

History 902
Research Seminar: Political Economy in
Twentieth Century America

Mr. Hollingsworth
Semester II, 1982-1983

This seminar is concerned primarily with public policy and the performance of American society in the twentieth century. The literature on political economy tends to explain policy and performance by focusing on the social and economic structure of American society. For example, scholarship suggests that social and economic structures place limits on political system characteristics, public policy, and societal performance. In turn, societal performance and the political system transform the social and economic system. My position is that there is considerable validity to such an approach. In addition, however, I want the seminar to explore the role of ideology in shaping policy and performance.

While the major assignment in the seminar is for each student to write a major research paper, we will for several weeks read some materials in common. These will be materials which focus on the role of ideology in shaping political economy. In addition, we will read several recent publications focusing on the changing role of women and on the nature of labor management relations in advanced capitalist societies. We will also read several recent books of a theoretical nature on advanced capitalist societies. The theoretical literature is designed to complement the empirical studies which the members of the seminar will present toward the end of the semester.

Students will be free to choose their own seminar paper, though the more overlap in subject matter, the better the seminar.

The following are a few very general topical areas for seminar papers, though each seminar paper should be well focused on some specific topic.

- 1) The role of business associations and business firms in shaping public policy (either domestic or foreign policies).
- 2) Problems in the study of class consciousness in 20th century America.
- 3) Problems relating to changes in the organization and distribution of power in 20th century America.
- 4) Public policy involving the changing role of women and the family in 20th century America.
- 5) Why has the U.S. provided certain types of services in the public, for-profit, or non-profit sectors - and with what consequences.
- 6) Changes in economic and democratic philosophy in 20th century America.
- 7) The following policy areas: income distribution, energy, housing, education, health, employment, defense, anti-trust, subsidies to upper income groups, income transfers and other policies for low income Americans.

Toward the end of the semester, each student will present a draft of his/her seminar paper. Each draft must be available to all members of the class several days prior to the discussion by the seminar.

The materials which the seminar will read in common are as follows:

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Hollingsworth

Isaac Balbus - MARXISM AND DOMINATION

Carl Boggs - GRAMSCI'S MARXISM

Daniel Boorstin - THE GENIUS OF AMERICAN POLITICS

Dan Clawson - BUREAUCRACY AND THE LABOR PROCESS

Bob Jessop - THE CAPITALIST STATE

Lydia Sargent - WOMEN AND REVOLUTION

Raymond Williams - MARXISM AND LITERATURE