

AMERICA AS A BUSINESS CIVILIZATION 050:281

American Studies Department

Marian Z. Stern

Fall Semester 2008

Wednesdays, 3:55-6:55 pm

Room 208 Ruth Adams Building

Office Hours: each Wednesday from 2:55-3:55 pm (in the American Studies Office) or by appointment

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Messages also may be left for me in the American Studies Department (732-932-9174)

Required Reading: Colossus How the Corporation Changed America by Jack Beatty – packet to be distributed at the first class  
Additional packet materials – to be distributed at the first class

**Week 1 October 22, 2008**

Topic: Historical Overview of American Business: The Puritans to Facebook

Readings: Colossus: How the Corporation Changed America, pp. xiii-xxii, 3-44, 59-64, 89-119, 129-140, 263-269, 375-382.

Please note: these readings should be completed before the second class. (Page numbers for Colossus refer to pages from the book, not the packet itself, and may be found just above the text.)

**Week 2 October 29, 2008**

Topic: “Go West Young Man” The historical and cultural roots of American Entrepreneurship.

Readings from packet materials: Benjamin Franklin “The Way to Wealth”, Bloomberg by Bloomberg, “The Big Picture” from Giants of Enterprise, “America’s Growing Affinity for Risk” from The Christian Science Monitor

### **Week 3 November 5, 2008**

Topic: Business and Democracy: friends or foes?

Readings: Colossus pp. 141-176, 290-298. From the packet: Monopolies in America, Robber Barons Saints or Sinners, and “Gates gets slammed” from Time Magazine.

### **Week 4 November 12, 2008**

Topic: “The Business of America is Business” Vs. “What Price Success?”  
The American definition of success and resulting disillusionment.

Readings: Colossus pp. 279-289, 319-354.

### **Week 5 November 19, 2008**

Topic: Business and Society - The role of business in hindering or promoting social change

Readings: Colossus pp. 65-81, 429-466, “Breaking Barriers” from Forbes, “50 Most Powerful Women” and “You Raised Them Now Manage Them” from Fortune

### **Week 6 November 26, 2008**

**No class. Happy Thanksgiving!**

### **Week 7 December 3, 2008**

**Term Paper Due!**

Topic: What is Corporate Social Responsibility and is it an Oxymoron?

Readings: Colossus pp. 355-371, 383-407, and 467-484; “Tree Huggers, Soy Lovers, and Profits” from CNN/Money. Com and web sites from several corporations (to be distributed in class)

## Week 8 December 10 , 2007

### Final Test

Grading: Attendance will be taken at each class and class participation will count for 25% of your final grade.

A test will count for 40% of your grade.

A term paper is due on December 3 and will count for 35% of your grade.

There is a choice for your paper topic:

a) Read one or more of the novels and/or non-fiction works listed below and compare the theme of the work(s) with themes discussed in class and the assigned readings. Pay particular attention to such topics as entrepreneurship, democracy, social stratification/mobility, personal sacrifices, and ethics.

Reading choices: Barbarians at the Gate (non-fiction), Liar's Poker (non-fiction), The Rise of Silas Lapham, Babbitt, "Death of a Salesman" (play) and Tearing Down the Walls (non-fiction). All of these books are readily available at local bookstores, on-line, and in at least one of the university libraries.

YOU MUST LET ME KNOW YOUR BOOK SELECTION BY NOVEMBER 19 AT THE LATEST.

b) Take on the persona of an American businessperson, living today, in the past, or future, and write a diary of your experiences over the period of six months. You should have at least twelve entries which cover the following topics and themes: type of business and how you developed it; past and current challenges; impact of your business on your personal life and family; **economic, social and cultural conditions in the United States during the time period you have chosen that impact your business**; your ethical (or lack of) ethical standards; your past and present role models; composition of your work force and why you hired certain individuals or types, etc.

