

Prof. Derber
W: 3-5:30

SOCIOLOGY 650

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ECONOMY
CORPORATE POWER IN AMERICA AND THE WORLD

This course analyzes key topics in social and political economy focusing on the structure of the corporate order in American and the world. It focuses on the interface between corporations and the state, and the way that the corporate regime organizes economic, political and social life. It also proposes changes in the corporate system – both at the national and global levels - that can heal American and world-wise social problems while ushering in a new system of global democracy.

The vast power of rising global corporate empires - from Citigroup to Exxon/Mobil to Microsoft - poses new threats to American democracy and the wellbeing of all citizens. Globalization and American corporations are trumpeted as the best hope for global prosperity and democracy. But the vast size of global markets and firms, their single-minded profit seeking, and *lack of public accountability* create a system of corporate domination, with rising poverty and inequality and corrupted democracy. Big business increasingly sets the agenda for both political parties in Washington, while Washington itself increasingly dictates economic and social policy to the rest of the world.

This course offers new solutions for these problems, offering a vision of how to maintain prosperity while bringing corporations and unchecked American power under democratic control. It shows that we need new social movements with a global vision of democracy and corporate accountability.

The course offers students literacy in globalization, political economy, the theory of the corporation and corporate responsibility, the practice of business, and the making of social change. It provides a new perspective on world affairs and American society, and should help students interpret the news about the economy and American social problems in a more critical and informed way. It does not require prior background in political economy or economics, and uses texts that are written for the general reader.

Requirements and Basis For Grading: Midterm: Final; Group Reports
Books (In Book Store and on Library Reserve):

Brecher and Costello, Global Village or Global Pillage

Collins and Yeskel, Economic Apartheid in America

Derber, Corporation Nation

Derber, The Wilding of America

Derber, People Before Profit

Derber, Hidden Power

Frank, What's the Matter With Kansas?

Friedman, The Lexus and the Olive Tree
Vogel, Japan as Number One
Rifkin, The European Dream
Perkins, Confessions of an Economic Hit Man
Wallach and Sforza, The WTO

READINGS

I. Who Runs America; Who Runs the World?

A. Session 1 Introduction

Derber, Hidden Power, Intro, Chaps 1-3 (read over first month of course)

Perkins, Confessions Of an Economic Hit Man (read over first month of course)

B. Globalization: Race to the Top or Race to the Bottom?

session 2

Brecher and Costello, Global Village or Global Pillage? Chap 1

Friedman, The Lexus and the Olive Tree, Chaps. 1,6,7,9

C. Globalization and Empire

session 3 Globalization and Empire

Derber, People Before Profit, Chapters 1-4

Bacevich, Empire, Introduction, Chapter 1

D. Corporate World Government:

session 4 The WTO and IMF: A SIMULATION GAME WITH PROF GAMSON

Derber, Corporation Nation, Chap. 14

Wallach and Sforza, The WTO, pp.13-60

II. The American Dream at Risk: Corporate Rule and The Threat to Democracy

A. New Robber Barons?: Corporate Sovereignty

Session 5

Derber, Corporation Nation

Intro, Chaps 1,2, 5, 6, 8, 9

B. Inequality and Poverty: Corporate Rule, the New Social Contract and the End of the American Dream

session 6

Collins and Yeskel, Economic Apartheid in America, Chapters 1-3

C. Social Disintegration: The Ungluing of America

session 7

Derber, The Wilding of America. Chaps. 1,2,4, 5, 6

D. Corporate Fascism in America?

Session 8 Corporations, US Foreign Policy and Fascism

Derber, Hidden Power, Chapters 5,6

Lawrence Brett, "Wake Up and Smell the Fascism,"

www.oldamericancentury.org/14pts.htm

MIDTERM EXAM session 9

III. Alternatives to the Corporate Regime: Toward Economic Democracy and Collective Security

A. Justice and Prosperity: The Western European Strategy and the European Challenge to American Empire

session 10

Rifkin, The European Dream, Chaps 1-6;9;16

B. Capitalism and Community: The Japanese Alternative

Session 11

Vogel, Japan as Number One

IV AMERICAN ALTERNATIVES: POPULISM, DEMOCRACY, AND REGIME CHANGE AT HOME

A: Right Wing Populism: How Conservatives Control the Debate

Session 12

Thomas Frank, What's the Matter With Kansas?

B. Postive Populism and The Accountable Corporation

session 13

C. Derber, Corporation Nation, Chapters 9-12; 13,14

Derber, Hidden Power, Chapters 8-10

E.Global Democracy: A Vision of Participation, Global Equality and Peace

Session 14-

Derber, People Before Profit, Chapters 6-10

