

ECONOMIC CRISIS AND SOCIAL CHANGE  
**The Political Economy of Crisis  
and the Fight for a Just and Sustainable World**

This course analyzes key topics in social and political economy focusing on the current economic crisis in the context of the corporate order in America 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 while producing extreme instability and a new economic and financial meltdown. It also proposes changes in the corporate system – both at the national and global levels - that can heal American and world-wide deep social, economic and environmental crises while ushering in a new system of sustainability and global democracy.

The vast power of rising global corporate empires - from Goldman Sachs 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 financial deep instability and a deteriorating economy, a dangerously deteriorating planetary environment, and corrupted democracy.

This course offers new solutions for these problems, offering a vision of how to deal with the current crisis in the economy and environment and polity, while bringing corporations and unchecked American power under democratic control. It shows that we need new social movements with a global vision of democracy, equality, and global environmental justice and sustainability. The Occupy Movement is explored as one model of new forms of social protest that challenge the corporate regime.

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 democratic and sustainable 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.

- 1) Requirements and Basis For Grading: Midterm and Final Exams (each about 50% of grade) Attendance and Participation are also a consideration

Books (In Book Store and on Library Reserve):

Bacevich, The Limits of Power

Collins, 99 to 1  
Derber, Corporation Nation  
Derber, The Wilding of America, 5<sup>th</sup> edition  
Derber, Greed to Green  
Derber, Marx's Ghost  
Friedman, The Lexus and the Olive Tree  
Kuttner, Obama's Challenge  
Rifkin, The European Dream

## READINGS

### **I. The Backstory of the Crisis: Creating the Global Capitalist Regime**

#### A. Introduction

##### *session 1*

if possible, begin reading the readings for Week 2 (listed again for emphasis)

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

Friedman, Milton, Free to Choose, Chapters 1-2 (online reserves)

Derber, People Before Profit, Chapters 1,2 (online reserve)

#### B. Globalization: Neo-Classical Economics and Exporting the Corporate System

##### *session 2*

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

Friedman, Milton, Free to Choose, Chapters 1-2 (online reserves)

Derber, People Before Profit, Chapters 1,2,3

(Guest Speaker: Charles Kernaghan)

#### C New Robber Barons?: Savage Capitalism and Corporate Sovereignty

##### *Session 3*

Derber, Corporation Nation

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

#### D. Inequality and Poverty: The Beginning of the End of the American Dream

##### *session 4*

Collins, 99 to 1: Extreme Inequality

Guest Lecture: Chuck Collins

#### E. Social Disintegration: Capitalist Culture and The Ungluing of America

##### *session 5*

Derber, The Wilding of America, 5<sup>th</sup> edition Chaps. 1,2, 5,9

## **II. The Current Crisis: Regime Collapse?**

### **A. Toward Depression?: Liberal Perspective on Capitalism and Economic Collapse**

Session 6

Kuttner, Obama's Challenge, Chapter 1

Krugman, "How Did Economists Get It So Wrong" (online Reserve)

### **B. Capitalism's Collapse? Marxists and the Long Crisis**

Session 7

Derber, Marx's Ghost, Parts I-III

### **C. Hegemony: Empire and Profligacy, A Centrist View**

Session 8

Bacevich, The Limits of Power Chapters 1-3

## **MIDTERM EXAM – WEEK 9**

## **III. Solutions to the Crisis: Regime Change at Home**

### **A. Justice and Prosperity: The Western European Solution**

session 10

Rifkin, The European Dream, Chaps 1-3;6;9;16

### **A. Obama's Hope: Keynes, Liberalism, and The New New Deal**

Session 11

Kuttner, Obama's Challenge, Chaps. 4-5

### **C. The Green New Deal: Solving the Crisis and Saving the Planet**

Session 12

Derber, Greed to Green, Intro; chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17

### **D. Democracy in Action: Postive Populism and Regime Change at Home:**

session 13

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

Derber, Marx's Ghost, Part VI

Field Trip to Occupy Movement site and/or Guest Speakers from Corporate Accountability

### **E. The Occupy Movement: The New Politics of the 99%**

Session 14

Van Gelder, This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street Movement and the 99%  
Movement (on-line reserves)  
Occupy: Scenes from Occupied America (on-line reserves)