Course Description and Requirements

This course of reading, writing, lecture and discussion considers the enterprise systems of Great Britain, Germany, Japan and the United States. We will examine the political and economic dynamics these four, successful, wealth-creating societies, paying special attention to impacts of government, entrepreneurship, management, and financial institutions. The intellectual objectives of the course are to hone students’ abilities to think comparatively, over time and across cultural contexts. We will take time to consider the lessons we can learn from history and their application to nations and institutions in our own time.

Classes will be a mix of lecture and discussion of the assigned readings. Attendance is expected. Short paragraphs on the assigned readings will be required for each class as a preparation for discussion. Student teams will be asked to make one brief presentation. There will be a final take home essay, distributed in the penultimate class session, which will be due one week from the end of the course.

Since there are reading and homework assignments due for the first class, it is important to do the reading sufficiently in advance. Please read for comprehension. Think about what the important themes are. Don’t get lost in the mass of detail. There is absolutely nothing to memorize.

Course grades will rest mainly on the quality of the final essay, adjusted for quality of class discussion and homework.
B30.2190. 9U
Global Perspectives

Required texts


Class Schedule and homework assignments

09/01 (6-9 pm) Patterns of modernization: government and society


Homework assignment due at the beginning of class: Write 2-3 pages about: What surprises you about the comparative economic development of the UK, the US, Germany and Japan?

09/03 (6-9 pm) Dynamics of capitalism: financial systems


Homework: Write no more than a page on: Though there is some “convergence” among different financial systems in the contemporary world, they were significantly different in Germany and the US before the 1990s. How do you account for these differences? Which system, historically, was better?

09/06 (9 am-12 noon) Dynamics of capitalism: entrepreneurship and management

Read: "Josiah Wedgwood" and “August Thyssen” from Creating Modern Capitalism.

Homework: Write a paragraph on each of the following questions: What, if anything, is particularly remarkable about Josiah Wedgwood’s business achievement? Why was Thyssen called “The American?”
09/06 (1 pm-4 pm) Comparative advantage lost and won


Homework: Write on one of the following. Toyoda/Toyota managed to capture markets from superior players in the textile machinery and auto industries. In each case, what factors contributed to the company’s success? Or, Rolls Royce found its niche in two industries. In each case, what factors contributed to the company’s success? A page, please.

Also, think about how Japanese culture might have contributed to that country’s success in certain markets.

09/08 (6-9 pm) Exploiting market (and political) constraints

Read: “IBM” and “7-Eleven in America and Japan” in Creating Modern Capitalism.

Homework: Write a paragraph on each of the following. Did Thomas Watson, Jr. behave responsibly in his push to develop the IBM 360? How do you explain the divergence of 7-Eleven strategies and operations in the U.S. and Japan?

09/10 (6-9 pm) Lessons for (and from) emerging markets

Please search for and read some good articles or other sources, e.g., Internet*, on the economic development of one of the following: Argentina, Brazil, Ghana, Ireland, and Viet Nam.

The instructor will assign groups specific responsibility for each of the countries. Each group will make a 15-minute presentation to the rest of the class.

What are some key facts of the country’s history? What does each country have going for it in terms of government, entrepreneurship, management, and finance? What are the negatives in each area?
Classroom Comportment

Classes will start on time, so please be on time. It’s the right thing to do. Everyone is expected to turn off all cell phones and put away all laptop computers, Blackberries, game boys, magazines, crossword puzzles, and other distracting paraphernalia during class sessions. Please at least pretend to be interested in what the instructor and your classmates have to say. Be not afraid to ask questions, to challenge the professor and one another, and to hold forth with your own ideas about the subject matter, so long as you are polite and don’t suck the air out of the room (that privilege is reserved for the instructor). At the end of class, take out everything you brought in, save for rubbish, which you may deposit in the receptacle provided. Dress as you would at home, so long as you dress at home.
Instructor’s Biographical Information

George David Smith is Clinical Professor of Economics and International Business at the NYU Stern School of Business. He began teaching at Stern in 1984, joined its economics faculty in 1988. He offers courses in U.S. Economic and Business History, Global Perspectives on Enterprise Systems, Markets, Ethics and Law, and Entrepreneurial Leadership. He has been a faculty member of the Berkley Center for Entrepreneurial Studies and is a research associate of the Center for Japan-U.S. Business and Economic Studies. He has been twice named a Glucksman Faculty Fellow.


Some of his publications include:


