Money and Power in the Western World, 1700-2000

B30.2391.70, Summer II 2010
Mondays and Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. – TBD

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COURSE WEBSITE: Blackboard

Course Description, Objectives, and Requirements:

This course examines the historical co-development of governments and markets in the Western World since about AD 1700. Readings and discussions will cover topics in financial markets and institutions, construction, higher education, slavery, marriage, retirement savings, and healthcare. It will also consider how specific fiscal, monetary, and regulatory policies have affected entrepreneurship, management, and economic growth.

The intellectual goals of the course are to impart a long-term perspective on business and economic policies and government involvement in the economy and to cultivate thinking in time and context. Students are urged to read for comprehension, not detail. They should stay focused on the big picture and not lose sight of the forest for the trees. The course readings and discussions should be probed for areas of intellectual interest and career relevance, not memorized.

Classes will be a mixture of lecture, discussion of the assigned readings, and sundry types of in-class activities. Attendance, active participation, and peer review of student presentations are important and will affect grades at the margin.

Required Texts:

Robert E. Wright, *Fubarnomics: A Lighthearted, Serious Look at America’s Economic Ills* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus, August 2010).
(Available to students gratis on Blackboard and in paper at the first class meeting.)

(Available to students in the bookstore and online.)
Grades:

Grades will largely be a function of each student’s final presentation, but attendance, class participation, and peer comments on other’s presentations are also required.

Student Presentations:

Presentations should be based on the required readings, class discussions, and additional readings or resources, as necessary, and should demonstrate a clear understanding of key course concepts like government, market, and hybrid failures.

Students may discuss any course-related topic that they wish, but should receive explicit instructor approval, via e-mail, before commencing. Presentations that explore current problems, especially current workplace issues, in historical context are preferred, but strictly “academic” or “historical” presentations are also acceptable. July 14 before class is the hard deadline for topic submission. Students may of course e-mail topic proposals before that date. The instructor will comment on Powerpoint outlines of presentations emailed to him before class on 4 August.

The final two (or possibly three) class sessions will be devoted to the presentations; recommended presentation length will be determined once the class size is known.

Students may obtain help from each other, the instructor, or others but should be careful to cite their sources on the final slide(s) of their Powerpoint file. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated.

If you need assistance with the presentation, or any other part of the course, feel free to contact the instructor via e-mail or to arrange a phone or face-to-face meeting.

Course Outline

Meeting 1 – Wednesday, 30 June: Course Overview; Money and Power: What’s At Stake?
Reading: None

**PER THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR, THERE WILL BE NO CLASSES ON MONDAY, 5 JULY**

Meeting 2 – Wednesday, 7 July: Market Failures
Reading: Government Failure Versus Market Failure, TBD.

Meeting 3 – Monday, 12 July: Government Failures
Reading: Government Failure Versus Market Failure, TBD.

PAPER TOPICS DUE, 14 JULY BEFORE CLASS

Prof. Robert E. Wright, Economics Dept., Stern School of Business, New York University
Meeting 4 – Wednesday, 14 July: Hybrid Failures  
Reading: *Fubarnomics*, Chapter 1.

Meeting 5 – Monday, 19 July: Financial Crises and Bailouts  
Reading: *Fubarnomics*, Chapters 2 and 5.

Meeting 6 – Wednesday, 21 July: Construction and Real Estate  
Reading: *Fubarnomics*, Chapters 2 and 3.

Meeting 7 – Monday, 26 July: Slavery and Marriage  
Reading: *Fubarnomics*, Chapters 4 and Supplement.

Meeting 8 – Wednesday, 28 July: Social Security and Retirement  
Reading: *Fubarnomics*, Chapter 6.

Meeting 9 – Monday, 2 August: Healthcare and Insurance  
Reading: *Fubarnomics*, Chapter 7.

Meeting 10 – Wednesday, 4 August: Higher Education and Pareto Solutions to FUBAR  
Reading: *Fubarnomics*, Chapters 8 and 9.

Meeting 11 – Monday, 9 August: Student Presentations  
Reading: None.

Meeting 12 – Wednesday, 11 August: Student Presentations  
Reading: None.

**Instructor’s Biographical Information**

Robert E. Wright is a clinical professor of economics at Stern, where he has taught in various capacities since Fall 2003. Professor Wright holds a Ph.D. in history (SUNY Buffalo, 1997) and is affiliated with the Museum of American Finance. His most significant publications include:


*Hamilton Unbound: Finance and the Creation of the American Republic* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2002).


Money and Banking (Nyack, N.Y.: Flat World Knowledge, 2009). With Vincenzo Quadrini.


Prof. Robert E. Wright, Economics Dept., Stern School of Business, New York University
Control of the Purse: Money, Politics, and the Imperial Crisis in New York (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming). With Ron Michener. †

† Tentative titles.