ANTH 72400: Problems in Capitalist Development (CRN21892)
Wednesdays, 4:15-6:15, Fall, 2013
Michael Blim
Rm. 8402.09
mblim@gc.cuny.edu
212-817-8007
Office Hours: Walk-ins or by appt., Thursday 12-4 and Friday 2-4

The object of the course is to examine those debates that underlie the understanding of the key changes in the operation and development of capitalism historically that have later been considered to be at the core of its historical meanings and value as an analytical tool for understanding the world economy. Obviously, there is a limit to what topics we can accommodate in a semester, and those chosen are among a multitude of possibilities. So our task will be both theoretical and historical-empirical. As social scientists we will try to acquire from these cases the concepts and arguments that can help us in our present research. At the same time, we will try to make an accurate appraisal of the validity of the interpretations of various crucial events and periods in the rise of modern capitalism, given the material before us. This is necessary for our work today. As historian David Fischer recalls a saying of Mark Twain: “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it rhymes.”

To the maximum extent possible, all the readings will be on Blackboard.

I would like each of you to post weekly commentaries on Blackboard consisting of a short statement of the argument of the week as you see it, the evidence presented, and a tentative appraisal of its value.

We will discuss all of the readings together. There will be a resource person armed with a commentary for each reading to assure adequate coverage.

A long paper (25pp) on a topic or a number of short papers adding up to 25pp on topics related to the work of the seminar is required. Please let me know as soon as possible which avenue you intend to take and how you will structure the writing(s). A short written description would be appreciated.

8/28: Introduction

9/4: NO CLASS

9/11: The China Syndrome: The New Century’s Capitalism?

9/18: China: The Arguments and Their Significance for Understanding Capitalism


Michael Webber, “Primitive Accumulation in Modern China,” Dialectical Anthropology, 2008.

Symposium on Giovanni Arrighi’s Adam Smith in Beijing (2008), on You Tube under Arrighi with David Harvey.


9/25: NO CLASS


10/8: “The Capital” in Capitalism: II

Karl Marx, Capital, Volume III
Chapter 20: "Historical Material on Merchant’s Capital"
Chapter 25: “Credit and Fictitious Capital”
Chapter 27: “The Role of Credit in Capitalist Production”
Chapter 30: “Money Capital and Real Capital: I”
10/16: Labor and the Capitalist World Economy


10/23: NO CLASS

10/30: Proletarianization and Struggle


Rosa Luxemburg, Reform or Revolution, excerpts.

11/6: Class Formation 20-21st Centuries


11/13: Peasantry and Rebellion: From Sack of Potatoes to Revolutionary Force I

Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Section VII.


V.I. Lenin, Section 13, Conclusion of “The Differentiation of the Peasantry,” The Development of Capitalism in Russia (1899),
[http://www.marx.org/archive/lenin/works/1899/dcr8ii/index.htm](http://www.marx.org/archive/lenin/works/1899/dcr8ii/index.htm)

Leon Trotsky, “The Proletariat and the Peasantry” and “The Peasantry,”
[https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/ch03.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/ch03.htm)
[https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/ch20.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/ch20.htm)


11/20: Peasantry and Rebellion: From Sack of Potatoes to Revolutionary Force II


12/4: Capitalist Crisis I: The 17th Century


**12/11: Capitalist Crisis II: Today**


