**English S-207: The Culture of Capitalism**

Harvard Summer School

Summer 2022

Course trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEsrQ0PuYg4>

Course Website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/12109>

This course asks how cultural products, including literature, theater and film, have captured the spirit of capitalism—fueling its fantasies, contemplating its effects, and chronicling its crises. More than just an economic system, capitalism created new habits of life and mind; it also created new values, forged and distilled by new forms of art. Core readings by Franklin, O’Neill, Rand, Miller, and Mamet and background readings by Smith, Marx, Taylor, Weber, and Schumpeter.

**Contact Information:**

* Prof. Martin Puchner – puchner@fas.harvard.edu
* TA: Aurelien Bellucci – abellucci@g.harvard.edu

**Course Texts:**

The majority of the course readings are available online, either through Harvard or through other sources. Links are provided on the course website, but you are welcome to use any edition you can find online or elsewhere. The films can be viewed on DVD or via a variety of online streaming services; you are of course welcome to view them using other means. You are likely to need to purchase, or check out from the library, the following texts:

* Bertolt Brecht, *In the Jungle of Cities*
* Bertolt Brecht, *The Good Person of Szechuan*
* Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*
* Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis*

Because they will be useful for the two creative assignments, you may also wish to obtain physical or otherwise easy-to-use copies of Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography* and Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto*.

The course will be offered in two modes: a-synchronous and synchronous. The formats are as follows:

***Lectures***: lectures are pre-recorded and released on Mondays and Thursdays in the morning.

***Live discussions***: Discussions are live and interactive, and take place Tuesdays and

Thursdays between 12:00 and 1:30 EST. For those taking the course asynchronously,

they are recorded and posted ca. 30 min. after the session ends.

***Online discussions***: Online discussions happen throughout the week. They are

interactive, but asynchronous, i.e. accessible to people in all time zones.

We will try to integrate live discussions and online discussions as much as possible by referring to online postings during our live sessions and vice versa.

**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1: The Habits of Capitalism I - June 21**

* *Lecture I:* Introduction.
* *Live introductions, June 21, noon EST.*
* *Lecture II:*[Adam Smith, from *The Wealth of Nations* (1776):](https://archive.org/details/WealthOfNationsAdamSmith) Book I, Chs. 1-2 (“Of the Division of Labor,” “Of the Principle which gives Occasion to the Division of Labor”).
* *Lecture III:* [Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3%3Ahul.ebookbatch.NLIB_batch%3Aocm49293990), Part I(1793).
* *Lecture IV:* [Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3%3Ahul.ebookbatch.NLIB_batch%3Aocm49293990), Part II (Parts III and IV recommended).
* *Live discussion, June 23, noon EST.*

**Week 2: The Habits of Capitalism II – June 27**

* *Lecture V:* [Max Weber, from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905):](https://archive.org/details/protestantethics00webe) "The Spirit of Capitalism"; ("Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism" recommended).
* *Lecture VI:* [Herman Melville, Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street (1853).](http://www.bartleby.com/129/)
* *Live discussion, June 28, noon EST.*
* *Lecture VII:* [Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House* (1879)](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3%3AHUL.FIG%3A003137188)
* *Lecture VIII:* [Henrik Ibsen, *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896).](http://www.readbookonline.net/title/13513/)
* *Live discussion, June 30, noon EST.*

First small assignment - due July 9

**Week 3: Capitalist Convulsions I - July 4**

* *Lecture IX:* [Harley Granville Barker, *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905).](http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&id=jFNFAAAAIAAJ&dq=the+voysey+inheritance&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=7TZP8W9Hlh&sig=yEoasq-eebAqE6H0iOnVaJhqFRs&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=4&ct=result&pgis=1)
* *Lecture X:* [George Bernard Shaw, Major Barbara (1905).](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3%3AHUL.FIG%3A001513075)
* *Live discussion, July 5, noon EST.*
* *Lecture XI:* [Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto (1848).](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3%3Ahul.ebookbatch.NLIB_batch%3Aocm49293027)
* *Lecture XII:* [Karel Capek, R.U.R. (1920).](http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/capek/karel/rur/)
* *Live discussion, July 7, EST.*

Midterm (material up to lecture X) – due July 16

**Week 4: Capitalist Convulsions II - July 11**

* *Lecture XIII:* [Eugene O’Neill, *The Hairy Ape* (1922).](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3%3AHUL.FIG%3A001517446)
* *Lecture XIV:* [Frederick Winslow Taylor, from *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911):](http://books.google.com/books?id=alAZAAAAYAAJ&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false) Chapter II.
* *Live discussion, July 12, noon EST.*
* *Lecture XV:* Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1927).
* *Lecture XVI:* Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times* (1936).
* *Live discussion, July 14, noon EST.*

Second Small Assignment - due July 23

**Week 5: Capitalist Convulsions III - July 18**

* *Lecture XVII:* [Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal* (1928).](http://solomon.wodr.alexanderstreet.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/cgi-bin/asp/philo/wodr/documentidx.pl?work_code=PL007898)
* *Lecture XVIII:* Bertolt Brecht, *In the Jungle of Cities* (1923).
* *Live discussion, July 19, noon EST.*
* *Lecture XIX:* Bertolt Brecht, *The Good Person of Szechwan* (1943).
* *Lecture XX:* [Joseph A. Schumpeter, from *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942):](http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/ehost/detail?sid=bdba8cbe-46f7-4777-a2db-58497e35d5b9%40sessionmgr115&vid=1&hid=120&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=nlebk&AN=88213) Part II, Prologue and Chapters V, VII, and XIV.
* *Live discussion, July 21, noon EST.*

**Week 6: Winners and Losers - July 25**

* *Lecture XXI:* Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* (1943).
* *Lecture XXII:* Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* (1949 [film]).
* *Lecture XIII:* [David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1984).](http://solomon.nadr.alexanderstreet.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/cgi-bin/asp/philo/navigate.pl?nadr.594)
* *Lecture XXIV:* Don DeLillo, *Cosmopolis* (2003 [novel]).
* *Finals preparation, July 28, noon EST.*

Final Exam and Final Projects due August 3

**Course Requirements (with Due Dates and Grade Weights):**

These assignments are discussed in more detail below the reading schedule. Note that students taking the course for graduate credit have different requirements.

***Undergraduate:***

* **Participation (20%):** Complete reading and viewing of course texts, to be reflected in active weekly participation in the online course discussion boards – *weekly.*
* **Small Assignments (20%):** Two small assignments over the course of the Summer.
* **Final Project (20%):** Four options listed below.
* **Midterm Exam (20%):** A one-hour exam, held online.
* **Final Exam (20%):** A two-hour comprehensive exam, held online.

***Graduate:***

* **Participation (20%):** Complete reading and viewing of course texts, to be reflected in active weekly participation in the online course discussion boards and live sessions (asynchronous students will watch recorded live sessions and may refer to them in their online postings) – *weekly.*
* **Small Assignments (20%):** Two small assignments over the course of the semester.
* **Paper Proposal (10%):** Proposal for final research paper, produced in consultation with your TA.
* **Term Paper (50%):** A standard 15-20pp research paper on some topic related to the themes of the course, to be selected in consultation with your TA*.*

Note that these assignments will also be discussed during course lectures and on the PowerPoints; be sure to look at those sources as well for more information about these assignments. You are also encouraged to contact your TA with any questions. NB: some modifications to due dates are discussed during the course lectures; these refer to earlier versions of the course and can be ignored. Due dates are listed in the course schedule above!

***Undergraduate Credit***

* **Participation - Online Discussion**

Each week, you are expected to make a *minimum* of four posts to the online discussion boards and participate in the live discussion sessions (asynchronous students watch recordings of live discussion sessions and may refer to them in online postings). In order to ensure that the posts become an ongoing conversation, rather than something you look at once a week, at least two of these posts should be made at some point until Wednesday night; at least two more should be made until Saturday night.

The TA will post some questions or topics related to that week’s reading and lectures. Excellent posts to the discussion boards will both thoughtfully respond to the topic and enter into useful intellectual conversation with your colleagues. You should expect to spend two hours a week reading your classmates’ posts and writing your own.

We will not accept any late posts for credit!

* **Two small assignments (one text and one film) - approx. 700 words**

See the course site for a detailed description.

* **Final Project (four options)**
1. **Franklin Diary**

In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin undertakes a project of moral perfection that seems to blur the lines between moral virtue and business virtue. In this assignment, you will undertake a contemporary version of Franklin’s project. Create your own list of virtues (between six and ten), translate them into actions, and observe your success or failure in practicing them for at least five days. Write down your observations, either in the form of a diary like Franklin’s, or in some other form that you think more appropriate. Then, compare your own project to Franklin’s and draw some larger conclusions about the endeavor. Are your virtues similar to Franklin’s? Why or why not? What does your experience tell us about how contemporary capitalism is similar to or different from capitalism in Franklin’s era?

Strong diaries will make meaningful creative choices about their form of presentation, making their formal choices part of the argument; will use concrete examples to show how your chosen virtues did or didn’t work in practice; and will use those cases as a way of illuminating your own historical or philosophical distance from or closeness to Franklin.

1. **Manifesto of Capitalism**

Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto* did not simply announce a new political doctrine; it established a new form of political (and eventually artistic) evangelism in the manifesto. This assignment asks you to adapt that form in a “Manifesto of Capitalism.” This will require you to critically reflect on this genre: can the *Manifesto*’s formal features be adopted wholesale, or will you need to change them in order to apply them to capitalism? Will you focus more on historical narrative or on ideas? How will you address the crises capitalism has undergone over the years? Against whom will the manifesto be written—who will play the role the bourgeoisie played in Marx? And what, exactly, will you be making manifest?

Strong manifestoes will, as with the Franklin diary, use their formal and rhetorical decisions as part of their argument, demonstrating reflection on the relationship between form and content. They will both exhibit a thorough understanding of the *Communist Manifesto*, and thoughtfully treat the history and contemporary realities of capitalism.

1. **Stage Proposal**

Pick one of the plays we read and develop a concept for a (imaginary) staging. Your proposal should demonstrate an intimate knowledge of the text (beyond the mere plot). Your take on the play can go in many directions, yet you should provide your reader with good reasons for you proposed decisions. Saying, for example, that your stage will be all black or pink without mentioning the effect on the audience or the reason for your choice would not make an effective proposal.

1. **Academic Essay**

Alternatively, students may write a standard critical-analytical essay of 7-9 pages instead. Since this course is not primarily intended to train students in this kind of writing, this option should generally only be taken if the student is already comfortable with writing literary or cultural analysis. Consult your TA if this interests you.

* **Exams - One hour (midterm) and two hours (final)**

The exams will cover material from the readings and from the video lectures. Both exams will have the same form, except for length. The midterm exam will cover the lectures up to and including Lecture XII; the final exam will be comprehensive, though the majority of its questions will come from the last half of the course. The exams will use three kinds of questions:

* *Keywords:*You will be provided with key terms or phrases from the course and asked to *define* each concept and *explain* its place among the ideas and texts we’ve been discussing in the course. These answers should be pretty concise: one or two sentences at most.
* *Passage Identification:*You will be given a passage from one of the course texts and asked to identify the *author* of the passage and the *title* of the work from which it comes. In addition, you will need to *explain* the meaning of the passage and say something about its place in the context of the *work as a whole*. Note that these questions do *not* ask you to give a summary of an entire book: if you have a passage from Max Weber, you will need to tell us what that particular passage is arguing or discussing; you should not simply talk about Weber’s ideas in general.
* *Short Essays:*You will be given a prompt and asked to respond to it in an essay of several paragraphs. These essays should offer a central *argument*, rather than a series of observations; should use *examples* drawn from the course readings and lectures; and should be written with *lucidity and thoughtfulness*, with the understanding that these essays are written under time constraints and therefore will not have the same quality as writing produced under normal circumstances.

***Graduate Credit***

* **Participation - Online Discussion**

Each week, you are expected to make a *minimum* of four posts to the online discussion boards and participate in live online discussions (asynchronous students watch recordings live discussions and may refer to them in their postings). In order to ensure that the posts become an ongoing conversation, rather than something you look at once a week, at least two of these posts should be made at some until Wednesday night; at least two more should be made until Saturday night.

Most weeks, the TA will post some questions or topics related to that week’s reading and lectures. Excellent posts to the discussion boards will both thoughtfully respond to the topic and enter into useful intellectual conversation with your colleagues. You should expect to spend approximately two hours a week reading your classmates’ posts and writing your own.

We will not accept any late posts for credit!

* **Two small assignments (one text and one film) - approx. 700 words**

See the course site for a detailed description

* **Paper Proposal - 1-2 pages**

Your proposal will describe, at the very least, the *argument* you plan to make in your final paper, the *evidence* or *archive* you will use to demonstrate this argument, and the larger intellectual *stakes* of your paper. Ideally, the proposal will constitute part of a longer consultation with your TA about your paper project, so you are encouraged to be in touch well before sending the actual proposal.

* **Final Paper - 15-20 pages**

This will be a standard 15-20-page research paper on some topic related to culture and capitalism. Many of its specifics will depend on your own intellectual interests and disciplinary perspective, so you should be in touch with your TA early on to discuss possible approaches.

Additional Notes:

**For Harvard College students**: Per College policy, you must take this course LIVE rather than “on demand” in order to receive Harvard College credit. You need to submit a Certificate of Live Attendance form (<https://registrar.fas.harvard.edu/files/fasro/files/certification_of_live_attendance_form.pdf?m=1647974075>) to the FAS Registrar’s office (enrollment@fas.harvard.edu) by the first Friday of the term, which is Friday, June 24. For more information see Harvard College Student Course and Policies Guidelines (<https://summer.harvard.edu/harvard-college-student-overview/student-course-policy-guidelines/>) on the Summer School website, especially the section under "Special Course Types" and "Online (live or on demand" web conference courses."

**Accessibility Issues.**Students with accessibility issues should get in touch with the Accessibility Services office at Accessibility@dcemail.harvard.edu or 617-998-9640.

**Academic Integrity and Other Course Policies.**Students enrolled in Harvard Summer School courses are expected to observe the policies listed in the HSS Student Handbook. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the HSS policies, which you can find online at <http://www.summer.harvard.edu/policies/student-responsibilities>

**A note on collaboration**: Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work, and is expected in the case of the wiki. For the term paper, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. Collaboration on assignments is prohibited unless permitted by the instructor. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc), you must also acknowledge this assistance. It is very important that you fully cite sources and avoid the risk of shading over into plagiarism – the use of another person’s ideas or writing without giving them proper credit. Consequences of plagiarism can range from failure on the paper to dismissal from the course to dismissal from Harvard. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the Harvard Guide to Using Sources, which is available at [http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu](http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/).

# Publishing or Distributing Course Materials policy information

Students may not post, publish, sell, or otherwise publicly distribute course materials without the written permission of the course instructor. Such materials include, but are not limited to, the following: lecture notes, lecture slides, video, or audio recordings, assignments, problem sets, examinations, other students’ work, and answer keys. Students who sell, post, publish, or distribute course materials without written permission, whether for the purposes of soliciting answers or otherwise, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including requirement to withdraw from the Summer School. Further, students may not make video or audio recordings of class sessions for their own use without written permission of the instructor.