

Professor Mansel Blackford
History 587.01
Fall, 2006

173 Dulles Hall
292-6341
blackford.1@osu.edu

COMPARATIVE BUSINESS HISTORY

Welcome to comparative (international) business history! In this course we shall compare the historical development of business in Great Britain, the United States, and Japan (with glances at business in Germany and China) from pre-industrial times to the present, with emphasis on the twentieth century. We shall focus our attention on the evolution of business firms and their management, but we shall also examine the development of government-business relations and the changing relationships between business and society in each nation. In short, we shall examine business developments in their full social, cultural, political, and environmental contexts--with the overall goal of understanding convergence and divergence in business systems across the globe. Throughout, we shall examine businesspeople--men and women--as agents of change.

Class Rules:

Here are a few ground rules: 1. All students must be officially enrolled in the course by the end of the second full week of the quarter. No requests to add the course will be approved after that time. Enrolling officially and on time is solely the responsibility of each student. 2. Students with university-recognized disabilities must inform me of those disabilities so that we can make suitable arrangements. 3. Class attendance and participation are expected. More than two absences without cause (verifiable illness or overwhelming personal problems) will result in a lower grade. 4. Late papers will be penalized one letter grade for each day they are late.

Assignments and Grading:

Grading will be based on two 6-page-long papers (30% each) and a take-home essay final exam about 9 pages long (40%). We shall work together on the papers in class before you work on them individually.

Books:

Mansel G. Blackford, *Rise of Modern Business in Great Britain, the United States, and Japan*, 2nd edition

Thomas McCraw, ed., *Creating Modern Capitalism*

Tentative Class Meetings:

Sept. 21: Introduction: The Value of Comparative Business History

Sept. 26: Preindustrial Merchants: House of Hancock

Sept. 28: Merchant Houses and Preindustrial Societies: The House of Konoike

Read: *Rise*, Introduction and ch.1; *Creating*, ch.1

Oct. 3: Industrialization: Why Britain? Why Not China?

Oct. 5: Varieties of British Industrialization: Steel and Pottery

Read: *Rise*, chs. 2 and 3; *Creating*, chs. 2 and 3

Oct. 10: American Industrialization and the Rise of Big Business

Oct. 12: Small Firms in U.S. Industrialization: Buckeye Steel Castings

Read: *Rise*, ch. 4; *Creating*, ch. 9

Oct. 17: Types of Japanese Industrialization: Zaibatsu and Non-Zaibatsu Firms

Oct. 19: Industrialization and City Building: Edo to Tokyo

Rise, ch. 5; *Creating*, ch.12

First Paper Due

Oct. 24: Consumerism, the Mass Media, and Business in the Interwar Years

Oct. 26: American Automakers Meet (and Create) the Mass Market

Read: *Rise*, ch. 6; *Creating*, ch. 8

Oct. 31: British and Japanese Automakers

Nov. 2: The Global Economy after World War II

Read: *Rise*, ch. 7; *Creating*, ch. 10

Nov. 7: Restructuring Big Businesses in America: BFGoodrich

Nov. 9: The Persistence of Small Business in Modern America: Wakefield Seafoods

Second Paper Due

Nov. 14: Changes in British Business: Renewing Unilever

Nov. 16: Challenges in Global Marketing: Budweiser Beer

Read: *Rise*, ch. 8; *Creating*, ch. 4

Nov. 21: Japanese Business Changes: Honda Motors

Read: *Creating*, chs. 11 and 13

Nov. 23: No Class, Thanksgiving

Nov. 28: Into the Future: Silicon Valley

Nov. 30: Business through the Centuries

Read: *Rise*, Conclusion; *Creating*, ch. 14

Dec. 6: **Take-Home Final Exam Due in Class, 1:30**

Assignments:

You will prepare 3 written assignments for the class. Each will be an essay due on the date indicated on the syllabus. Any late essays will be penalized 1 letter grade for each day they are late. Please also note that I take plagiarism very seriously. You must do your own work for this class. We shall discuss plagiarism in class.

1. Write an essay of 6 pages (double-spaced, 12-font) on 1 of the following topics:

A. There were many alterations in business methods from preindustrial to industrial times. Analyze how business leaders organized and ran successful industrial companies. What had changed from earlier times? What had not? Why? Be sure to use some examples from your readings.

OR

B. Government actions affect business development considerably. Choose any one of the nations we have studied and analyze how such actions affected the development of business in preindustrial and industrial times. In which time period were government actions most important? Why? Be sure to use some examples from your readings to support your points.

OR

C. We have seen that there was has not a single “best” or “correct” path of business development in industrial times. Instead, different forms of development were important in different situations. Compare and contrast any two of the following three different forms that business development, especially the development of manufacturing companies, has taken over time: large vertically integrated firms, smaller firms situated in geographic districts, and zaibatsu. How and why did each form develop? What were the advantages and disadvantages of each form? Be sure to use some specific examples to support you generalizations.

2. Write an essay of 6 pages on 1 of the following topics:

A. The development of new manufacturing methods and the development of new marketing methods have long been important in influencing the evolution of business firms. Choose any two of the major interwar business firms we have studied in *Creating* and compare and contrast (explain similarities and differences in) how manufacturing and marketing developments interacted to affect firm developments.

OR

B. Write a book review. You must see me and have my approval for the book you want to review no later than the end of the fourth week of the quarter. Your review should

summarize the author's main ideas, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the book, including the author's use of sources, and discuss the likely audience for the book.

3. Write an essay of 8-9 pages on 1 of the following topics:

A. Compare and contrast the development of bureaucratic business managements and structures in two of the following nations from about 1920 to the present: Great Britain, the U.S., and Japan. How and why did bureaucratic management replace other forms of management in some types of companies? What forms did bureaucratic management assume? What have been their strengths and weaknesses? Why? In what areas of business did bureaucratic management not arise?

OR

B. Imagine that because of your outstanding performance in History 587.01 you have been appointed as a staff vice-president to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a large British, American, or Japanese company (the choice of nationality is yours). Your company manufactures and sells consumer goods or provides a service to consumers at home and abroad. Your responsibility is to report to your CEO on the steps that he/she should take to maintain and, if possible, increase his/her company's competitiveness and profitability. Your report deals with: strategic management (that is, grand policymaking, which includes a consideration of the social-cultural environments of your business), but touches, as well, on operations management (factory or office operations). Finally, your report also makes recommendations on legislation for your CEO to recommend to his/her government. Write the report.