," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (May 1950), pp. 242-253.

### Week 5 (Sept. 26 & 28): Raking Muck, Wrestling Trusts

- Louis D. Brandeis, *Other People's Money and How the Bankers Use It* (1914), chapters 1, 5, and 10. (Originally published as articles in *Harper's Weekly*, 1913-1914). <http://www.law.louisville.edu/library/collections/brandeis/node/191>

### Week 6 (Oct. 3 & 5): Fordism and the American Soul

- Sinclair, *The Flivver King* (entire)
- "Modern Times" (United Artists motion picture, 1936)
- "Clockwork" (California Newsreel, 1982)

### Week 7 (Oct. 10 & 12): Advertising Age

- Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream* (1985), ch. 7

### Week 8 (Oct. 17 & 19): American Capitalism's Greatest Crisis

- first in-class exam: Wednesday 10/19, 10:00-10:50 a.m.
- note: exam will not cover material assigned this week
- note: sections will meet this week
- Studs Terkel, *Hard Times* (1970), "Big Money" (pp. 60-81); and "Three Strikes," (pp. 129-147).

#### Week 9 (Oct. 24 & 26): The Organization Man and Woman

- "Mildred Pierce" (Warner Brothers motion picture, 1945)

#### Week 10 (Oct. 31 & Nov. 2): Selling Culture and Counterculture

- "Office Etiquette" (short motion picture, Encyclopedia Britannica Films, 1950)
- "New Girl in the Office – Part I and Part II" (Government Committee on Government Contracts, c. 1959) <http://archive.org/details/prelinger> [type film titles in search field]

#### Week 11 (Nov. 7 & 9): Career Women and Celebrity CEOs

- "Baby Boom" (United Artists motion picture, 1987)

#### Week 12 (Nov. 14 & 16): Downsized Dreams

- Scott Adams, *The Dilbert Principle*, chs. 21-22 (pp. 244-273).
- New York Times, *The Downsizing of America* (1996), ch. 1 (pp. 3-36).

#### Week 13 (Nov. 21): Wall Street v. Main Street

- Tom Wolfe, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. (1987), pp. 55-71.
- CBS Evening News, "Enron Traders Caught on Tape," Dec. 5, 2007 – view the video and read the story. [http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563\\_162-620626.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563_162-620626.html)

#### Week 14 (Nov. 28 & 30): The Rise of Black and Hispanic Corporate America

- Robert Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar* (1998), ch. 6 (pp. 100-116).
- trailer for the 1971 movie "Shaft" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiCB2isZcRM>
- trailer for the 1991 movie "Boyz N the Hood" [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoFra\\_nLjzY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoFra_nLjzY)
- trailer for the 1989 movie "Do the Right Thing" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BT2al2t2jnU>
- Arlene Davila, "Language and Culture in the Media Battle Zone," in Davila, *Latinos Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People*. (2012), 153-180.

Week 15 (Dec. 5 & 7): IT, Globalization, and Anti-Globalization

- “Mardi Gras: Made in China” (Film produced by David Redmon, 2006).
- Benjamin Barber, “Jihad vs. McWorld,” *The Atlantic* (March 1992).  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/199203/barber>

Week 16 (Dec. 12): Review session

- no section meetings
- no short essay due

Final exam: Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2016, 9:00-10:00 a.m., SYM 0200